



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.
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Editorial

If ever there was doubt about the need for groups of Catholics to cry out for reform in the Church, surely some international and local issues over the past few months should put paid to that doubt. Almost every day now we are presented with yet more sexual abuse scandals and attempts by Church authorities to cover them up to avoid scandal. While the atrocities committed are themselves scandalous, the sinfulness continues as we read about Church authorities attempting to diminish the crimes by mouthing totally unconvincing comments about mitigating circumstances. The whole situation points to a culture of strategic deceit practised by so much of the hierarchy that has built up over a long period of time.

That culture contains elements of superiority evidenced in so many in the hierarchy by the attitude that their actions and decisions should not be questioned. The Second Vatican Council endorsed that the people are the Church and the clergy are its servants. Yet recently one prominent Australian bishop stated that there had been wide consultation over changing the English translation of the Mass because all the bishops had been consulted. Given that there has been no consultation beyond this, it would appear that the bishops are the Church. Another prominent Australian bishop recently commented in an ABC radio program that priests are “ontologically different” from the laity and become so at ordination. This means that they are different in their very being – superiority is inbuilt.

Bringing all that down to our local level means that, in the eyes of some, due processes do not have to be followed even if the rules are firmly established. Although ARC has never been condemned or even been accused of wrongdoing, we have twice

had our meetings disrupted by being prevented from gathering on Catholic Church property. If there were some concern about our approach and actions there is a process of mediation laid down by Canon Law that should be followed before such action is taken against us. We have sought such mediation after the event, but so far we have received no reply. I guess, given the above, should we be surprised if we are ignored?

John Buggy

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New English Translation of the Mass

I trust that you have heard that a new English translation of the Mass is about to be introduced next year. This means that prayers and responses you have become used to since we had Mass in English will be changed. Not only have you not been consulted about this but the new version will have some language that is quite different from the way we speak in Australia. At the moment there is no choice about it and priests will be simply told to introduce it even though many of them do not like it either.

Many Catholics are concerned about this and, following the lead of some clergy in America, many thousands have signed a petition asking that the hierarchy wait until there has been more consultation about it. You can go to the website: <http://www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org> and add your name if you so wish and this would be a good thing to do. You can also log on to <http://www.catholicsforministry.com.au> and see for yourself what the new translation means.

At the AGM of ARC on 7th March many of those present expressed concern and from the discussion we considered doing something ourselves. In America the hierarchy were worried that so many priests signed the petition. Given that they are more likely to listen to the voice of their priests than concerned laity, we believe that a concerted effort should be made in Australia to support priests who are worried about the effect of this imposition.

At the AGM it was agreed that all ARC members should be asked to approach their parish priest and enquire if they have reservations about the introduction of the

new translation. If they have they should be asked if they would be prepared to sign the "What if we said wait" petition on the internet and whether they would be prepared to sign a similar one in Australia if at least 50 other priests agreed to do so. Then if they agree, you let the Secretariat know and we will co-ordinate the petition by contacting those priests directly and engage them in a manner that is comfortable to them.

So the task that we would like everyone to follow is this:

1. speak to your parish priest and ask if he has concerns about it.
2. ask him to add his name to the "What if we said wait?" petition on line.
3. ask if he would be prepared to add his name to one that will go to the Australian Bishops Conference if at least 50 other priests are prepared to do so.
4. if he agrees, tell him that ARC will contact him if it is found that there are at least 50 similarly concerned priests.
5. contact a member of the Secretariat and let us know the outcome.

We do not often ask members to go to some effort to help with a strategy. This is a very important issue and we strongly request your co-operation with a matter so heavily endorsed by the Annual General Meeting.

John Buggy

(ALSO SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 4)

Present Form of Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one, holy Catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Proposed Form of Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

And one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

ARC's Annual General Meeting

House rules

An Annual General Meeting does not often attract a large audience but this time we were blessed on two fronts: Paul Collins is always a good drawcard and he served us well with his inspiring address. But it could be that Cardinal George Pell's much publicised interference in our choice of venue was enough to stir many outraged Catholics from their Sunday slumbers to enjoy a day of stimulating discussion in the pleasant ambiance of Rose Bay RSL Club. An attractively arranged room overlooking the sunlit harbour and good catering ensured an enjoyable and stimulating day.

One has to wonder why most of us stay on in a church that is becoming increasingly dictatorial and distant from the people. However, there was an excellent spirit of shared concerns amongst like-minded people over about issues such as:

- the ban on ARC meeting on Church property and what action should be taken;
- attempts to sweep away all the reforms gained by Vatican II;
- the new (archaic) language soon to be imposed on English-speaking Catholics;
- support for Fr Peter Kennedy in Brisbane.

Possible topics for future ARC conferences:

- What are your rights as Catholics?
- How do you define a Catholic?
- Accountability
- Structures of the Church

Margaret Knowlden

Your reporter was given a statement for the story on Australian Reforming Catholics ("Cardinal criticised over clampdown on reform group", February 8). It said: "There is nothing unusual in church-owned premises being made available only to groups which uphold Catholic teaching and beliefs." But the only reference to Cardinal Pell in the published story was that he was in Rome.

Since publication the cardinal has added: "You don't have a Liberal Party meeting at ALP headquarters." He did not and cannot ban the meeting, only its location.

Katrina Lee

*Director of Catholic Communications,
Archdiocese of Sydney*

Letter in *SMH* of 9 February 2010

Katrina Lee

I wish to express my deep disappointment concerning your letter to the Sydney Morning Herald last week.

It is a shame that you chose to misrepresent the facts from the position of Director of Communications for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney ("House Rules" – SMH 9/0/10). Your statement implies that ARC does not uphold Church teaching and that Cardinal Pell was justified in banning the organisation from Church property. There is no evidence given for this and it only serves to highlight the depth of the injustice done and your ignorance as a Church representative in supporting it.

ARC has not been accused of any wrongdoing nor has it been accused of denying Church teaching. On the contrary, I was asked some time ago to address the Curia of one diocese on the reasons why so many disaffected Catholics no longer practise their faith. Replies such as yours only serve to add to that disaffection.

To state that Cardinal Pell was not banning ARC but only the location is a useless distinction. What other sort of ban could there be? You imply that he had every right to do so when, in fact, he does not, unless a process of determining our unsuitability is undertaken. Your final quote using the banal comment about the Liberal Party not meeting on ALP premises was not made about this instance but drawn from 2004, again implying that ARC is in opposition to the Church. I request an unreserved apology to ARC and its members who are practising Catholics and include bishops, priests, religious brothers and sisters.

John Buggy

Spokesperson

Australian Reforming Catholics

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The New Mass Translation – A Hidden Agenda

Phoebe Basson

The new English Mass translation is not a hot topic in Australia at the moment. Although the full text is available online, I doubt many are aware of the fact or are sufficiently interested to read it. A spirit of indifference seems to prevail. We are more concerned about the pressing issues of sexual abuse, the shortage of priests and the exodus from the pews than yet another rendering of the Latin Mass into English. If we think about it at all, we might question the necessity of devoting a vast amount of time and money to what must seem an unnecessary, even frivolous exercise?

However there is a hidden agenda here. This is not just about a new and improved translation of the Church's central act of worship. It is not, as is claimed by some, a striving for liturgical perfection. If perfection is the goal it is hardly likely to be achieved by a mistranslation so abounding in grammatical errors and arcane expressions. Moreover the absurdity of final assessment and approval of an English translation by a Pope whose mother tongue is German is further evidence that we need to examine more closely the underlying motivation for this questionable exercise.

Pope Benedict, arguably one of the most authoritarian of popes, has clearly demonstrated that the primary focus of his papacy is the systematic reversal of the reforms of Vatican II. Following the path of his predecessor he has turned the Vatican into a conservative enclave and set about restoring the Church's pre-conciliar status. The new Mass translation is but a stage in this process. The strictly literal adherence to the Latin original hints at a return to the spectator Mass with its minimal lay participation, a cause of grave concern to the Council and the motivation for the introduction of the *Novus Ordo*. Although not introduced as a Vatican II reform, Communion in the hand is also coming under scrutiny. In 2008 Archbishop

PHOEBE BASSON is a librarian by profession and an Australian by adoption. She came to Australia from South Africa 17 years ago and now lives and works in Sydney. As a deeply committed Catholic with an enduring love of the Church, she is very concerned at the institutional leadership's refusal to acknowledge the need for reform and its failure to implement changes essential to ensure the Church's relevance and therefore its survival.

Ranjith, Secretary for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, is quoted as saying it is time for the Church to reconsider its decision to allow Communion in the hand. And what of extraordinary ministers of Communion? Will they become an extinct species? The argument that this lay ministry was instituted for the sole purpose of enabling the faithful to receive the Eucharist when no priest or deacon was available is surfacing again among some members of the hierarchy. Support for this view can be found in the Pope's warning, during an audience with visiting bishops from Brazil, that *it is important to avoid the secularisation of clergy and the 'clericalisation' of the laity*.

Viewed in this light the new Mass translation takes on a wider significance. While it has aroused criticism and outrage worldwide, not only of the translation itself but the lack of consultation, the graver implications are perhaps receiving insufficient attention. In South Africa where the South African Bishops Conference, in an excess of enthusiasm or misunderstanding, introduced it prematurely it has been almost universally rejected, with priests and some bishops adding their protests to those of the voices in the pews. In the United States a proactive priest, Father Michael Ryan of Seattle, initiated an online petition, *What if we just said wait?*, requesting a delayed implementation until the new text had been trialled for a limited period. Since it was posted on the Web a few months ago the petition has collected more than 15,000 signatures from around the world – from clergy, religious and laity, including a number from Australia. And counting continues.

In all of this, however, the focus is almost entirely linguistic, coupled with an angry response to the autocratic nature of its imposition. The more sinister underlying intention remains largely unrecognised, or as yet unacknowledged, and for that reason I fear no heed will be paid to any of the comments or criticisms, pleadings or petitions. While we seek to preserve the *Novus Ordo* of Vatican II, the real agenda of Benedict may overtake us.

Michael G. Ryan's article *What if we just said wait?* appeared in *America Magazine*,
December 14 2009

Copy available from your Editor on request:
knowlden@optusnet.com.au

ARC Members are encouraged to sign the
petition www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org

'just come and sit with us where we are ...'

Lynne Green

I'd struck by the fact that art can really light up what we're trying to put into words, as I re-viewed Alan Holroyd's cartoons in recent issues of ARCvoice, and was about to do some proof-reading for a friend. Then, the email came though via **e-arc** to let members know that there would be a change of venue for the next *oz reforming catholics*' AGM because we'd been banned from using a church hall. Order from further up the food chain!

Right after, I sat and watched the last episode of the summer series of *Message Stick*, on ABCIV. One of the most moving of very many that I've seen over the twenty years it has been rolling out and gathering strength by touching people's hearts and reaching deep into our minds and sub-conscious. It set an idea moving in my own mind and heart.

At some of ARC's earlier Conferences – which we'd originally called 'Campfires' – we considered ideas about how to maintain the momentum generated by our coming together for wide-apart events: by having smaller, locally-based, *comings-together*, on a more regular basis. That *campfire* memory was re-kindled – pun intended – as I saw indigenous people sitting by campfires with scientists in scattered parts of Australia, and comparing their understanding/s of astronomy in a mutually respectful way. They shared in other ways, too, including at an incredible indigenous art exhibition in Geraldton, WA. Its focus: on ways of representing our understanding of science, showing the value of intertwining 'art' – in a range of senses, not just pictorial ones – with our shared humanity/ need to grow together/side-by-side.

It was an incredible episode, and it prompted me to float an idea that one way to go, for future *interim* gatherings – which might well offset the posturings and power-plays of *Poob Babs* – would be a *counter-cultural* one. Appealing!



I'd like to see us explore the idea of meeting in a group – eventually several of them – to reflect together, using *stimulus* or *focus* DVDs of a programme like that *Message Stick* one. We'd watch it, reflect on it, consider any relevant action/response, perhaps also bring our time together to a close with some kind of unstructured, brief, intercessory prayer. Meeting places would vary, to suit group members, in a way like the '*coffee-conversations*' some of us have tried out since the last two AGM's.

'*We are church*' – that's what a group in [a European country] call themselves. I've long felt that **ARC** will never have a significant impact in ensuring this *church-which-we-are* will change, grow, [be]reform[ed] if we merely continue to use the *tactics* of many in the patriarchal hiero-clerical sub-class, instead of developing flexible – and radically different – *strategies* for change. If '*head-butting sucks*', why not '*model*' behaviour which helps us to do things differently?

Something I began to put in writing, years before my current engagements – both in an official ecumenical job in the early to mid 1990's, and even before that, was an idea about inviting people to '*sit with us where we are*', and accepting similar invitations. My naming of this sprang from my experience in women's – and other – ecumenical groups. One was being part of the first national [church] conference of indigenous people, which our group in the NSW Ecumenical Council helped its convenor '*animate*' – as distinct from [*top-down*] '*patronise*' – during that time. She was an indigenous woman from Palm Island, a friend who worked at the **NCCA**, and when we gathered, it was her mum who put into words what is the only way to *be church*, for me.

We were sitting in one of the groups which punctuated our time between listening to speakers – indigenous and non-indigenous – and praying together. This woman said to us, '*just come and sit with us where we are!*' The rest of the message – that we didn't need to *give answers* to, or *solve problems* for them. It was much more important just to be together, to listen to, and learn to respect each other.

Back to that episode of *Message Stick* – it was called '*Before Galileo*'. What I did was just that: listen! And I felt dry spaces in my life flooding with refreshing water. I really want to watch it again, and invite others to join me to do this. Not as a '*fix it*', so much, as '*sit, be still, listen*'.

LYNNE GREEN's background is in education and church life, as high school teacher and tertiary administrator. She is a passionate supporter of continuing adult learning – invaluable in a later ecumenical *PR* job. A Catholic from a family *grafted* on Northern Irish/French Huguenot '*root-stock*', so, pre-disposed to being ecumenical, she is also committed to fostering inter-faith engagement, because of life-changing contact with Muslim families in recent years.

Traditionally...however..

Tony Griffiths

Christmas is a time rich in traditions – religious, family, national and personal traditions. Two recent events caused me to ponder the concept of traditions: are they mere customs, or are they something deeper, perhaps even essential to continued wellbeing in whatever sphere they occur?

One Catholic school I attended had as its motto *Tenete Traditiones* – translated to its pupils as ‘hold fast to the traditions’. With the hindsight of 60 years this motto, with its suggestion of ‘tenaciousness’, sounds a bit strong.

Consider, for example, that old tradition of trial-by-ordeal of suspect villains. The idea was to subject the suspect to some potentially fatal physical ordeal, confident that God would indicate innocence or guilt. For example: if a bound suspect was thrown into a river, God ordained that normally he would drown. If he didn’t, then the devil must have helped him survive – so he was guilty. Other interesting things were done with red-hot iron.

So, it’s a good idea to consider the background of a serious tradition, to be sure that anything that seems illogical isn’t just a product of the peculiar mindset or circumstances surrounding its origin.

The first thing that prompted these thoughts was the change to the traditional way people receive Holy Communion. For about half my life, the congregation received only the Host. This, the various nuns, brothers and priests who taught me said came from the period of the plagues in Europe when, even though there was no knowledge of bacterial infection, people realised that sipping from a chalice following a person with a face full of puss was, at least, unpleasant and quite off-putting. Theologians, we were told, supported this change on the grounds that the Host was the Body of Christ and, as all bodies contain blood, taking the Host alone was all-inclusive. That sounded quite reasonable.

Some 30 or so years ago things changed: people were encouraged to receive both species – bread and wine. The chalice rim was to be wiped after each person sipped, and dipping the Host in the chalice was encouraged as an acceptable and hygienic alternative. And this tradition remained the norm until the recent Swine Flu scare. We then reverted to the older tradition of Host only.

Recently, at least in this Diocese, that tradition – or is it just a custom – changed again. Sipping was back in, but dipping was out. The Parish Bulletin informed us that ‘intinction (dipping)’ was not acceptable – and after all these years! My Macquarie Dictionary doesn’t list ‘intinction’, but it does offer a menu of seven varieties of meaning for ‘tincture’.

But, if the ‘sip and wipe’ tradition might have spread Swine Flu, why would it not spread other diseases just as efficiently, and why was it not abandoned permanently years ago? The cursory wipe of the chalice rim after each person doesn’t just remove deposited bacteria – if it removes any at all – and it equally can spread them. This might explain why some people are fanatical about being first – perhaps they’re bacteriologists. Anyone after about the fourth recipient will potentially receive a harvest of all previous communicants’ germs. Why then have we abandoned the tradition of ‘dipping’? Spread of germs was recognised during the Swine Flu scare, and it still exists. Why not revert to the tradition of dipping and abandon dangerous ‘sip and wipe’? Dipping is easily the most hygienic process and guarantees receiving both Body and Blood. And ‘intinction’ isn’t just surface colouring, it’s absorption of the wine by the bread.

Why not adopt the earlier theologians’ tradition: they said that bread alone is quite adequate; we know it carries little risk and it made sense. Let’s be selective in our traditions and keep the ones that make sense.

It could be worse! I saw a ‘Christmas-around-the-world’ program in which, in a European church, the wine was served on a gold spoon out of a gold chalice, straight into the communicants’ mouths. It was just ‘dip and slurp’, no wipes at all. That’s another tradition I could do without.

In the end, surely it’s all about ‘what we are about to receive’, rather than how we receive it. Why not play safe?

The other tradition that caught my ear was Purgatory. A friend told of an article in her parish newsletter that made comments about Purgatory, casting doubts on some long-held traditional views of many parishioners and causing much upset. The Parish Priest thought it best to have a theologian answer the article but after a page of undoubtedly impeccable theology, that man concluded by saying that Purgatory was a ‘state’ rather than a ‘place’. This didn’t help one bit.

That concept is outside all human experience. If you are in a ‘state’ then you must be in a ‘place’, whether it be a state of grace or just the State of Excitement (Victoria?). And, of course, it also threw doubt on our Christian

traditions of Heaven and Hell as physical places. While the tradition of Heaven as a place where we again meet all our friends and relatives does raise some practical and social problems, I certainly want to keep Hell as a place – a mere ‘state’ would be quite inadequate. And what about Limbo, was it also just a ‘state’? or was it a misconception all along?

And think of the Vikings, who see Valhalla as a place of continuous feasting; and men of some faiths who look forward to Paradise with its continuous supply of nubile maidens. They don’t want a ‘state’ that wouldn’t be worth fighting for.

There are traditions some hold deeply and, whether fact or fantasy, they do bring comfort to many. By all means take comfort from traditions, but not too much more. And remember: traditions can change, as we’ve seen.

TONY GRIFFITHS’ first contribution to ARCVoice was in September 2009 (No. 33) when he “pondered the imponderable”! Here he continues to raise questions ... and to wonder!

Liberation through oppression?

Fred Jansohn

There is a fundamental objective underlying the Mission Statement of Church charities, and that is to liberate. The ministry of the Church is, in part, to serve Christ in the poor with love, respect and justice so as to shape a more compassionate society. The Church is also there to encourage the needy to take control of their own destinies.

To love, respect and to dole out justice entails an engagement of the utmost good faith and an unswerving adherence to ethical principles. To contribute to the fashioning of a ‘more compassionate society’ and to contribute to the empowerment of the marginalised so that they ‘take control of their own destinies’ is to acknowledge the existence of deficits in the status quo and amounts to an implicit undertaking to do all possible to abolish current injustices.

The process by which these tasks are achieved inevitably results in the removal of the internal and external constraints and restraints barring an individual from leading a quality-filled life and realising hidden potential. The net effect will be a liberating one. Liberation allows one to breathe freely as befits a dignified person. Indeed ‘dignity’, and its maintenance, is a central theme in the vision of catholic charities. Reference is frequently made to respecting the dignity of the needy.

The above themes are founded on an implicit guarantee that those providing services to the needy pledge to act within ethical and legal boundaries. If it is notionally illegal or unethical that the needy are prevented from controlling their own destinies, then it is a corollary to the process of assisting them reclaim the control, that those doing the assisting act ethically themselves and within legal boundaries.

What, then, should we make of catholic organisations refusing to act within appropriate boundaries by side-stepping ethical and legal obligations under industrial awards? It is a routine event.

It is behaviour inconsistent with organisations whose ministry is based on the concept of liberation. It is, moreover, behaviour that breaches Christian principles, as it is behaviour that breaches legal obligations under the awards concerned. It is behaviour inconsistent with the requirement to act within the ethos of the Catholic Church! It is unacceptable, undignified behaviour, which demeans, insults and undermines those organisations’ very reason for being and is deeply troubling and an embarrassment to employed staff routinely affected by the behaviour.

Perhaps, most importantly and significantly, it harks back to a Dark Age mentality in its oppressive and non-liberating impact. Christmas should inspire us to recall the liberating impact of the life and death of Jesus Christ. Reassuringly he continues to stand as the ultimate role model for liberation.

Fred Jansohn

St Francis, Jesus and the Call of the Wild

Alan Holroyd

In 1903 USA writer Jack London's classic novel, *Call of the Wild* was published, featuring a dog called Buck and his adventures from suburban domesticity into the far wilds of the frozen Yukon gold fields. I read this book as a kid and it still resonates with me today. When I was a teenager Saint Francis of Assisi was one of my heroes where legend had it that his care for the creatures of the earth even extended to stepping over ants. In those times our family had a dog, a cat and some chooks, and before that we lived on a dairy farm with a large herd of cattle which included a bull, pigs, riding and draught horses with dingoes, cockatoos, maggies, peewees, willy-wagtails and of course rats, mice and yes, ants. The Holroyds were very familiar with looking after God's creatures, and this meant occasionally needing to shoot an animal or to chop the head off a chook or a duck for a hearty meal. On one sad occasion, we had to shoot our family dog that had been poisoned by a tick.

As an adult I got a job with Woolworths that later became an international icon of super-marketing with their Fresh Food People campaign. As part of Australia's largest retailer of meat, fish, chicken and eggs, executives like me visited places with battery chickens, with grain fed beef where fifty huge cows stood shoulder to shoulder, standing ankle-deep in dirt with their heads in a trough that had an endless supply of grain feed, and then a fish farm where thousands of fish were kept in large tanks and fed for sale and ultimate consumption. At the time, I reasoned that unlike St Francis, I had to put food on the table for a wife and kids and today, hey, the pope wears red leather shoes! So I guess, like the pope, I'm a tainted man.

In a big multi-cultural metropolis it is my observation that many have only a vague awareness of animals and so we thought that it would be good for our grandkids to experience a family pet while they were still young and able to learn and love from the participation. And so, we bought a twelve weeks old Labrador pup from the RSPCA and the boys promptly named her Milly, and so our adventures and love life with this creature of God began. It was a family decision that Milly belonged to the boys but she would live at Grandma and Grandpa's place and over time she would change addresses. In choosing a Labrador our reasoning was based on the reputation of the Seeing Eye Dog organization – in that Milly would be intelligent, loyal and good with families. All of this proved so right.



Milly and I spent weeks in our front yard as I crawled along our new fence, placing vinyl netting along the lower portion to keep the puppy from escaping. All this time, the many people who pass by on their way to the railway station and to TAFE, came to know Milly on a first name basis. We'd been here twenty-five years and rarely did anyone engage personally with us humans as they passed by, but with Milly, we now know all of our neighbours. Milly was at the fence one day as a young man walked along the footpath talking on his mobile. He stopped, knelt and

patted Milly, then leant inside and placed the mobile to the dog's ear and said, "Hello Milly. How's your day been?"

Recovery from a medical condition involved my having to spend almost 18 months on my bum with my leg elevated, so having Milly there kept me from going mad and gave me time to observe Milly's growth over time. Watching her asleep, dreaming – her legs twitching, her vocalising as she tries to tell us that she is hungry for her dinner. All of this and more got me thinking about myself – and my relationship with my fellow humans and with my God. I was learning so much from this dog.

If I were a creationist, as I understand it, God determined that cats would kill the mouse slowly causing

excruciating pain for the mouse. If I were an evolutionist, the mouse would still suffer but for a different reason – yet either way, I question the purpose when I look into my dog’s eyes and see her thinking. There is intelligence and love in this creature that has accompanied us humans for many thousands of years with a unique relationship. Yet, in its wild state this dog would have to hunt and bring down its food, inflicting pain on a weaker creature – or starve and die. We humans are omnivores so, along with fruit, vegetables and grains we need animals, birds and fish to be killed for our consumption. Back to the pope’s red shoes. Think of the huge by-products of the abattoir such as leather, the staple material for human footwear for thousands of years.

In the opening chapter of the Good News Bible, on the fifth day God created birds and sea monsters, on the sixth, animal life – domestic and wild, large and small and then human beings. God then put humans in charge of

all of this and provided us with grass and leafy plants for food. Does this mean we should be vegetarians?

The legend of St Francis is there, but for Jesus, apart from his riding on the donkey in the last days of his life, we have no story that indicates his relationship with animals but I can make lots of assumptions in positive terms. Imagine this, my dog Milly and I are sitting at the well taking it easy, and along comes Jesus. I’d love to raise this subject and talk it over with him – face to face. My guess is that Jesus and Milly would soon be friends, and so his engaging her in the conversation would be interesting to witness. It’s a strange feeling to make eye contact with a dog, who, you can see, is thinking, and absorbing your every move, smell and sound.

Will Rogers is reported to have said that if there were no dogs in heaven, then when he died, he wanted to go where they went. I agree with Will.



Clericalism: why is it a problem?

Gideon Goosen

Why is clericalism a problem that needs reform? Before we answer that, we need to ask: what is clericalism? It is an attitude of some people in the church (and possibly in other religions as well) of privilege above others, which gives them certain entitlements. It is a feeling of superiority and includes secrecy and a preoccupation with status. It needs to be said that any person in the church, ordained or otherwise, can support this attitude. So it is an attitude that priests and laity can have. Indeed without the tacit consent and cooperation of the laity, it would not exist.

With the recent upheavals over sexual abuse by the clergy, one of the attitudes which surfaced was precisely clericalism. How did clericalism affect the cases? Some clergy thought that they did not have to do anything about sexual abuse cases because the clergy who perpetrated them were somehow above the law, enjoyed a special privilege in these cases. Some bishops also thought that

clergy, being privileged as they thought, should be protected from the law. In so far as clericalism has contributed to this sorry state of things, it needs to be reformed, eradicated. This is easier said than done because clericalism is a blind spot.

Sexual abuse cases aside, clericalism does not allow the ‘priesthood’ of the faithful to flourish. It prevents church members seeing that, because of their common baptism, all have equal dignity and are worthy of respect. It divides the church into the ordained and non-ordained, instead of stressing the equality of all through baptism. It stresses ordination rather than baptism. This results in the gifts of members not being sufficiently recognised and used. It encourages the laity to remain passive and let the clergy get on with it.

People who would like to get rid of the attitude of clericalism are not guilty of anti-clericalism which is something quite different. The latter is an attitude of being against the clergy and wanting to get rid of them like some of the French philosophers at the time of the French Revolution. This is not the point being made in the above paragraphs. In wanting to reform clericalism, it is those negative attitudes associated with clericalism, which have been so destructive in the church, that we have to change.

GIDEON GOOSEN is a Sydney-based theologian who has taught theology for more than thirty years. His latest book is *Spacetime and Theology in Dialogue* (Marquette University Press, 2008).

Hearing each other, healing the earth - Make a World of Difference!

Peter Meury

This was the theme of the conference of the **Parliament of the World's Religions** in Melbourne 3rd-10th December 2009. 6,000 active participants from 220 different Religions, 80 countries with some 650 different programs to choose from! Wow! – high-calibre speakers from different faith traditions including some of our Australian Archbishops and Bishops, the Dalai Lama, Theologian Professor Hans Küng, famous Benedictine nun and outspoken feminist Joan Chittister, OSB, outspoken Malaysian Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim etc.

The main topics of this global Interfaith dialogue were World Peace, Understanding amongst Religions especially Islam, the Environment and Overcoming Poverty. One of the major speakers was Professor Hans Küng who presented his new ethical manifesto for the Global Economy. He predicted dire consequences unless lessons are being learnt and positive steps are being taken for leaders to observe fundamental ethical principles in business, namely the principles of humanity, non-violence and respect for life, justice and solidarity, honesty and tolerance and mutual esteem and partnership.

The theme for renewal in our own Church was certainly represented by a number of addresses and discussions by Sister Joan Chittister who strongly advocated the role of women when she demanded equal opportunities and presence in all Faith traditions, especially the Catholic Church! She posed challenging questions, such as why two-thirds of the World's poor are women and children! She coined the phrase: 'When you do not come to the table, you are on the menu!' One of the specific Panel discussions for instance was titled 'Breaking through Patriarchy: New Visions for Women of Faith'.

Homosexuality and acceptance of gays covered a few presentations. It was sad during a panel discussion/presentation to hear one young man speak of not being accepted by any of five different Faith traditions. They were all practically begging for being accepted as part of the Community. Some of these people have impressive spirituality and Faith concepts.

Under the theme 'Interreligious Dialogue and the Catholic Church in Australia and Melbourne' Bishop Michael E. Putney (Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Townsville QLD. and responsible for Ecumenism and

Interreligious Relations within the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference) presented the excellent concept as developed by the Melbourne Archdiocese 'Promoting Interfaith Relations'. A few presentations by actual interfaith relations' active groups from Melbourne Parishes followed. Why is this not promoted Australia wide?

Bishop Christopher Prowse, now the new Bishop of Sale (Vic) described interfaith dialogue as a 'friendship'. I was somewhat intrigued by this statement remembering my experience the previous morning during the celebration of the Eucharist at the Parliament, when the Priest explained that non-Catholics are not allowed to receive communion, but can come up for a blessing! Is this the way Jesus would have acted? Incidentally, two young Muslim women came forward to make use of this invitation.

To witness all these Traditions, take part in the discussions and engage in dialogue for a whole week was certainly a deeply moving faith experience for both my wife and me. Why was this event not publicised, when an impressive website existed for over 12 months? Why did our Priests not know about it when so many of our Church Leaders participated? My own knowledge of this conference and the existence of the organisation came from overseas twelve months before the event! It appears that someone is giving us the mushroom treatment!

PETER MEURY of Swiss-Germanic Catholic descent is a passionate believer and follower of Jesus, and the proclamation of his message of truth in the twenty-first Century. His major commitments are family life and the promotion of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.



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A 'Disaffected Catholic' speaks out

Anon

I was a Mercy Sister for 24 years but had become so stressed with religious life that my bladder ceased to void and eventually, after several cystoscopies, I was given anti-depressants. This enabled me to live normally. Once I'd settled into the real world, the problem disappeared, but occasionally it returns if I am over-stressed.

Vatican II was such a wonder! As I see our Church now, its leaders act as though that wonderful movement never happened, e.g. the reintroduction of the Latin Mass (I'd be amazed if there were priests, still alive, who could say this); the whole attitude of the current Church officialdom; the compulsory celibacy for its priests. I experienced personally, as a nun in the outback, just what this vow did to some priests! Having been married and widowed twice, I think I know how important sexual love is for men particularly!

Another area I find wanting in the Church is the manner in which certain priests are chosen to become bishops – all the way to cardinals. Obviously George Pell was not voted for by the Australian bishops in his appointment to the mother church of this nation. Rome stepped in. The treatment issued to Bishop Robinson when he published his book *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church* is another reason for my defection from

the church. Even the former Fr Paul Collins' decision to leave the MSC Fathers was a direct result of the psychological abuse of power by Rome.

Probably too, I've come to the conclusion that the orthodox belief as to why Jesus came to earth is more believable to me than the atonement theory by Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury in the 11th century. Thus another reason for defecting. An acquaintance of mine, an Australian Greek Orthodox, tells me there is no shortage of young men studying for the priesthood in his church. In fact, if a priest working in a parish is not married, people question his sexual tendency!

A further problem I have is the attitude of Rome towards the use of condoms to help prevent the spread of AIDS, especially in South Africa. Added to this is the attitude of the Church to artificial birth control.

When I entered the Convent at 18, I was the complete innocent regarding sexual behaviour. I understood the fundamentals relative to creating new life, but I'd no idea of emotional or physical needs associated with procreation. Believe me, I left religious life a much wiser woman, but was still a virgin on departure from the Convent!

Just as a further comment. Did you know that in the 1950s there were over 400 nuns in St Margaret's Psychiatric Hospital, Ryde? When I was stationed in Sydney, our convent housed some of those going into hospital and on their return. The poor Sisters had to wear lay-dress plus a headscarf to cover their shaved heads. This was to prevent scandal should any decide to 'climb over the wall!' I was terrified of the same happening to me!

Having written my reasons for my defection from the Catholic Church, it feels good!

Editor's Note:

One of ARC's concerns is that, while so many are leaving the church, most just simply disappear from the pews and rarely make the effort to tell church authorities why they are leaving. It would be helpful if those who have joined the ranks of so-called "Disaffected Catholics" could let us have accounts of their negative church experiences and their reasons for leaving. This anonymous response may inspire others to tell their stories.

CathNews 25.2.10:

A priest received a maximum of 18 months in jail for grooming and procuring a child under the age of 16, but was given a six-month parole period and six months off his sentence for an early guilty plea. (*The Australian*) He had told the court he masturbated "for my own personal sexual needs". In response, the judge said it must be agonising to be a Catholic priest. "I'm not a Catholic," Sydney District Court judge Allan Hughes was quoted as saying. "I do not regard (that) celibacy (should be) imposed on people. That is because it is a suppression of human instinct. It must be agonising. I don't know why they (the church) don't change their rules. It is archaic. It's cruel, cruel."

CathNews 12.3.10:

Celibacy remains important for the clergy, the Vatican has reaffirmed, after Austria's Archbishop Christoph Schoenborn reportedly suggested a link between celibacy and abuse and urged for an 'unflinching examination' of the possible reasons for paedophilia.

- ◆ "Priestly celibacy is a gift of the Holy Spirit which must be understood and experienced with a fullness of feeling and joy, in a total relationship with the Lord", Cardinal Claudio Hummes was quoted as saying by an AFP report on news.com.au.
- ◆ "This unique and privileged relationship with God makes the priest an authentic witness of a singular spiritual paternity", said Cardinal Hummes, who is the Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy.

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

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Please send material to:
The Editor ARCVoice
32 Awatea Road
ST IVES CHASE NSW 2075
OR (preferably) email: knowlden@optusnet.com.au
(NB: Change of email address)
Tel: 02 9449 7275 Fax 02 9449 5017

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ARC Secretariat

- Barbara Brannan** 02 9451 7130 barbarabrannan@mac.com
Rob Brian 02 9371 8519 rbrian@vtown.com.au
John Buggy Spokesperson 02 9451 8393 jbuggy@ozemail.com.au
Margaret Casey rsj 02 9651 1514 margaret.casey@hotmail.com
Alan Clague 07 3374 1889 clague@aapt.net.au
Margaret Knowlden Editor 02 9449 7275 knowlden@optusnet.com.au
Peter Meury 02 4390 9208 petermeury@bigpond.com
Denis Nickle 0417279354 kanoona@fastmail.com.au
John Shervington 02) 9349 1282 jshervington1@bigpond.com
Jim Taverne 02 9449 2923 jagota@ozemail.com.au

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4/1035 Pacific Highway, Pymble, New South Wales 2073