



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.
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Editorial

Reform is the buzzword being bantered around the Vatican, from the Pope down. But knowing how slowly the wheels of Catholicism turn, and how determined the Curia will be to hold onto its power, it would be unwise to expect an overnight conversion from their rigid medieval mindset. Never having felt the need for reform, how will they go about it?

To begin with, it is hoped that they will consult the experts! But 'fear of losing face' is a powerful deterrent and one which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith would be careful to avoid. A pity! Having systematically banned all works of a visionary nature and, in effect, 'killed all the messengers', they can hardly now eat humble pie and admit they were wrong!

Ever since Vatican II, there has been an outpouring of excellent publications by theologians of high standing, all suggesting changes to entrenched Catholic beliefs and practices. These all offer sensible proposals for bringing the Church up to the 21st Century, providing perfect blueprints for the reform process. But these theologians have all been treated harshly by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, threatened with excommunication, forbidden to preach or teach, and their books condemned.

There have also been innumerable reform movements and lay organisations clamouring for change, whose petitions have been ignored by the Vatican.

In Australia, Paul Collins and Michael Morwood were victims of the CDF's malicious attacks on their publications and both have since left the priesthood. Freed from Papal displeasure, they continue to inspire many Catholics by speaking the truth. As we know, Bishop William Morris lost his job for daring to even suggest discussion about the ordination of women and, recently, Greg Reynolds has been excommunicated because of his views on the same subject. ARC has twice been the target of Cardinal George Pell's interference in our choice of conference venues. The word 'Reform' appears to be an *anathema* to him.

Can we save the Catholic Church? It is the question Hans Küng asks and answers in his new book (see review p.13). Taking a medical view of the institutional church, Küng diagnoses a disease akin to Osteoporosis where the whole structure will collapse unless concrete therapeutic measures are applied. He puts forward a 'detailed, comprehensive rescue plan for the gravely ill Church' and makes radical proposals for its rehabilitation.

However, it is doubtful whether this wise publication will ever become compulsory bedtime reading for members of the Curia!

Margaret Knowlden
Editor

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Reform Groups Prepare for the Synod on the Family

As mentioned in the previous issue of *ARCvoice*, Pope Francis has called for a Synod on the Family to take place in October this year. Questionnaires have been sent from Rome to all parts of the world to obtain feedback from people in parishes about issues related to this subject. Some of you may have filled in the survey, the results of which have been compiled by the Australian Bishops Conference and will be sent to Rome confidentially.

Not only has the format of the survey been criticised widely for not asking the more pertinent questions but the secrecy in keeping the results away from the faithful is most disappointing. The bishops from several countries, especially the German bishops, have published the results from their countries (see article this issue) and they show a significant non-acceptance of the Church's teaching on sexual matters. The call for reform in this aspect of Church teaching is now steadily growing.

Through our association with Catholic Church Reform I have been engaged in teleconference meetings as a member of the advisory group that is made up of representatives from reform groups in England, USA, Ireland, Canada, Germany, Spain, India and Australia. We have set ourselves the task of attempting to influence the Synod in October by preparing Position Papers on the critical topics that the Synod should address. These will be prepared, with the assistance of some experts, over the next few months and the media will be engaged in several countries to pick up on what is written. Coupled with this, groups of Catholics across these countries will be invited to meet and discuss the content of the papers, add their perspectives and experience, and the papers will be refined and co-ordinated into a truly international presentation to the Synod. When the papers are prepared we may organise some gatherings ourselves in Australia so that you can contribute to this initiative. Those who are interested and can do so will be invited to apply to come to a gathering in Rome just prior to the Synod and to be a living presence of the concerns that should be expressed. This international gathering will be called 'Forum on the Family: Listening to the Faithful'. Preparation and the logistics for this are now getting under way.

The International movement 'We are Church' is currently calling for the full speech on the topic of 'family' that Cardinal Walter Kasper gave to the College of Cardinals recently. Pope Francis apparently called his remarks 'profound theology' and 'clear thinking', but it appears that the Vatican is reluctant to make his speech public, most likely because it would differ from the view of the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Cardinal Ludwig Müller. The more the Vatican attempts to keep progressive thought under wraps, the more there will be organised calls upon it to engage in the transparency that Pope Francis is espousing.

People in the Church who have longed for reform and renewal are finding new hope in the direction that Pope Francis is now taking us, but there is significant resistance within the hierarchical structure. As members of Australian Reforming Catholics we have all believed that we should speak out whenever we can since it is 'our Church'. Hopefully, the time to be heard is about to arrive.

John Buggy

German Bishops' response to Vatican survey

(Reuters)

Germany's Catholic bishops, responding to a worldwide Vatican survey, said on Monday that many Church teachings on sexual morality were either unknown to the faithful there or rejected as unrealistic and heartless.

They said the survey, drawn up for a synod on possible reforms in October, showed most German Catholics disputed Church bans on birth control and premarital or gay sex and criticized rules barring the divorced from remarriage in church.

The results will not be news to many Catholics, especially in affluent Western countries, but the blunt official admission of this wide gap between policy and practice is uncommon and bound to raise pressure on Pope Francis to introduce reforms.

Bishops in Germany, one of the richest and most influential national churches in the 1.2-billion-strong Catholic world, have been pressing the Vatican to reform, especially over divorce.

A statement from the German bishops conference called the results 'a sober inventory of what German Catholics appreciate about Church teaching on marriage and the family and what they find off-putting or unacceptable, either mostly or completely'.

Since his election last March, Pope Francis has hinted at possible reform on divorce and at a more welcoming approach to homosexuals. But he has stressed he does not want to change core Church teachings such as the ban on women priests.

WIDESPREAD REJECTION

The bishops' report said many Germans still respect the Church's ideal of stable marriages and a happy family life.

'The Church's statements on premarital sexual relations, homosexuality, on those divorced and remarried, and on birth control, by contrast, are virtually never accepted, or are expressly rejected in the vast majority of cases,' it said.

'Almost all couples who wish to marry in church have already been living together,' it said. Less than three percent of Catholic couples, it said, use the rhythm

method of birth control favored by the Church rather than the pill, condom or other methods.

While almost all German Catholics approved artificial birth control, the 'vast majority are against abortion', it added.

There was a 'marked tendency' among Catholics to accept legal recognition of same-sex unions as 'a commandment of justice' and they felt the Church should bless them, the report said, although most did not want gay marriage to be legalized.

The report said many Germans cannot understand the rule that divorced Catholics cannot remarry in church and must be denied the sacraments if they opt for a civil ceremony.

Especially faithful churchgoers in this situation see this as 'unjustified discrimination and ... merciless,' it said.

ADVISORY ETHICS

Pope Francis has suggested the Church wants to show mercy towards divorced Catholics and might ease the rules, taking an example from the Orthodox churches that allow remarriage.

The report said divorced and remarried couples have 'become a normal part of pastoral reality in Germany' but gave no figures. In the United States, an estimated 4.5 million of nearly 30 million married Catholics are divorced and remarried.

The German bishops suggested the Church should move away from what it called its 'prohibition ethics' of rules against certain acts or views and stress 'advisory ethics' meant to help Catholics live better lives.

In sexual morality, it should find a way of presenting its views that does not make people feel it is hostile to sex.

The report further said the Vatican should 'take married couples and families seriously' and actively involve them in preparing the synod due to discuss possible reforms in October. □

The latest from Pope Francis on women

Maureen Fiedler

NCR Today Nov. 27, 2013

I really like Pope Francis in so many ways. He seems personable, friendly, truly human, a man who experiences life with joy. I love his simpler lifestyle, his emphasis on the poor of the world and his preaching of social justice and peace as cornerstones of the Gospel message.

But when it comes to women, I want to cry. He just doesn't seem to get it. He tries to be nice, to be complimentary and understanding. But in almost every phrase, he seems to think of women as a different species of human.

His latest document, *Evangelii Gaudium*, is no exception. He talks about women's 'sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess'. He mentions 'the special concern which women show to others, which finds a particular, even if not exclusive, expression in motherhood'. In another sentence, he talks about the 'feminine genius'. Women may be socialized into many of these roles and qualities, but we don't have a corner on them. I have known lots of men who are sensitive, intuitive and show a special concern for others. Francis himself demonstrates many of those qualities.

But there are many qualities women and men also share that he does not mention: intelligence, organizing abilities, leadership skills, political savvy, physical prowess. These attributes are women's as much as they are men's.

But Francis' words read as if he thinks women are somehow a different species. They are the creatures with 'soft' qualities, not the qualities stereotypically attributed to males.

The real problem is that these sentiments, together with some strange theology, seem to be the basis for his rejection of any discussion of women's ordination. On this score, he says, 'The reservation of the priesthood to males, as a sign of Christ the Spouse who gives himself in the Eucharist, is not a question open to discussion'.

This seems to be a new way of saying that because Jesus was male, the priest must be male. That argument has been answered so many times, it seems redundant to say it. But 'imaging Jesus' is not a question of gender. To make the maleness of Jesus a controlling element in imaging him is to confuse Jesus' maleness, which is incidental, with his humanity, which is fundamental to his redemptive role. And the spousal imagery is just that: imagery. Moreover, to say that only males may image Jesus sacralizes masculinity.

Pope Francis does have a noteworthy point on one thing: The priesthood is for service, not for power. Too often, these are entangled and confused.

But that does not erase his antiquated view of women, nor does it reform his theology of the priesthood. Until that happens, many of his other worthy goals – especially attracting young people to the church – will remain beyond his reach. □



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Traumatised Catholics

Claire Rawnsley

In this reflection I raise the problem of what I call, 'traumatised Catholics'; the background and cause that has given rise to the spiritual traumatising of Catholics, and the need to identify this problem if the laity is going to make a serious contribution to the church, their own spiritual life and that of others. It was my encounter with parish study groups that helped me to understand what I call the 'Catholic mind'. I discovered that those who have been brought up as 'cradle Catholics' have very different perceptions of their faith from those who come to the Catholic faith as adults. What became evident, in the case of some cradle Catholics, appeared to be a deep abiding fear to an exaggerated extent, where there is the sense of loss of heaven, committing sin and fear of God. As a result of this fear many Catholics are deeply psychologically traumatised. As far as I know this problem has not been identified as a 'traumatisation of the spiritual life', yet the effects of such traumatisation are manifested in many ways. Some examples are concern about the problem of hell, going to purgatory, carrying out actions in order to earn God's favour and thence being assured of going to heaven, after eventually passing through the inevitable Purgatory.

The following reflection presents my experience with some of these 'traumatised Catholics', and then I consider the background and cause that has given rise to this traumatisation. It is important to identify this problem if the laity is going to make a significant contribution to their own spiritual life and that of others. Further, it is not possible for the heart of the Christian message to grow if persons are spiritually traumatised.

On the one hand, the Church upholds the dignity of human persons and their relation to the Gospel as stated in the Document, *The Church in the Modern World*: 'For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence the pivotal point of our total presentation will be man [woman] himself [herself], whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.' (2009:126). However, there is in reality little work done to actually nourish spiritually the laity that make up most of the Church. Certainly there is awareness to assist those socially and politically oppressed, but there is little recognition that the institutional Church herself has contributed to the spiritual oppression of her members. Although there are many movements and causes available to nourish the spiritual life of the faithful, that is, if they have the time and money to be able to attend these courses, yet

at the same time there is little recognition that many, especially older Catholics have been traumatised by their early religious experience. Many of these older Catholics see their religion as just attending Sunday mass and assisting the church financially. Generally, most Catholics whether rich, poor, educated or not have little interest in what is called 'the spiritual life'. Generally, this is considered as something irrelevant to

their everyday world. Yet, the substance of the Council Documents proposed a spiritual renewal for the laity, as well as other members of the Church. The focus here is on the laity, but one cannot help observing that the same problem to some extent afflicts the hierarchy and religious as well.

First, why the term 'traumatisation'? And secondly, in what way does this experience affect the whole person and in particular the spiritual life? A definition for 'trauma' is explained as an 'emotional shock producing a lasting harmful effect'. I would concur with this definition, because spiritually, many Catholics have indeed received an 'emotional shock' and, this psychological factor has been an ever-present reality to them for many decades, 40-50 years or more. In fact, at each Mission renewal these same fears would be



renewed and, with few exceptions, would reinforce the religious experience that had been received as children and endured into adult life.

In my experience as co-coordinator of small groups I realised the depth of the problem. Many Catholics had very little knowledge of the substance of their faith. Yet, at the same time, these people were excellent Catholics; in fact, I would call them 'the salt of the earth'. Their conscience, yes they had a conscience, was very sensitive to the rights and wrongs and they keenly strove to keep the laws of the Church in all ways. However, underlying their faith was a deep-seated fear of God, fear of death and failure to be able to carry out all that is required of them. This psychological negativity was the driving force that pervaded their religious and spiritual lives.

One encounter I had was when I was coordinating a group some years ago, and a professional woman commented how the course had helped her overcome many fears and problems with her faith. I found the comment illuminating, because I assumed that someone with a good education would have been able to dispel many of those childhood fears. Yet, since that time, my experience with similar groups and other people I have encountered, is that there is present the same underlying fear arising from what was taught at school, fears that have stayed with them throughout their adult spiritual lives.

Now, I realise that there is a historical reason. Most of these older Catholics attribute the knowledge of their faith to what they learnt at school, and here we are talking 40-50 years or more ago. They were educated in their faith by the Sisters and Brothers and whatever they learnt would have come from this source. Yet the problem does not rest there, because the understanding of the faith of these Religious was of course drawn from a similar source. Those who went on to become religious and priests have perpetuated the same negative experience of their faith. Very few have managed to break away from this early experience of their faith, comprehending spirituality in a literal fashion – anything to do with fire, hell and purgatory etc. (Perhaps Dante of course has had a big contribution to this problem!)

In the larger picture, other reasons can be found as to why this state of affairs exists. One of the major causes was the defensive attitude the Church took by regarding the mass of people as illiterate, and hence a watered-down version of their faith was imparted. Another important cause was that religious education was taught almost in a fundamentalist manner – spiked with fear of God, hell and so on. Thirdly, the same teaching was perpetuated by the family and by those in religious life, and in the end the heart of Christian faith was never explained because, as I would argue, no one knew what it really was.



If this analysis is correct, then that explains to some extent the incredible confusion that arose after Vatican II. In fact, what occurred then, looking back, was almost inevitable. How could people who had so little spiritual substance understand the new theology, liturgy and discourse set out in the Council documents? Even Bishops and priests who had had a similar experience of their faith had also never really explored their own spiritual life in any depth. They may have possessed great knowledge of canon law, moral theology and doctrine, but the spiritual life passed them by, even though there were many

tomes containing great descriptions of what the spiritual life consists of, but perhaps lost in over-learned expositions.

Historically, there are many causes for this state of affairs which have been set out by others in more detail, but some aspects I refer to here are: First, the problem of modernism as perceived by Pius X, and then, further back historically, the defensive approach taken by the Church against the Protestant Reformation. As a defence against new ideas the Church built up walls and bulwarks to protect the illiterate faithful, which most Catholics were at that time. Secondly, freedom of debate and questioning has never been a present reality in the Church, as many current examples come to light. Even well-known theologians have to look over their shoulder, restricting their creative work. Those courageous thinkers who attempt to blaze a trail are often seriously criticised and curtailed, stifling the creative work of the

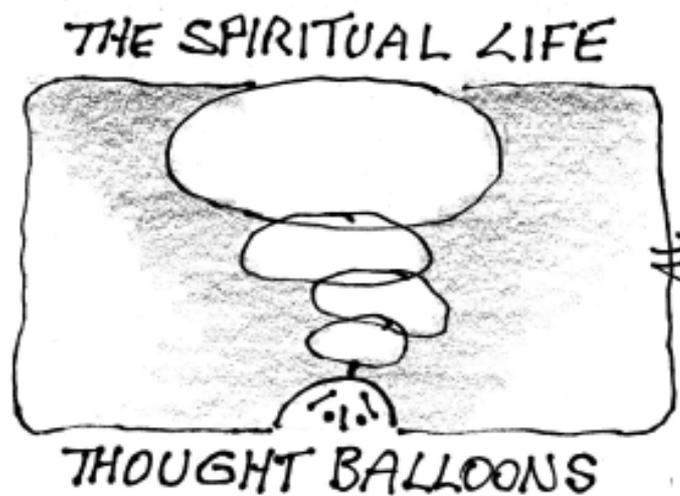
Spirit in the Church. As a result, in the midst of such an intensely constraining atmosphere, it seems difficult for the spiritual life to flourish.

The other problem was that Catholics were not encouraged to read the Scriptures, certainly not during their schooling, and those who taught them had little familiarity with the Scriptures as well. As a result, this important source of inspiration and hope was effectively denied to both 'the sheep and the shepherd'. Instead, the emphasis was on a dogmatic approach that was black and white, reducing the Gospel message to what one should do or not do and that was that. Homilies involved anecdotes with a brief moral reference to the Gospel, but rarely was a homily peppered with references to the Word of God, something very different from the sermons of someone such as Ronald Knox whose whole homilies are littered with references to Scripture.

So far I have been tracing the source of the problem and suggest with few exceptions that this is the state of affairs for many older Catholics. What has been presented may appear as a severe criticism of the Catholic Church as experienced by 'cradle Catholics'. Yet, this is not a criticism of the people themselves; rather one of the things that is constantly astounding is the very goodness and generosity of these Catholics and how they have managed to keep going on what I call, 'an engine with one cylinder when they should have an engine with six cylinders'; in spite of the fact that the Church for two thousand years has possessed riches and treasures of theology and spirituality that have never been imparted to them. These treasures have been closed to Catholics in general and yet the same people have persevered with deep faith. These good people, the silent majority, who have provided money for the churches and all the good works carried out by the church, still manage to stay in their church. Though for many of these Catholics there is present this deep-seated problem that has never been addressed. These people are traumatised by the very faith that should bring them peace, joy and hope in the new life in Christ.

Catholic people deal with this problem in different ways. In the end some will leave the Church because

they feel that what they have been taught is so bizarre – and I have encountered many here. Others laugh at what these fears were to them and cast off the faith as something superstitious and glad to be rid of. However, at the same time, many of these same people want the Church to be present at their weddings, the baptism of their children, funerals or at their deathbed. On the other hand, others leave the faith entirely and take up important causes such as care for the environment, human rights, political and social activities carrying out the good works such as they were taught at school but in broader arenas. It is interesting to observe that some of the most courageous, bravest and dedicated people in these fields were once Catholics. Whereas there are others who choose to remain in the Church, and accept what they are told with a grain of salt, but still want to keep a foot in the door. Many of these Catholics keep to their Sunday Mass and carry on because it fulfils a desire to worship in a community and fulfils their deepest needs.



So far I have described the state of older Catholics' experience as I see it in the Church today. To remedy the situation there should be a return to the Good News as Jesus gave it to us. Sometimes this is called the *kerygma* and consists in living the Paschal Mystery. By grace and Baptism, Christians have become 'a new creation in Christ' (Ephesians). What must be stressed here is that none of

this is new; in fact it has been part of the Church's heritage for two thousand years but has never been presented in a meaningful way.

One important dimension of spirituality is to recognise the power we have as baptised Christians to offer the Eucharist, that is, we are with Christ in His offering to the Father in the Holy Spirit. We need to realise what power a baptised, confirmed Christian has – because the priesthood belongs to all the baptised. It is not exclusive to the ordained priest and I suggest that this is where the difficulty lies, because so much emphasis has gone onto the function of the ordained priest that the wonder of joining in the offering of the Eucharist as a baptised Christian is lost on the faithful. Attendance at Mass should be a conscious participation of all the faithful; the priest is the leader with the people

and should never be seen apart from the community. However, the heavy emphasis on the meaning of ordination has had the effect of stifling the priesthood of all the faithful, and not promoting the realisation of the great gift God has given us in Baptism. There is a need to encourage the laity to see that we all share this great gift and realise the power we have in Christ and joining with Christ to pray for the whole world to share in the life in Christ. As the Document: *Constitution on the Church* states:

... established as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people...who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God (1 Pet 2:9-10). [*Constitution on the Church*, 2009: 24]

And

Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men (cf. Heb.5:1-5) made the new people a kingdom and priests to God the Father (Apoc.1:6;cf 5:9-10). The baptised, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His own marvellous light (cf. I Pet.2:4-10). Therefore all the disciples of Christ persevering in prayer and praising God (cf. Acts 2:42-47), should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (cf. Rom.12:1). Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give

answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them (1 Pet. 3:15).

... the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ....

... the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood join in the offering of the Eucharist they likewise exercise that priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, by self-denial and active charity. (*Constitution on the Church*, 2009: 25-26)

I conclude with this reflection on traumatised Catholics with a thought from the Australian poet, Vincent Buckley [1925-1988]. He wrote:

In the harsh continent, the dulled society, the terrors which many of us nursed in our childhood had to do with Catholicism; but so did overwhelming hope. The vividness and grandeur of that religion have imprinted my childhood on me forever (V. Buckley, 1983 *Cutting Green Hay*, p. xi).

As Buckley reminisces, there were childhood 'terrors', but at the same time there is the vividness and grandeur of religion and so for all people there is still an overwhelming hope in the mystery of the Church and in a God, bigger than us. □

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The Extraordinary Synod on the Family 2014

Extract from Summary of Survey completed by WATAC
(Women and the Australian Church)

Significant Issues of Concern

(reprinted with permission from WATAC)

The last section of the survey invited respondents to name up to three issues of concern to them. While 10% did not add further issues, 70% nominated two or three and often wrote passionately about their particular concerns. Lack of opportunity for discussion within the Church was named as one of the main reasons the Institution is ignorant of what are relevant to its laity. Some of the issues most often mentioned are listed below and the first two were named by the majority of respondents:

1. The Role of Women in the Church
2. Divorced and Re-married Catholics
3. The need for an Inclusive, Open Church – a New Model of Church
4. The Primacy of Conscience
5. A Change in the Church's Attitude to Homosexuality
6. Sexual Abuse and the Church

1. The Role of Women in the Church

There were many concerns people expressed about this subject and they included:

- “Half the Curial positions could be filled by women. The dreams of Vatican II are fading fast and the disgrace of the Church is much louder than its message of Christ, ‘the Bringer of Life’ (*Gaudium et Spes*). It is necessary to turn the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith into Facilitators not Gatekeepers.”
- “Women theologians should be acknowledged not marginalised.” One respondent named as an example the treatment of the US Women Religious.
- “Discrimination against women and homosexuals in the Church is at odds with the message of Jesus Christ.”
- “The place of Women in the Church cannot, I believe, be left unattended – if the Church does not allow for the ordination of women it will become more and more irrelevant, and looks more and more like an exclusive, male-dominated club.”
- Women are disillusioned by not being allowed to participate fully in the Church. It is an insult to their intelligence.
- Church itself is diminished by its exclusion of women and their potential.

- “Within the family, children should be taught to recognise and value the importance of women in all roles, including their place in the Church ...”
- In the proposed ‘Synod on the Family’ unless women take part in equal numbers and have equal voting rights as the male participants, I do not think any new teaching will have much effect nor change anything.”
- The Church needs women and married males and females as soon as possible through the ranks up to Bishops and Cardinals or in the Western World it will be seen as an irrelevant medieval institution ... and as such cannot make credible pronouncements on sexuality, and realistic family life.”
- Women are not subordinate but created equal and “should be given full recognition” in the Church.

(There are many more comments on this topic but these capture the overall concerns of the writers.)

2. Divorced and Re-married Catholics

This issue was mentioned by most respondents and all named their total acceptance of those involved being included in all aspects of the Church's community life. Examples of this attitude include:

- “Divorce should not be seen as a complete break with God's love and an impediment to receiving Eucharist.”
- “There should not be a requirement to have a previous marriage annulled before re-marrying – the fact of separation for a period constitutes the end of the previous marriage.” This concern about ‘annulment’ was often repeated and no one ever expressed acceptance of annulment, as a process.
- It is important to remember that Divorce is very often the result of abuse (physical and/or psychological), infidelity, alcoholism, and so the Church's seeming punitive response is not appropriate. Pastoral care is needed.
- “Church needs to become more inclusive and welcome all relationships, so that no one feels discriminated against ... Church should be a loving home and refuge ...”
- A worrying example of this is the Church's attitude to IVF.
- “Divorce and Re-marriage is as common among Catholics as in the rest of the community.”

3. The need for an Inclusive, Open Church – a New Model of Church

Throughout the Survey, this issue was nominated many times by the vast majority of those who responded; some wrote very hopefully, some with real urgency, and a smaller number almost despairingly. To capture these concerns here are some typical replies:

- “The Church needs to meet people where they are at and the time in which they live. They need to get back to the ‘Jesus’ message to love unconditionally and to care for those they can.”
- “The Church needs to look at its own structures and teachings before it can address ‘Family Life.’” A sad example of this is the excommunication of a Catholic Priest who disagrees with a particular teaching. “These priests are usually outstanding men who practice Christian principles.”
- “If the Church does not provide a pastoral voice which is totally inclusive then the message of Jesus will be lost.”
- “There is too much emphasis on trite rules In our Church.” This comment was often repeated in various ways.
- “The Pope wants the clerics to become more involved with the people. As long as we have a priestly caste who consider they are above reproach there will be no progress in reforming the Catholic Church.”

Some people wrote of their concern at the decreasing number of people attending Mass regularly and especially the young. “Is the ‘new’ translation of the Mass in any way responsible?”, a few asked. Others questioned if the people’s needs were being considered by the Church in terms of prayer, hymns, etc. One woman wrote: “However can the Church (and all of us) help people to find the deep meaning of the Eucharist and the worshipping family?”

One writer claimed that Catholics need to give up the idea that they are “special” and it’s time to take seriously “the ecumenism of Vatican II teaching” and “let the holiness of all people be acknowledged” whether they be Buddhist, Orthodox, Jewish or indeed any of the various denominations.

4. The Primacy of Conscience

This issue was mentioned many, many times, usually in conjunction with other significant issues such as Contraception and the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*; Divorce and Re-marriage and the reception of Eucharist; as also issues of Homosexuality and Same-Sex marriage. Many also wrote of the reality of the different types of families functioning in our society and Church today: single parent families, co-habiting

partners often with children of former marriages, same-sex couples and their children, and so on. While people have made their informed, responsible decisions the Church often does not approve. A worrying example of this is the Church’s attitude to IVF.

All respondents agreed that the doctrine of the primacy of Conscience is a key issue in our post-Vatican II Church. As one writer succinctly expressed it: “Our Church must have faith in the ‘People of God’ and the ‘Spirit of Jesus’ alive in individuals.” Vatican II proclaimed the primacy of Conscience and those who have replied to this Survey have taken it seriously – as have many educated Catholics, so it cannot be denied or put aside by the Institutional Church.

5. A Change in the Church’s Attitude to Homosexuality

This issue was mentioned by the majority of writers in terms of the question regarding ‘Natural Law’ and the union of a man and a woman, but a number also named it as one of their special concerns in our Church and society today. By far the majority wrote of their support of homosexual marriage, and their desire that the Church would support it. Two people wrote they believed that another name, not ‘marriage’, should be given to the formalised union of homosexuals.

One respondent wrote strongly that, “Medical science lends no credence to the idea promulgated by some high ranking clergy that gender preferences are decided by people themselves.” There was no support for this ‘clerical stance’ in the replies to this survey.

6. Sexual Abuse and the Church

This issue was mentioned by most respondents in terms of their disillusionment with the Institutional Hierarchical Church. One writer summed it up thus: “Church must do more to protect children instead of concentrating on what consenting adults do in the bedroom. Abuse of the young, whether in the Church or in the family, is indefensible and the problem must be addressed and not covered up.”

It was also noted many times that these ‘sexual abuse’ issues indicated that the Church has a need to be more ‘open’, as well as to include responsible women in its structures so that there will be no more ‘covering up’ of such unacceptable failures and on-going attempts to protect the institution while ignoring the agony of the victim and his/her family. □

The Ordination of Women

(Bishop) Geoffrey Robinson

Despite his promising track record so far, Pope Francis is on record as still holding onto his two predecessors' ban on women priests. The following extract from Bishop Geoffrey Robinson: *For Christ Sake – End Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church for good*. pp.67-73 explains the background to the very controversial "Infallible Statement" promulgated by Pope John Paul II. Is it as infallible as the Church would have us believe?

In 1994, Pope John Paul II wanted to put a stop to the increasing talk about the ordination of women to the priesthood, so he decided to publish a document that would have the maximum possible authority, and he knew that the support of the bishops of the world would assist in giving it greater authority. He prepared a document and then called to Rome the Presidents of the Bishops' Conferences from around the world. These Presidents were shown the document and then asked to endorse it in the name of all the bishops in their conferences.

The Presidents replied that they could not do this, for they could not speak in the name of all the bishops without first asking them. They asked for two changes in the text of the document. They asked that the phrase '... having heard our brothers in the episcopal college...' be omitted, for the consultation with the Presidents alone did not add up to this. They also asked that the word 'irrevocable' be omitted.

(My account of these events comes from the verbal report given soon afterwards to the Australian bishops by its then Vice-President, Archbishop John Bathersby, who had attended the meeting in Rome.)

The document was published with no reference to consultation with the bishops and with the word 'irrevocable' replaced by the words 'and that this judgement is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful'.

My interpretation of these events is that Pope John Paul II wanted his document to have the maximum possible authority and so wanted the support of the bishops, but was unwilling to consult all of them because he could not guarantee their response. I believe that, had he asked them, the majority would have supported him, but a number wouldn't have. I do not know how large that number would have been, but the point is that neither did he, and he was unwilling to take the risk. I further believe that a significantly larger percentage of the bishops, probably a majority, would

not have supported the use of words such as 'irrevocable' or 'infallible', and this is surely indicated by the request of the Presidents that such words be omitted.

The dilemma for the Pope was that he could not publish his document with any hope that it would achieve the desired result of stopping even talk of the ordination of women if any noticeable number of bishops voted against it and a highly noticeable number, even a majority, did not want any reference to infallibility. How could a Pope claim the document was infallible – and should, therefore, stop all discussion – if Catholic women could reply: 'But a significant number of your own bishops don't agree with you, and most of them refuse to call the teaching infallible?'

Instead of consultation with the bishops, it was arranged that the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, should in the following year publish a Response to a Doubt in which he said that:

This teaching requires definitive assent, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (cf *Lumen Gentium*, 25).¹

The use of the word 'infallible' here means that the Presidents of conferences were overruled and the word 'infallible' was used, so that John Paul II and, later, Ratzinger himself (as Benedict XVI) could say that even talk of the ordination of women was forbidden.

The cardinal referred to two factors. The first is 'the written Word of God', which is presumably a reference to the fact that no women are recorded as being among those present at the Last Supper. The second is his appeal to the constant tradition of the Church over two thousand years. This is a particularly weak argument, for in appealing to the dead bishops of the past it pointedly excluded the living bishops of the present and, over the centuries, all too many of those past

bishops had extreme negative views concerning women that today appal us.

There is an abundance of lurid statements to draw on. For example:

I speak to you, O charmers of the clergy, appetizing flesh of the devil ... you, poison of the minds, death of souls, venom of wine and eating, companions of the very stuff of sin, the cause of our ruin. You, I say, I exhort you women of the ancient enemy, you bitches, sows, screech-owls, night owls, she-wolves, blood suckers, who cry 'Give, give without ceasing!'²

Today we would say that this writer has serious problems and is in urgent need of psychological help!

Rather than quote more of this type of statement, I prefer to add quotations from two sober canonists who were doing no more than quoting the reality of their times. Both acknowledge that for many centuries there had been women deacons, but Theodore Balsamon (12th century) then says, 'But the monthly affliction banished them from the divine and holy sanctuary'.³ Matthew Blastares (14th century) says, 'They were forbidden access and performance of these services by later fathers because of their monthly flow that cannot be controlled'.⁴ This continuing influence of the ancient purity laws of the First Testament – at least those concerning women – has never disappeared, even though it causes most Catholic people of today to cringe in shame.

When looking at Tradition, it is not only the quantity, but also the quality that must be considered. Some years earlier, Joseph Ratzinger himself had written:

Not everything that exists in the Church must for that reason be also a legitimate tradition; in other words, not every tradition that arises in the Church is a true celebration and keeping present of the mystery of Christ. There is a distorting, as well as legitimate, tradition ... Consequently, tradition must not be considered only affirmatively, but also critically.⁵

It is small wonder that Hans Küng responded to the reply of Cardinal Ratzinger by writing in an open letter to his friend, 'Joseph, how could you? You're far too good a theologian for this!'

The conclusion I have drawn from these events is that the declaration of papal infallibility in 1870 has now developed to the point that, in the Vatican, papal authority and infallibility trump all other issues. Popes of the past could not have been wrong in not ordaining women and that had to be the end of the matter or all

papal authority would be called into question. So there could not even be any discussion, not among Catholic people throughout the world, and not within the Vatican itself. The only question remaining was how to suppress the talk by Catholic people on this subject. If this meant subjecting the desires, dignity and rights of women to the needs of papal authority, then so be it.

Since I believe that the exclusion of women from all positions of influence in the Church has been a significant causal factor in sexual abuse, this decision also means that the protection of papal authority and infallibility has been more important than eliminating sexual abuse.

It has also meant that, under the present system of governance within the Church, infallibility and collegiality are as incompatible as oil and water. The understanding of infallibility applied by Pope John Paul II in this case demanded monarchy. On any controversial issue a Pope could never guarantee that he would obtain that very high degree of consensus from the bishops that infallibility would demand. As long as this kind of infallibility reigns, there will be no room for collegiality.

And if the Pope is not listening to the bishops, then even less will he be listening to the whole Church. This in turn means that there will be no seeking of the opinion of women on any subject of importance, let alone on a subject such as sexual abuse where they might well have some strong things to say about how the Popes themselves and all the men around them have acted.

The male Church is another part of the unhealthy culture out of which abuse can arise and the response to abuse can be poor.

Endnotes

- ¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Concerning the Teaching Contained in *ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, *Responsum ad Dubium*, 28th October 1995
- ² Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination, Female Clergy in the Medieval West*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p.113
- ³ Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osick, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 2005, p.137
- ⁴ Madigan and Osick, op.cit.
- ⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, 'The Transmission of Divine Revelation' in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol.3, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, Herder and Hender, New York, 1969, p.185

Can we Save the Catholic Church?

Hans Küng

Review by Fr Tony Flannery

19 October 2013

Hans Küng is a remarkable man. Now in his mid-eighties, the famous Swiss theologian continues to write and publish books, and to play a significant part in Catholic Church debate. He has long ago come under censure from the Vatican, and hasn't been allowed to teach in a Catholic college or seminary for many years. But that has in no way restricted his work or his influence. If anything, it has given more weight to his voice during the long years of the pontificates of John Paul and Benedict.

His new book is very readable, accessible to people who have no theological training. It is also extraordinarily timely. Pope Francis is only six months in office, and already he has changed the atmosphere in the church, talking openly about the urgent need for change.

Even before he was elected, during the six-week interregnum after the resignation of Benedict, most of us were amazed at the open way in which the assembled cardinals spoke about the need for reform, especially reform of the Vatican Curia. If people want to know why the Pope is talking like this, and why the call for change is so urgent, I cannot recommend anything more appropriate than this opportune book.

In it, Küng traces the historical development of what most people now recognise to be the problematic and even damaging aspects of church life. He goes back to the beginning, to the preaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God, and what this constituted, how there was no sense that Jesus wanted a large, hierarchical structure. "I have come to serve, not to be served", Jesus said, and his followers were not to "lord it over each other".

But by the 3rd Century, under the influence of the Roman Empire, this was exactly what had begun to develop. Popes and bishops began to lord it over the people, in imitation of the Roman emperors, wearing the trappings of wealth and power.

Küng then outlines how the Gregorian reform of the 11th Century greatly increased the power of the papacy. But for those of us who grew up and were

educated as Catholics, he is at his best in writing about the period of the Protestant Reformation.

In Catholic schools, we were presented with a version of the reformation which placed all the blame on Martin Luther and the other reformers. But Küng shows that most of what the reformers initially called for were badly needed reforms in the church, and that if the church authorities had had the wisdom and humility to enter into real discussion with them we could have a dramatically different and better church and avoided the slaughter that took place during the long years of the wars of religion.

Furthermore, in reaction to the reformers, the church turned in on itself and became reactionary and dogmatic, with disastrous consequences for the next four centuries. As a consequence, it developed an attitude of hostility towards the enlightenment and scientific thought. Küng shows that the declaration of Papal Infallibility in the 19th century was what we might call today a 'power-grab' by the Vatican and resulted in a church that was totally centralised and authoritarian.

Küng played an active part in the Second Vatican Council in the middle of the last century, and he spells out the dramatic new impetus for reform this proved to be. But in the following years, the powers-that-be in the Vatican, with the active assistance of John Paul and Benedict, gradually blocked and dismantled most of the reforms and returned the church to the centralised power structure of the past.

For people who want to understand how the church got itself into its current difficulties, this is a marvellous book. Küng finishes with a list of what he considers necessary reforms. The one that stands out for me is his suggestion that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith be abolished, and that an end be put to all repression in the church.

The book is a wonderful service to the church at this time, and yet again we owe a debt of gratitude to Küng. Despite being effectively shut out for most of his life, he still clearly has a deep love for the church, and is possessed by a passion to see it become a more effective vehicle of the message of Christ.

I recommend this book to all those who share his passion and his faith. □

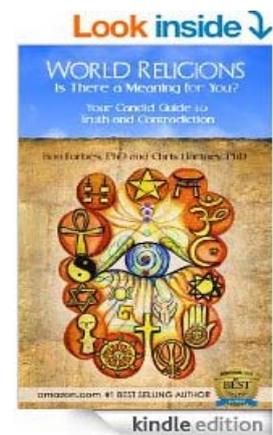
Irish Redemptorist Fr Tony Flannery is the author of *A Question of Conscience* (published by Londubd Books) for which he was censured by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and threatened with excommunication.

World Religions:

Is there a meaning for You?

Your candid guide to truth and contradiction

Dr Ron Forbes & Dr Chris Hartney



The greatest myth about any religion is that it remains unchanged ‘from the start’. Religions don’t. They evolve as both organisations and individuals come into contact with one another – through working together, marriage, competing, or fighting and conquest. People are curious about ideas and they constantly exchange them.

Today, in the ‘one world’ culture, religions of all kinds are coming into close contact with one another and jostling for adherents. Everyone wants to get the others following the One True Faith. There are benefits for all of us, both socially and at work, in knowing more about the beliefs that people hold, the value they have for the believer, the differences between one faith and another – and also the risks and sacrifices that each religion can entail.

Starting from world travels and exploration of any religion and indigenous peoples that came my way, I began working on my book in 1997. I was recommended a co-author, Dr Chris Hartney in the Department of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney (and much more), and he joined me with his own contributions and some underlying academic rigour.

The book is written from a deep and sincere appreciation of what each religion offers. At the end are first-hand accounts from people of widely differing faiths. In these stories, we see the power of religion to touch the soul, to heal, and to change lives.

The book begins with the most ancient religions, the ones that have endured the onset of the major religions (mainly Christianity and Islam). We start with the ‘Pagans’, ranging from the Celts to the Americas and the Pacific, including that most ancient living tradition, the Australian Aboriginals.

Next are the ones most familiar to us, the Abrahamic religions – those that begin with the Jewish prophet Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. After that come the Eastern religions, starting with Hinduism (the oldest) and following on to Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and then Atheism – and Consumerism (with laughs). Included are the many branches and sects in between, and serious reference to some ‘cults’.

We have written this book from a sense of heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for all religion – at its core. We summarise the key concepts of each and its benefits to humanity. Then we show the other side of the coin, the many problems that religions have caused humanity. Since these problems weren’t the intention of their founders, we call them the ‘Unintended Consequences’.

In presenting the best and worst of each faith, we believe that what is true will weather the storm and in time surpass that which may be harmful or untrue. Along the way we mention music and the arts and cultural aspects, even some language you might find helpful.

Find it at: <http://amazon.com.au/dp/B00HDTRDGK>.

You don’t need a Kindle, they provide software.

If you like the book, write a review, spread the word!

The Day Was Made for Walking

Noel Braun

The Camino de Santiago de Compostela, the ancient pilgrimage route, winds its way across France and Spain towards the cathedral at Santiago in the north-west of Spain. Here the shrine of Saint James the Apostle is venerated.

It has fascinated me for years. I took the plunge in 2010 and walked from Le Puy-en-Velay in the east of France to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port at the foot of the Pyrenees. After 760 kilometres my body had had enough and I called it quits. I returned home. But my pilgrimage didn't end there. I had to return. Nine months later, I was back on the plane to Paris, determined to finish what I started – AND I DID! I continued my trek over the Pyrenees through Spain to Santiago – another 760 kilometres.

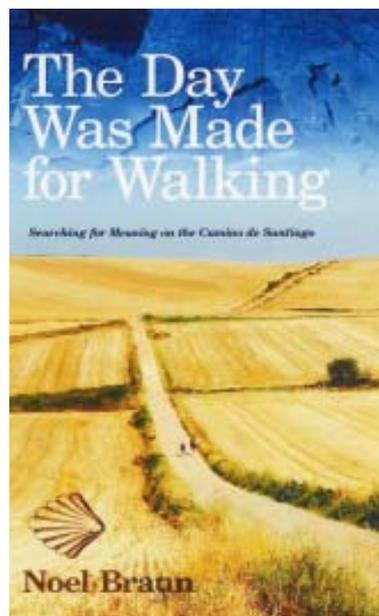
My new book *The Day Was Made for Walking* has just been released. Subtitled **Searching for Meaning on the Camino de Santiago**, it describes the physical journey, but interwoven in the narrative is the story of a spiritual journey. There is a constant interplay between the two.

I hope my book will inspire others, not necessarily to undertake the Camino, but to find meaning in their suffering and adversities.

I have included two reviews. They're a bit over the top, but they convey what I was trying to achieve in writing this book:



On the road to Lescar



To purchase a copy, contact Noel Braun
on 9450 1355 or 0419 522 737.
Or visit his website www.noelbraun.com.au

Noel Braun is a remarkable man. The loss of his wife signified a great change in his life and instead of dropping his bundle, he devised ways to negate his feelings of grief and loss.

He is a man I would call a hero. He's not a great sports star, actor or celebrity, but in my eyes he tackled his problems head on and has written of his journey in a sincere and honest way. Reading about his pilgrimage across France and Spain is a humbling experience.

John Morrow's *Pick of the Week*

Author Noel Braun's prose is beautiful. In his book he pours out his emotions, his life story and his observations of life without reserve and with honesty.

*His 2010 memoir **No Way to Behave at a Funeral** told of his heart-breaking journey dealing with his much-loved wife Maris' suicide in 2004 after years of battling depression. And it is from this journey that Noel began another. In one way it was to decipher his life, in another it was to embrace life.*

I want to follow his footsteps – light the candles in stone chapels, share the bread and cheese, be inspired by the uplifting wayside graffiti, drink in the wonder, and rejoice at the tapestry of nature and resilient human spirit.

If any reader is not inspired by this book, by this man's humble and amazing achievements – you are probably dead already! Go on, live a little! Read this book, cherish life more and make big plans!

Wendy O'Hanlon *Acres Australia*

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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