



# arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.  
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## Editorial

### Spiritual Power - BEWARE!

During the past year, we have experienced economic, social and political power ‘games’ some of which have reached almost ludicrous proportions. Alongside all these, are the many examples which give testimony to the prophetic words of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson: “Spiritual power is the most dangerous power of all”!

Some examples of this type of power have had headline status last year: “Women’s ordination among ‘most serious crimes’ – a crime against the faith”.<sup>2</sup> In July the visiting American priest-author Donald Cozzens highlighted, as cultural injustice, such things in the hierarchical Church as the ‘culture of secrecy’; the ‘culture of feudal loyalty’; the habitual ways in which ‘discretion’ is exercised negatively “so that the truths of a situation are not adequately confronted”.<sup>3</sup> Bishop Kevin Dowling of South Africa claimed in July that the principle of subsidiarity (on which so much of our Catholic Social Justice teaching is based) is being undermined by leadership in the Church “where the minutiae of Church life and praxis ‘at the lowest level’ are subject to examination and authentication being given at the ‘highest level’, in fact *the* highest level, e.g. the approval of liturgical language and texts; where one of the key Vatican II principles, collegiality in decision-making, is virtually non-existent”.<sup>4</sup>

The process of implementation of the new translation of the liturgical texts, I believe, will be one of the most significant issues of theology, faith, and justice to challenge us during 2011. Denial and complacency are no longer valid – serious reflection and responses are called for. It is a divisive issue of both real and symbolic importance. Certain things have been written and suggested about the theological and pastoral ramifications of the new translation; the rejection of the 1998 ICEL translation, which had been approved by Bishops’ Conferences, but rejected by the Congregation for Divine Worship; the use of archaic, hyperbolic and repetitive terminology; the use of exclusive language; the stress on prayer forms of separation, supplication to a God ‘beyond’; and so on.

I believe there are serious justice issues as well. Could this be a ‘distraction’ to divert attention from some of the serious moral, structural and leadership issues which face the Church? Theologically, Eucharist is the whole Body of Christ in action in

the world, unified and strengthened by our communal celebration and prayer. This new English translation does not seem compatible, therefore, with the definition of ‘Prayer’ given by Fr Richard Leonard SJ: “We don’t pray to God to change God’s mind. We pray that God might change us so that we might change the world”.<sup>5</sup>

“We were not consulted!” Is this just? This was one of the overwhelming criticisms from significant numbers of people (ordained and non-ordained) who responded to the survey conducted by WATAC and Catholics for Ministry.<sup>6</sup> Also, at this stage, no figures appear to have been published as to what the total costs of publication/distribution of the new texts might be. It is possible, however, that others might justifiably question us, as the People of God, as to what we really mean by our claim of a preferential option for the poor!!

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There are many challenges and many questions still to be asked about the serious issues which face us. While Geoffrey Robinson is correct about the danger of spiritual power, I recall an earlier statement by Joan Chittister that spiritual power, when it is directed towards service, is the strongest power of all. It is in this spirit of hope that we continue our mission to make the Kingdom of God a reality in our time and in our place.

*Rob Brian*

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*. [Melbourne: John Garrett, 2007], Introduction, p 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Cath.News*, 16 July 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Noel Debien, 'Mutinous rumblings among senior Australian Catholic Clergy' in ABC, *Religion and Ethics*, 16 July 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Kevin Dowling, 'Catholic social teaching finds Church leadership lacking', in *National Catholic Reporter*, 8 July 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Fr Richard Leonard, *Where the Hell is God?* 2010.

<sup>6</sup> *And So the People Said*, WATAC and Catholics for Ministry, 2010.

## Australian Catholicism - Facing Disaster?

Paul Collins

Most committed Catholics and those aware of what is happening in the church know that Australian Catholicism faces a crisis. When people focus on this crisis most tend to think of sexual abuse. In fact this is probably more a symptom than the actual core of what is happening. The real problem is leadership, or the lack of it, and the failure of the church to provide adequate pastoral ministry, let alone evangelisation and participation as Catholics in the wider community.

This is the overwhelming conclusion of Peter Wilkinson's detailed and careful study *Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster* just published by Catholics for Ministry and Women and the Australian Church. Wilkinson looks at everything connected with on-the-ground ministry in Australia and shows that parishes are failing for a complex of reasons to meet even the basic liturgical needs of parishioners, let alone the broad range of other challenges facing Catholicism. 'The crisis is real', he says, 'and the scale is huge'.

As well as issues like sexual abuse, episcopal cover-ups, lack of transparency, accountability and co-responsibility, the failure to implement the reforms of Vatican II, an inadequate theology of sexuality, clericalism, the blanket refusal to discuss optional celibacy and the ordination of women, the marginalisation of divorced and gay people and the failure to read well the signs of the times, Wilkinson says that church leadership has 'strayed from the core of the Jesus message and has put the interests of image, reputation and self-preservation ahead of the spiritual interests of the faithful entrusted to their care.'

He adds that 'it would be simplistic to measure the faith of Australian Catholics and the success or failure of parish ministry purely by rates of regular Mass attendance, which might perhaps be better read as ordinary Catholics

attempting to convey a message to their leaders about how they see their church.' In this context I actually think he overestimates the percentage of Catholics attending Mass. He puts it at 13.8% in 2006. Personally, in 2011 I think it is much lower – my guess is somewhere between 7% and 9% at best.

What Wilkinson has done in this unique and detailed survey is to substantiate the claims that many have made, but none before have adequately demonstrated. He shows for instance that one in four Australian parishes is now without a full-time priest, that very few new parishes have been established despite a rapidly increasing Catholic population, that 184 existing parishes have been merged since 1994, that there has been a catastrophic decline in the number of priests, that recruitment of seminarians is far below the number needed, that the average number of Catholics per parish has increased 25% in the last ten years (from an average of 3481 Catholics per parish in 2000 to 4368 in 2010), and that fewer students from poorer Catholic families are enrolled in Catholic schools.

Wilkinson has particularly put us in his debt by the material he has unearthed on the recruitment of overseas priests. This strategy (which Wilkinson says 'appears to have originated out of despair and desperation') has been in place now for over 20 years, but it has hardly ever been discussed in public (except in last year's ABC TV program *The Mission* on Nigerian priests in Hobart Archdiocese). Accurate statistics on foreign priests are particularly difficult to unearth and, as Wilkinson says, 'the few publicly stated objectives of the strategy are confusing'. It almost seems as if the bishops are ashamed of the whole business.

As a band-aid solution it simply puts off the inevitable question of asking why local vocations are scarce in the first place. He points out that if the bishops want to maintain an average of one priest for every 3600 Catholics nationwide then, given the number of local priests available, the majority of priests in parish ministry in Australia in 2020 (nine years from now) will have to be overseas born. The simple statistics are that the number of priests needed is 1780, the number of local priests available will be 800, which leaves a shortfall of 980 which

will have to be supplied by foreign priests. Local seminarians will not make up the shortfall. Wilkinson is not the first to argue this. Melbourne's Father Eric Hodgens has been arguing this for a decade now.

Wilkinson points out that there are some real problems involved in importing priests from other cultures. One is the mismatch between the 'missionary' or 'evangelical' ambitions of many of the foreign priests who see themselves as evangelizing the Australian church, and the pragmatic expectations of the bishops who simply see them as getting us through a tough period. 'If this mismatch is not resolved quickly', Wilkinson comments, 'the strategy could end in tears.'

He also shows that of the 205 diocesan seminarians, 38 are studying at the Neo-Catechumenal Way (NCW) seminaries in Perth and Sydney. While these will be incardinated into these archdioceses when ordained, they

actually only have to do two years work there before they go 'on mission' elsewhere in the world. So that means that there are really only 176 seminarians for the whole of the Australian church.

Another difficulty that Wilkinson doesn't canvass is that many of these foreign priests are inexperienced and come from cultures that are tribal and patriarchal. They have little or no comprehension of the kinds of faith challenges that face Catholics living in a secular, individualistic, consumerist culture that places a strong emphasis on equality, women's rights, and co-responsibility for parish ministry and mission.

Peter Wilkinson's *Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster?* is without doubt the most comprehensive survey of its kind ever undertaken. Not only is it a valuable source of statistics but it clearly sets out the issues confronting us as Australian Catholics.

*Catholic Parish Ministry in Australia: Facing Disaster?*

is available

at [www.catholicsforministry.com.au](http://www.catholicsforministry.com.au)

or a hard copy can be ordered for \$10 from

WATAC (Women & the Australian Church)

37/121 Anzac Avenue Engadine, 2233

email: [watac@watac.net](mailto:watac@watac.net)

## Priests lose faith in their church

**Leesha McKenny** *Sydney Morning Herald*

February 26, 2011

One priest said he learnt more about God from Alcoholics Anonymous meetings than the Catholic Church. Another compared the fervour of World Youth Day to the Hitler Youth. And a 47-year-old, whose only ambition had been to be a priest, said: 'Given the state of the church today, I look forward to the night when I go to sleep and just don't wake up again.' Such were the varied, often frank and sometimes bleak views of Australia's Catholic clergy revealed in an anonymous survey.

The Charles Sturt University academics Chris McGillion and John O'Carroll approached 1550 active and 160 retired priests for their views on their lives and their church, and 542 took part in the written survey. The results, plus 50 face-to-face interviews, were the basis of their book *Our Fathers*, which revealed that many thought the Vatican was out of touch, bishops were bad managers and the future of the church was a cause of great concern.

'You've got a very representative group of mainstream priests responding,' said Mr McGillion, a former *Herald* journalist. What emerged was a priesthood in a

professional crisis, rather than a vocational one, he said. While 90.2 per cent said their lives as priests had been fulfilling, 47.4 per cent found the workload 'excessive' and 54.3 per cent thought they had too little say in the life of the church. Only 35.4 per cent thought bishops were doing a good job, with one saying their performance was 'between poor and mediocre'. But 43 per cent did not feel nurtured by their bishop while 41.5 per cent did. Almost 65 per cent did not think Rome understood the challenges facing priests and 70.1 per cent thought it often failed to understand the nature of the Australian church. This schism was reflected in the respondents' views on church teachings. Only 19.2 per cent thought it sinful for married couples to use birth control. Almost 70 per cent thought abortion was always a sin but only 40.2 per cent said the same of sex before marriage. More than 70 per cent thought celibacy for priests should be optional and several priests made 'no secret of the fact they were in long-term committed relationships with women'.

Lay involvement was seen as the church's greatest internal challenge, with many acutely aware of – and affected by – dwindling attendances. The general secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Father Brian Lucas, would not comment on the survey, saying he had not seen the book.

A spokeswoman for the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, was given a copy this week but would not comment yet. □

# My Catholic Heart

Kerry Gonzales

I don't know if it has a sound, but I do know how it feels. My Catholic heart has finally broken. In fact I should stop even using a capital letter for *Catholic*. While still holding fast to my core beliefs and trying to live my life in a fragile and inept, but still Jesus-like way, I have been slowly distancing myself from the Catholic Church (old habits die hard). With every new utterance of our local leaders and every new scandal throughout the world, my identification with the Roman Catholic Church has become more and more distant and problematic. Yet I have still called myself Catholic. But not any more. Never again will I use that word as an identifier of who I am and what I believe in. I am still a believer, but I will never allow myself to be counted in any way as a member of the catholic church.

While I did not expect change to happen in my lifetime, I still held onto a small element of hope that the existing structures could not carry on indefinitely as they always have. Having taken myself out of the mix and having attempted to keep the outrage and despair at arm's length, I didn't think that there was much left in the church's arsenal that could surprise me and cause me such grief. However, having just read, *The case of the Pope: Vatican Accountability for Human Rights Abuse* by Geoffrey Robertson QC, I realise how deluded I had been. My 55 years of indoctrination within the catholic church were still lurking and consequently my catholic heart broke. The shame and outrage and sickness in the pit of my stomach told me that any hopes and dreams I might have still harboured for the church were best forgotten. No, not even forgotten, but expunged from the very core of my being. My life could go on as before, but never again in quite the same way and never again as a catholic.

Having said all that, I do still have enormous respect for those people, both clergy and laity, who for a variety of reasons still work within the catholic structures. They do wonderful work in the name of Jesus and I would not

like to lose this aspect of the church's ministry. I don't condemn the entire catholic church, but it is getting harder and harder to accept the arrogance and corruption that seem to be an integral part of the operations of the Holy See, without having that anger directed at targets closer to home. It is akin to being annoyed with the operator when you eventually get through to a real person, when they are as much a part of the system as you are, with neither being able to effect change up the line. The real and significant difference being that the bank, power company, etc., does not claim to own the moral high ground.

Geoffrey Robertson sets out in graphic detail how the catholic church has gained the power and influence (unjustifiably, he would claim) that it has in our modern world. It also details much about the sexual abuse scandals and how the Holy See has known and done little positive

about this problem for half a century. The church has actually done a lot in regard to the issue but this has mostly been negative for everyone but the church. Holding fast to Canon Law and its secrecy and moving paedophile priests both internally and off-shore has been the major response of the church over a long period. Putting itself beyond the law of all the nations in which it works has been the church's *modus operandi*. The only thing



Robertson shows the church to be good at, in regard to this issue, is trying to place the blame elsewhere, as any secular, consumerist, journalist, homosexual, etc., will know.

In lots of ways the book is a very heavy read. However, it is mostly the content that makes it so. Robertson has taken some very complex issues and presented them in a staccato format that enables bite-size chunks to be digested at a time. Robertson presents some very stark and startling facts and figures such as the fact that 90 priests have been convicted in Australia and that the Murphy Report in Ireland used the word 'endemic' for the molestation of boys in catholic institutions. In the US alone the compensation bill is closing on \$2 billion dollars, without legal fees, and is expected to run to \$5 billion dollars. This is only the tip of the iceberg, and given the church's ability to side step the legal process, the revelations in the book are only those to be found outside the secret vatican files.

The book's most chilling parts, however, are in the appendices where you find the deposition of an American Bishop in relation to a case brought against the church in Los Angeles for negligent supervision of paedophile priests. The Bishop's own words demonstrate unequivocally in what little regard the victims of clerical abuse were held by the church authorities. The other appendix shows official vatican documents, as late as 2010, that very clearly show that what the pope and others say in public is not what is to be followed in reality and in secret.

All of Geoffrey Robertson's revelations were enough to break my catholic heart. But for me, the most damning and heart-wrenching thing is that even in 2010 the catholic church is hiding behind secrecy, Canon Law and an inflated sense of its own worth to avoid taking a real, open and honest look at itself and its legacy. It seems it will take appeal, by some brave body, to the civil courts, to bring the church to account, and although I am convinced of the correctness of the arguments of Robertson, even he admits that it is not likely in the foreseeable future. How can anyone believe that the Holy

Spirit has been a part of the election of a man at the heart of the scandalous actions and deliberate oversights within the church? How can compassion and forgiveness be taken seriously by the faithful when they only relate to predator priests and not to the victims of these men? How can such evil and destructive practices be allowed to continue under the blind eyes of the rest of the world? How can...

I don't know how to answer these questions. All I know is that as of today I will not be a party to the problem. I will not acknowledge nor align myself with a body that will not put mandatory reporting of sexual abuse as a higher priority than the scandal that will ensue. I will not allow myself to be tainted by a hierarchy that has lost its way. I will live the best life that I can, but not as a catholic – sadly!

**KERRY GONZALES** has been a regular contributor to ARCvoice. We hope that she will continue to share her insights with us (albeit from the side lines).

## Another 'disaffected' Catholic

I have been considering not renewing my subscription for some time. While I appreciate the work ARC is doing, I find myself becoming so disaffected with the Catholic Church that I no longer want to be associated with it in any way, even in a reformed structure. Sadly, I believe it is beyond reform. Nothing that is happening by so many disparate and well-meaning attempts to change it appears to be reaching or affecting those in control. I now believe I no longer want to belong to any kind of institutionalised religious structure of any kind, however benevolent, because I now believe one cannot make such a structure without it becoming corrupted, if not in the initial stages, later in its development. I have come to the opinion that any religious structure/church is incompatible with the message of Jesus. In my view, Jesus worked at the grassroots/community level and structures do not do this. So-called home churches are attempts by people to find this kind of community and should they ever become formally organised they too will have within them the seeds of destruction, in my view.

I believe the message that Jesus intended to convey, that is, to love one's neighbour which I interpret as those one knows and meets in one's community has been corrupted, misinterpreted and misunderstood over time to serve particular interests, the first and chief corrupters being the founders of the Catholic Church. Other churches, to a greater or lesser degree, have followed suit.

I am surprised to find myself in my old age becoming a religious anarchist but disillusion leads me there. When I read your magazine I just become angry and depressed because I share the pain of those who belong to a church that has failed them and so many others so tragically. I now feel it is all a waste of time and effort by good people. I am tired of trying to beat down brick walls and instead, I now want to put my energy into activities that directly help those in need. I emphasise that my views are my own that I have come to and I would not want to try to convert others to them. That would undo all I have stated.

*Name withheld by request*

# ‘Don’t even think about it’ just isn’t working any more

Joan Chittister osb

National Catholic Reporter  
October 25, 2010

Change always happens one way or another. If it happens through the system, we call it evolution. If it happens despite the system, we call it revolution. The problem is that the spirit of revolution – that unguided burst of change so often triggered by frustration or despair – is in the air now, politically, economically and spiritually.

Almost half a century after the opening of the first session of the Second Vatican Council in October 1962, there is a new spirit in the church.

But the spirit that is rising in this church no longer pulses with the promise and energy of Vatican II. There is little sense of new possibilities now. The council’s mandate to welcome the fresh air of the Spirit has gone stale.

But not completely.

The echo of council documents still rings in those who have a living memory or an intuitive fear of what it was like to live in the shadow of the 16th-century Council of Trent. These are the people who experienced the clerical domination that shaped its definition, the medieval caste system that marked its identity, the authoritarianism that shaped its culture. These are the people who took Vatican II seriously. Its call to the laity “to make their needs known to their bishops” began to overflow into church renewal groups.

New life erupted everywhere.

For a while it looked as if things were really changing.

Laypeople took the kind of responsibility for the church that was reminiscent of early Christian communities: They became eucharistic ministers to the sick and elderly in the parish; they became hospital chaplains; they took responsibility for parish marriage courses and RCIA programs; they accepted positions on parish and diocesan boards; they became credentialed church ministers in what had once been exclusively clerical preserves.

An electrifying spirit bubbled up and overflowed in the wake of Vatican II. Renewal groups since then have been intent on making the council documents real. It seems that the list will never end: The *Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church* seeks to make the priest-lay relationship plain. *Call to Action* seeks to bring laity, religious

and clerics together to continue the discussion of renewal of the church. *Corpus*, an association of laicized priests, brings their willingness to minister to bear on the question of married priests. *Future-Church*, *Women-Church Convergence* and the *Women’s Ordination Conference* began to call for the expansion of the role of women in the church. *New Ways Ministry* and *Dignity* seek to bring the attention of the church to the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered Catholics; *Voice of the Faithful* emerged to enlarge the model of authority in the church; and *Priests for Equality* and *Elephants in the Living Room* call for the enlargement of roles for both women and men in the church.

And that’s not the whole list of them.

Of special importance to the history of these groups is that all of them set out to function within the rubrics of the church.

But the church, it seems, chose not to take any of them as seriously as the groups themselves took renewal.

They simply closed discussion. Correction: They couldn’t close it. They simply refused to be part of it.

The problem with that approach is that the longer an organization – any organization – ignores major internal questions, the more the pressure builds up within it. Like too much water against a dam for too long a time, the cement begins to crack. First, it’s only little cracks, hardly noticeable. Then, if nothing happens, the cracks get larger. Finally, there are more cracks in the dam than the dam can withstand.

For years now, small intentional communities have begun to develop around pressing questions to form their own opinions on them. And brave individuals rose up across the years, plagued by conscience and committed to the Gospel, to speak the unspeakable, louder and more clearly every time. For instance:

- Maryknoll Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder of *School of the Americas Watch*, which is one of the most effective groups in the country in the monitoring of the U.S. military’s teaching of torture tactics, spoke out in favor of the ordination of women. The church that took years to expel pedophile priests put Bourgeois out of the priesthood in four months.
- Fr. Michael Tegeder, pastor of St. Edward Parish in Bloomington, Minn., spoke out against the recent

Minneapolis-St. Paul arch-diocesan DVD campaign against committed same-sex relationships. As a result, Communion was denied to a group of students wearing buttons and sashes to protest that campaign at Archbishop John Nienstedt's Mass at St. John's Abbey.

- Sr Louvenagh Heffernan, an Irish Sister of Loreto, in the light of failing Mass attendance in Ireland and a shortage of priests there, spoke out in favor of the ordination of women.
- Jennifer Sleeman, a grandmother from Cork, Ireland, called "faithful women" to a one-day boycott of Sunday Mass to demonstrate to the church the importance of women while it denies the Eucharist to many because of the lack of male vocations to a celibate clergy.

And all the while, the waters of frustration and despair bubble and stir:

- Charity Sr. Louise Lears was placed under interdict and refused sacraments for attending the ordination of two Roman Catholic Womenpriests in November 2007.

- Charity Sister Louise Akers of Cincinnati was prevented from teaching or making any presentations in the archdiocese when she refused to publicly disassociate herself from the issue of women's ordination.

Women have begun to open their own seminaries and ordain their own priests. Priests for Equality published a non-sexist edition of the scriptures in the face of the Vatican's refusal to admit that God is speaking to all of us, not simply to men.

Even bishops from various parts of the world, and as a group in Asia, have called for the church to explore such questions in their own synods.

From where I stand, it looks as if "Don't even think about it" just isn't working anymore. It looks as if the dam is threatening to break. It looks as if Jesus is walking the road to Galilee again, raising women from the dead, curing the sick on the Sabbath, contesting with the scribes and Pharisees, calling for change so that the churchmen of that time would finally be true to the scriptures they teach.

It looks as if the church may have to choose whether it will foster evolution or risk revolution one more painfully unnecessary time. □

## The Roger Pryke Story TRAVELLER to FREEDOM

author: Francis Ravel Harvey

Publisher Freshwater Press

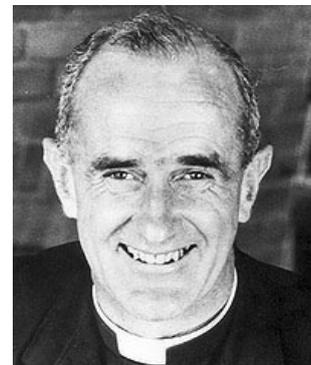
[www.freshwaterpress.com](http://www.freshwaterpress.com)

\$A49.95 (at this stage available from publisher)

**R**OGER PRYKE changed thousands of people's lives. Chaplain to Catholic students at Sydney University for a decade before the second Vatican Council (1962-65), he was an early exponent of the major themes that make up the Vatican II event. A historian tracing the Vatican II story in Australian Catholicism might profitably start with Roger Pryke.

Students influenced by him became a new type of Catholic. Previous generations had been wary of the university and its values. This generation learned to treasure university values and make them theirs. This experience would be written into one of the council's most significant documents but, before it was written, it was lived at the university.

Pryke's students, in small faculty-based groups, discussed the Bible before asking what God would want them to do about problems of university life. At weekend camps and summer schools they experienced worship, not as a duty, but as the prayer of a community. In personal counselling, the chaplain directed them to the new thinking then energising the Catholic world.



Roger Pryke  
1921-2009

Jack Callaghan has written:

Roger was of course chaplain at Sydney University for many years, as well as parish priest at Camperdown and then at Harbord. His Requiem was celebrated in the chapel of his old school, St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill.

He made a tremendous contribution to the Church of Vatican II, to the personal lives of countless students, and to the community generally through the peace movement and particularly the Anti-Vietnam War agitations.

*The Catholic Weekly* refused to take a paid advertisement for the book. How small-minded, petty and immature!

# HELL ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN

Chrissie Foster

(with Paul Kennedy)

A Bantam book - 2010

If ever proof was needed that the Catholic Church has to change, this heartrending book says it all. This is just one family who have lived through, and still live with, the insidious and far-reaching effects of clerical sexual abuse of children. How many other families have not had the courage to take on the Church to seek justice? How many other Catholic hearts have been broken?

Chrissie and Anthony Foster were like any other young family, raising their three daughters in suburban Melbourne with what they hoped were the right values. Chrissie could not have known that the stranger-danger she feared actually lurked in the presbytery attached to the girls' primary school. Father Kevin O'Donnell, a long-term paedophile, lived and worked there.

Two of their young daughters became victims of O'Donnell. And once the truth was revealed, the Fosters began a battle to find out how this could have happened. The Church offered silence, lies, denials and threats. Meanwhile their daughters tried to piece together their fractured lives.

This is the chilling true story that made national and international headlines. Chrissie Foster's heartbreaking account of her family's suffering, and their determination to stand up for themselves against the might of the Catholic Church, is testament to the strength of a mother's love, and the resilience of the human spirit.

Learn more at [Childwise.org](http://Childwise.org)  
 telephone: (03) 9645 8911  
 fax: (03) 9645 8922  
 email: [office@childwise.net](mailto:office@childwise.net)  
 freecall: 1800 99 10 99 within Australia

A heartbreaking, searing expose of the corruption at the heart of the Roman Catholic Church and a powerful testimony to the resilience and power of a mother's love. Chrissie's passionate commitment to her daughters and to the principles of truth and justice jump off every page. If the Pope wants to understand the true impact of clergy sexual abuse on all of its victims, he need only read this book.

Colm O'Gorman  
 author of *Beyond Belief*

Chrissie Foster's courageous and utterly devastating book, while intensely personal, is a wake-up call for us all. We can no longer collectively sit by as the crime of child sexual assault decimates our children, as systems of power perpetuate the victimisation, as lives are irreparably damaged, as faith is destroyed and morality mocked. Each child abuse statistic represents the imposed hell of stolen innocence and the lived horror of everyday families like Emma's and Katie's. Together we must protect our children, bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice and address the systems that perpetuate them.

Dr Cathy Kezelman  
 Chairperson  
 ASCA, Adults Surviving Child Abuse

This is an awful yet compelling story of the rape of children and the complicity of the church. Every journalist interviewing a senior member of the Catholic Church must now ask one question: 'Are you telling the truth, or are you using "mental reservation", trying to lie without lying?'. This is the extraordinary story of children raped by priests, and the organised behaviour of the church hierarchy to silence the helpless victims and intimidate their families. These children deserve a Royal Commission.

Professor Chris Goddard  
 Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia  
 Monash University

## Some Clerical Gaffes

Cardinal Pell was quoted in *The Age*. 'Speaking about Australia's high rate of youth suicide, Cardinal Pell blamed those who encouraged young people to pursue promiscuity, alcohol and drugs, saying these things were simply a hopeless "prison".'

[Chrissie's response: 'If Cardinal Pell cared to find out, he would have known promiscuity, alcohol and drugs were all major symptoms of sexual assault of children. In cases involving clergy, it was the paedophile priests condemning youth to living in prisons, both metaphorically and in reality, not to mention pushing many to suicide. The victims' rights group *Broken Rites* had stated it knew of at least twenty clergy sex abuse victims who had killed themselves to escape their silent suffering – paedophile priests were getting away with murder by way of their victims' suicides.']

Monsignor Cudmore (trying to soothe the parents' Manger): 'We didn't know the effect it [sexual abuse] would have on children?'

[Chrissie's response: 'Was this an admission that the Church hierarchy knew about child sexual assault, but didn't think it worth stopping because they didn't know the effect it would have? What about the fact that child rape and molestation were against the law? Criminal offences with jail terms attached...']



# Another Viewpoint

John Bunyan

As an Anglican, I too enjoy reading *ARCvoice* and appreciate the different views expressed, including those of Robert Funk of the *Jesus Seminar*. However, not all liberal Christians would share the Seminar's views and, with regard to the Gospels and the historic Jesus, some would see the Seminar as representative of a rather narrow form of liberal Christianity, not strongly supported by the best present Biblical scholarship. Indeed, I think American liberal Christianity in general often tends to pay little attention, for example, to more *positive* modern studies of Jesus and the Gospels, some Jewish ones such as those of Geza Vermes or David Flusser (his work now extended by R. Steven Notley in *The Sage from Galilee*, and some Christian ones such as those of E.P. Sanders.

In this respect the latest clear and very detailed work of a former Christian, Maurice Casey's magnum opus, *Jesus of Nazareth: An independent historian's account of his life and teaching*, deserves special attention.

Casey is very strongly critical of both conservative views and those of the Jesus Seminar. Unlike most who write on the New Testament, he has extensive knowledge of Aramaic and some of his conclusions are surprising. For example, he puts S. Mark's Gospel as early as AD 40, and argues that it is basically a translation, not always accurate, from the Aramaic, usually very close to the original events. Again and again Casey throws light on the Synoptic Gospels and their 1<sup>st</sup> century setting with, for example, a quite nuanced study of the relationship of Jesus to the Pharisees. The book has already been highly praised and, though New Testament scholars will be debating it for a long time, it challenges us to avoid simplistic generalisations about Our Lord. Roger Haight SJ (sadly no longer an official teacher in the eyes of Rome) and others have sought to make the Church's classical Christology intelligible for today but Casey compels us to consider to what extent that Christology is really based on the historic Jesus. Like Casey, Hans Kung in his fine but rather neglected work, *Christianity*, has suggested we

need to go back behind that Christology and that patristic paradigm.

May I make some more general points? Though inevitably something of an agnostic (1 Corinthians 13.12), I feel that reforming Catholics of any sort (including Anglicans) need to seek for deeper foundations for faith as far as that is possible, in the light of such studies as those I have referred to, and in the light of the ever-increasing though still always partial knowledge that science is bringing to us, for instance, in David Suzuki's *The Sacred Balance*.

Here we *can* learn something from Sir Lloyd Geering, for example, or Bishop Spong (that sounds condescending!), but I wonder how helpful is some 'non-theism' or even 'non realism', sometimes sounding a little intolerant of other views, and sometimes fairly far removed from ordinary Christians in or outside church.

Yet for the sake of the latter, we do need 'reforming' Catholics in the broadest sense – though not 'retreating' Catholics or 'Cheshire cat' Catholics. (I was disappointed, for instance, to find St Mary's-in-Exile in Brisbane unnecessarily so far removed from its roots.) We do need 'resisting Catholics' contending against authoritarianism and out-moded ways, and 're-visioned Catholics' such as the many European RC theologians who have recently called for urgent change in the Church, but I suggest we also need 'reconciling Catholics' who seek a broad middle ground, appreciating treasures old and new, and 'resurrected Catholics' whose faith and spirituality are being renewed, perhaps in ways pointed to by the Aquinas Academy or by some in the religious communities, and inspired by such faithful people as Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, Dr Paul Collins, and Hans Kung, already mentioned – for so long an inspiration to and a guide for Anglicans as well as many Roman Catholics and others. Again thank you for *ARCvoice* and for the encouragement its members and its activities can bring – not least to those many Sydney Anglicans who find themselves marginalised in an *at present* intolerant and puritan Diocese. □

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# A Poisoned Chalice?

Clem Boughton AO

ARC Member, Ross L Clifton, has been concerned about the use of the common chalice in the practice of Mass, and he sought the opinion of a consultant to the Division of Infectious Diseases at the University of NSW.

I have had a number of similar questions from many parishes, both Catholic and Anglican, in NSW, the ACT and Western Australia. Reasons for abolishing this undesirable practice are set out hereunder.

Those who wish to participate in this procedure during the practice of the Mass should be aware that it is not without microbiological risk. Human saliva may, on occasions, contain pathogenic organisms that can be acquired by direct transfer and initiate infection in the recipient.

**Viruses:** Herpes simplex; rhinoviruses, causes of the common cold of which there are more than 100 varieties; SARS virus, a coronavirus (potentially lethal); mumps; measles; varicella; HIV; hepatitis B; poliovirus and other enteroviruses; norovirus (an easily caught infection causing acute gastroenteritis); influenza viruses including swine flu and avian flu (potentially lethal).

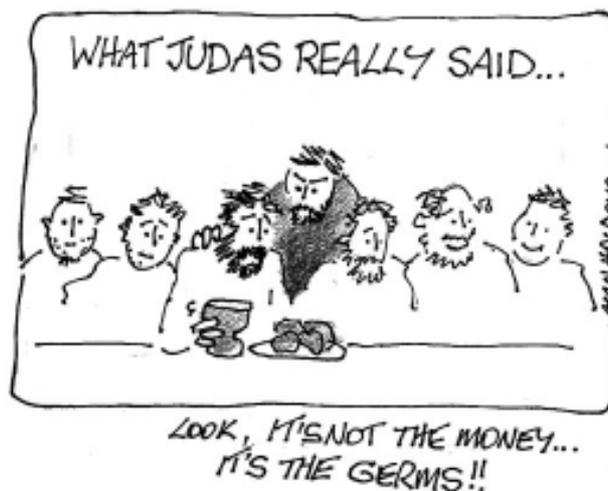
**Bacteria:** Haemolytic streptococcus; Staphylococcus aureus; diphtheria; tuberculosis; syphilis (the secondary form is highly catching); mixed organisms causing pyrrhoea etc.

The presence of any of the above can be verified by appropriate laboratory testing.

The ceremonial wiping by the priest of the rim and interior of the chalice between supplicants is not sufficient to safely remove organisms. It may be objected that no double blind controlled studies have shown the spread of infection from the chalice as vector; a moment's thought will show that such a study

is virtually impossible. There are many possible sources from which infections can be acquired in everyday life, and these cannot be identified or controlled for experimentally.

Consider: you are just seated in a restaurant and the waiter, noticing no wine glasses on your table, picks up used glasses from the next table, wipes them with his serviette and places them in front of you and your guests. Your response?



Public Health regulations expressly forbid such a practice. All used utensils must be physically cleaned and washed for a full wash cycle at more than 70°. To comply with the law, the same should apply to the common chalice. Many churches provide each participant with a small individual glass for the sacramental wine. This avoids the risks noted above.

Some parishioners may wish to share the Cup, as told in the Gospels for the Last Supper. But at that time there was no knowledge concerning microbiological hazards. We cannot rely on divine intervention to protect us! If we ignore this information, many people are being put at unnecessary risk.

*Clem Boughton AO  
Consultant Emeritus,  
Division of Infectious Diseases  
University of NSW*

# Jesus – Better Known and Bible – Better Read

Revealing a Jesus We Hardly Knew  
and a Bible We Have Hardly  
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A Regional Conference with  
members of  
the Jesus Seminar

Beecroft Community Centre  
Corner Beecroft & Copeland Roads,  
Beecroft

Saturday 19th March, 2011

9 am – 4.30 pm

Speakers:

Professor Sir Lloyd Geering

Rev. Dr. Greg Jenks

Lloyd Geering has been a champion of progressive religious thought outside the traditional institutions and is a member of The Sea of Faith. He was tried for heresy (and exonerated!!) by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in the 1960's.

Greg Jenks, on the other hand is interested in the application of progressive scholarship to the practice of local Christian faith communities. He is Academic Dean at St Francis Theological College, Brisbane, and teaches Biblical Studies in the CSU School of Theology.

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# The Gospels: The Divinely Inspired Word of God?

## THE FIVE GOSPELS

What did Jesus really say?

## THE ACTS OF JESUS

What did Jesus really do?

Robert Funk and *The Jesus Seminar*  
HarperCollins, 1998

These two books challenged us to re-examine age-old certainties and look at the questions:

- did Jesus claim to be the Messiah?
- did he promise to return and usher in a new age?
- how did Jesus envision the kingdom of God?
- did he commission his disciples to convert the world and establish a church?

According to scholars of *The Jesus Seminar*:

- Jesus of Nazareth was born during the reign of Herod the Great;
- his mother's name was Mary, and he had a human father whose name may not have been Joseph;
- Jesus was born in Nazareth, not in Bethlehem;
- Jesus was an itinerant sage who shared meals with social outcasts;
- Jesus practised healing without the use of ancient medicine or magic, relieving afflictions we now consider psychosomatic;
- he did not walk on water, feed the multitude with loaves and fishes, change water into wine, or raise Lazarus from the dead;
- Jesus was arrested in Jerusalem and crucified by the Romans;
- he was executed as a public nuisance, not for claiming to be the Son of God;
- the empty tomb is a fiction – Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead;
- belief in the resurrection is based on the visionary experience of Peter, Paul and Mary.

All the sayings and acts attributed to Jesus were colour-coded by the scholars and presented in a completely new translation of the Greek and Coptic texts. In the judgment of *The Jesus Seminar*:

- only those sayings that appear in **red** type are considered by the Seminar to be close to what Jesus actually said;
- the words in **pink** less certainly originated with Jesus;
- the words in **grey** are not his, although they contain ideas that are close to his own;
- the sayings that appear in **black** have been embellished or created by his followers, or borrowed from common lore.

According to the Seminar, **no more than 18% of the sayings** attributed to Jesus were uttered by him and **no more than 16% of the acts** recorded occurred with him as the main actor.

## 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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