



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.
September 2014 **Issue No. 53**

Editorial

The Extraordinary Synod on the Family, instigated by Pope Francis to examine the Church's teaching on matters of family life, begins next month. ARC owes an enormous debt to our spokesperson, John Buggy, who has devoted his time and expertise in working with other members of Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI – to which ARC is affiliated) to produce Position Papers that have been submitted to this momentous event. Given his very personal involvement, the Secretariat decided unanimously to sponsor John to attend a CCRI Forum in Rome and to represent ARC. He is committed through this visit to creating a situation in which ARC members, and especially the Secretariat, can contribute directly to both the strategy of CCRI and to what it can do to influence the hierarchy going forward, along with the other international groups.

CCRI has expressed its concern that only a small group of conservative lay people has been selected to attend the Synod and a letter has been sent to the Pope stating this strongly. (see P.4) However, there is still a lot to arrange in order to make an impact. Banners and placards are being made for use in St Peter's Square and John is helping to prepare answers to expected tricky questions that might come from the Press when the argument for responsible reform is being proposed at CCRI's Press conference prior to the Synod.

For those ARC Members who were not able to attend the ARC meeting at North Sydney on 2nd August, we have included in this issue a summary of the Position Papers on which our discussions were based and a lead to the main papers. It would be surprising if any Catholic families have not at one time or another had to deal with many of the issues outlined. Also in this issue are several thought-provoking articles on the Synod, showing the need for reform in these matters.

There is much resistance within the Vatican to the prospect of change and Cardinal Pell has added his voice to those who advocate for no change before the Synod debate even gets started. There are other bishops who would be wary of speaking out in a progressive way, no doubt some of them aware of the treatment given to Bishop Morris of Toowoomba for simply suggesting that he would ordain women if he was allowed to.

At this Synod many will expect that more challenging questions will be raised about most of the Church's teaching on sexuality and its gender discrimination. We hope that Pope Francis supports open debate even though we are very disappointed that family representation in family matters is sadly missing in a gathering of decision-making celibates. We expect that there will be just as much need for speaking out strongly after this Synod and before the Ordinary Synod that will be held at the same time in 2015.

Margaret Knowlden
Editor

In this issue	
Editorial	1
Synod on the Family – Positon Papers	2-3
Open Letter to Pope re Appointments to Synod	4
Bishop Pat Power – Letter	5-6
CCRI Survey on Fulfilling Relationships – selected quotes	6
J. A. Dick: <i>Belgian Bishop Says it is Time to Close the Catholic Gap</i>	7-8
Claire Maguire: Letter to the Editor	8
Joshua J. McElwee: <i>Vatican document for synod on family balances mercy and cultural blame</i>	9-11
John Edwards: <i>Max Charlesworth's A Democratic Church</i>	12-13
Ron Watts: <i>Mary McAleese at the Sydney Town Hall</i>	14
Book Review by Gideon Goosen: Tapsell, Kieran: <i>Potiphar's Wife: The Vatican's Secret and Child Sexual Abuse</i>	15
Edward Schillebeeckx, OP: Quotation: <i>Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ</i>	15
Illustrator: Alan Holroyd (page 3 & 10)	
ARC Secretariat – Have Your Say – Subscription form.....	16

Synod on the Family

to be held in Rome from 5th to 19th October 2014

Theme: “The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation”

Summary of Position Papers delivered to the Synod of Bishops from Catholic Church Reform International as a gift from members who share the wisdom of their experience in living as Christian families in today’s world and the challenges that Church teaching presents.
<http://www.catholicchurchreform.com/documents/CCRIIntlRecommendationstotheSynodMay2014.pdf>

Fulfilling Relationships

This topic takes the approach that all “religion” (re-binding) is a seeking to have a relationship with God expressed through the relationships that we have with one another, reflective of the greatest commandment.

- Reality of marriage today – nuclear vs extended families, “mixed” marriages, modern pressures;
- divorce and separation, single parent issues, the influence of poverty;
- annulments;
- sex before marriage;
- relationships supported by Sacraments – in union with Jesus.

Conclusion: a Church supporting the relationships through which people grow and assist their significant others to prosper by their actions and deeds.

Openness to Life

This topic takes the approach that we are charged with the obligation to support life and the planet that supports us. The religious truth contained in Genesis is precisely this. This obligation falls on everyone, not just those who are in a position to have children.

- Quality of life and finite resources;
- sustainability and population growth;
- responsible parenthood, judgment and conscience;
- medical intervention to achieve conception (IVF, etc);
- birth control and contraception;
- recognition of the impact of growing poverty in the world and insufficient health resources.

Conclusion: a Church supporting life in its fullness, helping people to make decisions in good conscience when the only outcomes possible still lead to situations that no one desires. The strong need for pastoral recognition of the difficulty of many to live according to the ideal must be brought out.

Gender and Sexuality

This topic begins with the influence of sexuality for human beings and its strong influence on their making significant decisions in all aspects of their life. The body is at the core of our relationship to God, ourselves and others.

- Sexuality is a powerful drive in human beings. Well-formed sexual identity is responsive to conscience, our circumstances and those of others;
- respect for others regardless of their sexual orientation;
- gender neither defines the roles nor the tasks that people are capable of taking on in the Church or in society;
- give women and men equal access to positions of decision-making authority in our Church according to their ability to promote the common good;
- as part of pastoral ministry, welcome women and married persons to teach and share their experiences.;
- use Gender-inclusive language in documents and liturgy, matching the use in secular society;
- seek new ways of expressing our tradition that are compatible with the Gospel and which enable its transmission into the future. ‘Tradition’ means ‘passing on’ it does not mean ‘being traditional’.

Conclusion: we hope our Bishops will reassess this important aspect of human expression and life in the light of scientific findings as well as all those who participate in the life of the Church.

How the Church Learns and Teaches

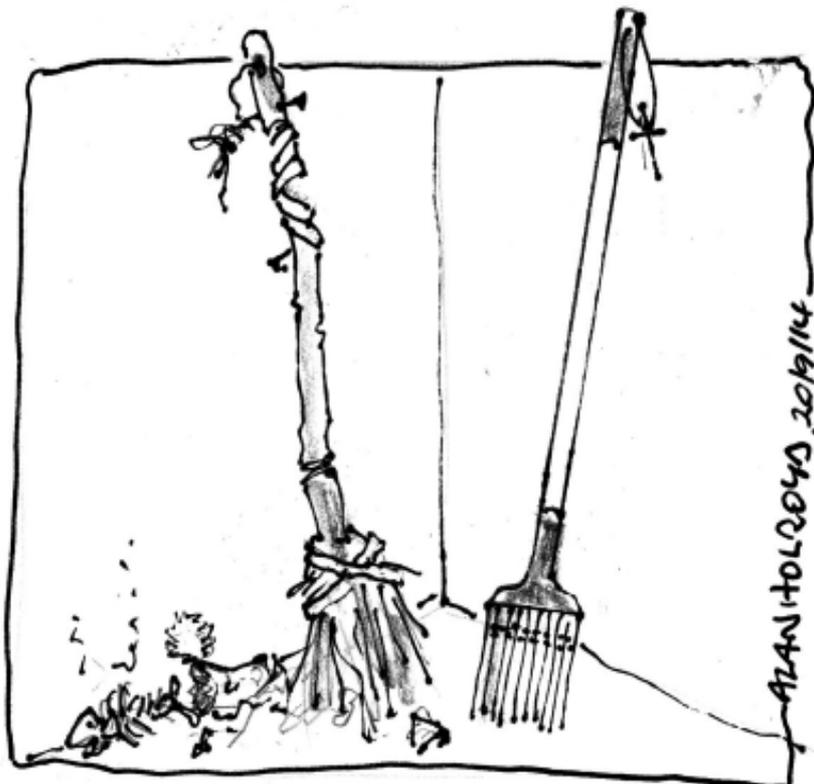
This topic deals with the manner in which the Church must convey a supportive teaching rather than a compendium of prohibitions in order to engage those disaffected now and the next generations to come. This topic will also deal with the structures and attitudes that the hierarchical Church needs to adopt to achieve an

environment where it can elicit and be aware of the *sensus fidelium* on moral matters. Only then will the advice, as opposed to prohibition, be heard by the faithful as whole. The structures need to be such that people are motivated to respond and contribute to the wisdom of their Church.

- Preaching and receiving – what enables the connection?
- the evidence that Catholics are not listening;
- decline in the practice of the faith – church attendance, weddings away from church;
- drop-out of young people after leaving school, even those from Catholic schools;
- context for teaching – educated people no longer respond to prohibition from above;
- the family unit as the starting point of teaching and role modelling;
- empathic support involved in faith and morals education;
- lack of effective education about relationships vis-à-vis television, movies, social media;
- need for the hierarchical Church to re-engage with thinking people;
- revelation is ongoing – Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation;
- acceptance that the Church does not have all answers or sufficient answers;
- educated faithful – pastor and flock are outdated images;
- need for input from both practising and non-practising Catholics;
- need for perspectives of “family” from adults who are not married;
- structures at the local, diocesan, and national levels necessary to obtain effective input;
- feedback mechanisms that show that structured input from the faithful is considered valuable and is acted upon.

Conclusion: strong emphasis is placed on the fact that teaching is of no value if it displays little empathy for those who are supposed to follow it. It needs to be shown that youth respond to reason far more than to tradition. The centralization of power that defines the Church structure today inhibits the hierarchical Church in responding to its people. There is a huge gap in expressed understanding between the sensitive pastors and religious who work with people and the top of the hierarchy who determine how the faith must be practised. A certain amount of gap is understandable but effective ongoing structured dialogue has yet to be established and it is now critical for the Church’s moral authority.

A new broom for Sydney!



Open Letter to Pope Re Appointments to Synod

Dear Pope Francis:

When you called the Extraordinary Synod on the Family, we welcomed this initiative as a genuine attempt to consult the people of the Church.

We now write to you on the cusp of the Synod to express our dismay at the process employed in selecting participants from the faithful, a process that ignores your commitment to “involve all the People of God” and sadly reflects the continued mindset of clericalism with its reluctance to be accountable and transparent.

Having now announced that 14 married couples from 12 nations will join 197 bishops, 15 other clerics and 16 lay experts at the Synod, we are at a loss as to how these representatives of families were chosen. In a truly transparent and accountable Church, the selection process should have been open. Moreover, only 24 women will participate as collaborators and auditors without a vote in the Synod deliberations, despite your call in *Evangelii Gaudium* “to create broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church” and for the expansion of “possible roles (for) women in decision-making in areas of the Church’s life.” Among the married couples and non-clerical auditors and collaborators selected, few represent the diversity of families within the Church, but rather organizations that generally support existing doctrine, much of which was questioned by grass-roots respondents to the Synod survey circulated globally last year.

Regrettably, non-clerical participants from the faithful will be only a small minority (17.2%) in an essentially clerical forum, and will have no vote in the decision-making process. While responses to the Vatican survey and our own research indicate that an overwhelming majority of Catholics ignore much of what the Church condemns, those participants selected to represent families at the Synod are largely advocates for traditional Catholic teachings, and are unlikely to challenge those teachings.

It seems that the Synod has been designed to ensure that bishops are being sheltered from the voices of diverse Catholic families who live their daily lives not always according to the formulations in the Catechism, but attuned in good conscience to their understanding and embrace of the word of God. The magisterium has to be attentive to the *sensus fidelium*, the living voice of the people of God. The Theological Commission’s 2014 document *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* affirmed this: “Those who exercise authority in the Church will take care to ensure that there is responsible exchange of freely held and expressed opinion among the People of God. More than this, they will set up norms and conditions for this to take place” (n. 74).

We ask, therefore, that you review the arrangements for this Synod to ensure that there is within its membership a truly adequate representation from ordinary and diverse Catholic families, with appropriate provision for them to share their views, be heard, and to have a vote. As an additional assurance of openness of the proceedings, we urge you to arrange public broadcasting of the complete Synod discussions via radio, television and the internet. If this Synod is for the people of God, then it should be open to them.

Here is an opportunity for a real new evangelization. Holy Father, we are committed to a Christ-like Church in all its works and governance. This Synod is a unique opportunity for renewal and it must be credible. If it lacks credibility in this first session, it will prejudice the success of the final session in 2015. We pray for you, and the success of the Synod under the guidance of the Holy Spirit! Yours in Christ,

The Link to this page is [http://www.catholicchurchreform.com/
OpenLettertoPopereappointmentstoSynod.htm](http://www.catholicchurchreform.com/OpenLettertoPopereappointmentstoSynod.htm)

Letter from Retired Bishop Pat Power

Hardly a day goes by without some form of adverse media criticism being levelled at the Catholic Church or some of its members. Sometimes the criticism is vitriolic, unfair and replete with half-truths. At other times, I must admit, it is totally justified.

It hurts me deeply to see the family of God which is meant to be a source of goodness and grace portrayed as a repository of evil. Much of the current negative publicity flows from the Royal Commission and other inquiries into institutional sexual abuse. Can such public discussion be an opportunity for the Church to endorse reforms needed for it to become its best self?

For nearly 20 years I have spoken and written of my hopes for our Church which I have seen to be much in need of reform at many levels. Among those hopes are that we will be a more human Church, a humbler Church and a Church which is more intent on reflecting the person and the teaching of Jesus.

In the 18 months since his election, Pope Francis has demonstrated simply and forcefully those Christ-like qualities which the whole Church needs to embrace. He has walked away from pomp and ceremony and the triumphalism which has previously distracted from what should have been the true mission of the Church. He tells pastors that they need to be at home with “the smell of the sheep”.

The Holy Thursday ceremony of the washing of the feet has been for Pope Francis more than symbolic as he has included women who were previously excluded, as well as embracing Muslims, prisoners and disabled people. He has spoken out unambiguously of the horror and criminality of sexual abuse in every form, especially within the ranks of the Church. He has called on us to be a “poor Church for the poor”.

Much of the criticism of the Church these days is sharpened by the fact that in the past its teaching on sexuality was so negative and unbalanced. This was exacerbated by the fact that it was articulated exclusively by men removed from the realities of intimacy and family life.

The forthcoming **Synod on the Family** offers an opportunity for the beginning of a healthier approach which will need to admit past mistakes and embrace the wisdom and experience of women and of married people generally.

In a society which seems to take promiscuity for granted, the Church has a clear role in promoting values such as fidelity, integrity and healthy sexual relationships. Homosexual people need to be engaged in a conversation which hopefully will result in a better formulation of Church teaching on all forms of sexuality.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes about the indispensable role of women in the Church and of the need to listen to young people and poor people. He makes it clear that the Church at every level must be engaged in dialogue and conversation. Ecumenical and interfaith dialogue is an intrinsic part of being Catholic today as is a healthy interaction with the secular world.

The Good Samaritan Sisters’ origins in the middle of the nineteenth century focused primarily on vulnerable women in Sydney. Today, we see Sister Anna Warlow and her community supporting indigenous, rural and mining communities in remote Western Australia; Sister Rita Hayes assisting Timorese people in their recovery as a nation; and Good Samaritan Sisters in Australia, along with other religious women, campaigning against the exploitation of women through people-trafficking.

Although their numbers are diminishing, religious sisters in Australia bring great credit to our Church and stand for what is best in the Catholic tradition. This came out very clearly in the tributes paid to Sacred Heart Sister, Philomene Tiernan, who perished in the Malaysia Airlines plane shot down over the Ukraine.

Pope Francis humbly and realistically recognises that he does not have all the answers, but looks to local communities to search out, reflect and take action on the issues which are impinging on their people.

As I watch the evening news or read the newspaper, I am confronted with stories of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers, unemployment, homelessness, poverty in a multitude of forms, domestic violence, alcohol-induced violence, suicide especially among the young, mental illness, Aboriginal disadvantage, rural crises and drug addiction, as just some of the ills plaguing Australian society.

At the heart of these tragic stories is the diminishing of the value of human life. Of course, there are many good news stories as well, but unfortunately they do not always attract the same publicity.

Sometimes we can be overwhelmed by the vastness and the complexity of the problems. But I am heartened by the slogan often used by development agencies which encourage us to think globally and act locally. Personal friendships, neighbourly concern and simple acts of kindness can be powerful antidotes to many of our contemporary evils.

I find the image of the pilgrim church an attractive one for today's Catholics. We are not standing still but are being constantly called to move forward, often re-adjusting to changing circumstances, sometimes falling

over or getting lost. Always we need Jesus and our fellow Christians as companions on the journey.

Pope Francis gives expression to the deepest sentiments of my heart: "We have a treasure of life and love which cannot deceive, and a message which cannot mislead or disappoint. It penetrates the depths of our hearts, sustaining and ennobling us. It is a truth which is never out of date because it reaches that part of us which nothing else can reach. Our infinite sadness can only be cured by infinite love".

Pat Power

Bishop Pat Power retired in 2012 as Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra-Goulburn. Educated by the Good Samaritan Sisters at St Christopher's School in Canberra, Pat says he has "retained a continuing affection for and appreciation of the Good Samaritan Sisters who have played an integral part in my life as priest and bishop since my ordination in 1965". This article first appeared in their publication, *The Good Oil*.

CCRI survey on Fulfilling Relationships - selected quotations

- I would like those who've been in very difficult marriages and are able to extricate themselves from the marriage to be able to receive the Eucharist.
- All of us must make our decisions within the limitations of our personality, intelligence, spiritual development, upbringing and immediate and wider culture and environment. Certainly, as we look around us we see some people making decisions which we regard as quite flawed. I believe it is certainly not for me (or my unelected Church representatives) to pass judgment on them.
- When I first tried to find out about the annulment process, the priest just threw a few papers across his desk to me. Then he dismissed me and sent me home like a disobedient child. It took me another 10 years to approach the process again. This time (another priest) sat and typed while I talked and poured out my heart. It was so painful. And as I said above, I so often felt the need for a hug which he could not give me.
- When my husband had an affair in 1988, I received no support or assistance from the Church. My then parish priest told me he did not know what to say, and that he would pray for me.
- My understanding is annulment means the marriage was not a valid marriage – insulting to both parties and the children. The marriage existed, it just didn't work.
- I am 78 years old and knew I was a homosexual when I was very young. I hated myself for this 3/4 of my life because I was told it was sinful. What was I supposed to do? Marry a man and create a life of unhappiness for two people and maybe an entire family?
- I married, young and ignorant, a man who has no faith/church affiliation. We have been married for 42 years and raised three children, now have almost 7 grandchildren. We have struggled, but persevered and our relationship is God-centered and improving with every year. Given the circumstance, I long ago decided not to follow the church teaching on the use of birth control. I baptized and faithfully took all three children to church every week, but they are not interested in the church, turned off instead. The church teachings on birth control are archaic and show a total lack of responsibility toward the world as a whole.
- Church teaching on the value and beauty of loving relationships, the gift of children, the care of the elderly, is marvelous. In a world where porn, the sexualisation of girls, broken marriages, child abuse, and casual sex are so commonplace, we need it. It is an affirmation of the meaningfulness and value of human beings. Unfortunately all we seem to hear is the hierarchy attempting to control people by such force as is at their disposal (i.e. withholding sacraments).

Full Report on the Survey available from the Editor: mknowlden@bigpond.com

Belgian Bishop Says it is Time to Close the Catholic Gap

Posted September 5, 2014

by J. A. Dick

As reported in Belgian newspapers and the Belgian Catholic press service, Kerknet (September 5), Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp has written a long letter to the Vatican about his personal expectations for the Synod on the Family, which takes place from October 5 to 19 in Rome. Obviously he cannot anticipate what will happen there but he has indicated what he would like to see happen.

Johan Bonny has been Bishop of Antwerp since October 2008. Many church observers would like to see him succeed Archbishop André-Joseph Léonard as Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels and thus Primate of Belgium.

As a bishop, Bonny said that he has experienced a decades-old gap between what the church teaches and the perception and attitudes of most believers. This gap arose particularly with Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. Bonny insists that gap must now be closed by a church that truly is collegial in its decision-making and truly listens to people.

Bonny hopes that the October synod will begin to effectively close the gap. That will only happen, he says, if the church once again becomes the travelling companion of the faithful and listens carefully to their concerns about the complex life situations in which they find themselves.

In his twenty-three-page letter, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Antwerp pleads for understanding for those who are divorced, those who are living together without marriage, those who are civilly married and homosexual, and those who have become or would like to become parents through in vitro fertilization.

There are good reasons for suspecting that Bishop Bonny's letter will be given serious consideration by the Vatican. Cardinal Walter Kasper, close friend and theological advisor to Pope Francis, is also a personal friend of Johan Bonny. They met in 1997, when Bonny was one of his closest collaborators in Rome.

That Bishop Bonny's thinking is very similar to the thinking of the German is, therefore, no coincidence; and the German cardinal has a great influence on the

Pope. With Bishop Bonny's letter, the October Synod is truly starting to take on new interest.

Bishop Johan Bonny has been making headlines in Catholic media, first in Germany but today also in his native Belgium. In an extensive note the bishop of Antwerp outlines his thoughts and expectations for this autumn's Synod of Bishops. Various media have presented this as an attack on Popes Paul VI and St. John Paul II and their documents on difficult subjects related to marriage, family and morality. But reality is somewhat different. Bishop Bonny does not exclusively discuss the contents of various magisterial pronouncements, but does offer strong criticism on how they came about, and how they are put into practice.

In this post, I will summarise the text and offer my opinion here and there. As it is a fairly long text, this post is a work in progress. Expect updates over the coming days.

In the first part of his document, the bishop explains that he sees the development of an ecclesiastical question within the discussion about marriage and family, which he traces back to Pope Paul VI's encyclical on contraception and sexuality, *Humanae vitae*. The way in which the Pope developed this text, apparently ignoring the advice of experts he had appointed himself, stands in stark contrast with how the Second Vatican Council went about matters: in strong collegiality which led to a virtually unanimous passing of documents.

This lack of collegiality in such an important matter has led, so the bishop explains, to a gap between the Church's moral teaching and the moral understanding of the faithful. And we do see this happening: statements, decrees, encyclicals and the like do not play much of a role in the lives of the faithful, even though they can be important for properly living as Catholic faithful. Of course, a perceived lack of collegiality cannot be the only explanation for this, as Bishop Bonny admits. I would even go so far as wondering if many faithful are even aware of how documents are developed, at least not in our time.

Among bishops, Curia and Pope, more collegiality can have positive results (and also negative), since we should not be afraid of talking about such important matters. But the Church is no democracy. The very nature of the papacy, of the body of apostles and disciples that Christ established, is at odds with that. The Pope has magisterial primacy, and he must be free to exercise it. But of course it is good to do everything to avoid needless division and even opposition, although that can probably never be rooted out completely.

Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp wrote a message for the feast of Pentecost, discussing the seeming opposition between the Spirit and the institute of the Church. Of course, there is no opposition, but the Holy Spirit works in the Church and the Church needs to be continuously open to His workings. Not an easy task...!

“The Pope and the Holy Spirit: do they get along? It seem a superfluous question. But much ink has been spent and battle has been done, both in and outside the Church, about that topic. For some the Holy Spirit is invisible where the Pope is. For others the Pope is invisible where the Holy Spirit is. Institute and charisma, durability and renewal, shepherding and prophecy: they are so easily put in opposition to one another. Yet the story of Pentecost begins in the house where the Apostles are. They are among the first to receive the Spirit for the mission that the Lord has entrusted to them.

I thought of Pentecost when I was in St. Peter’s Square for the canonisation of Pope John XXII and John Paul II. In his homily, Pope Francis said about these Popes that they “cooperated with the Holy Spirit in renewing and updating the Church in keeping with her pristine features, those features which the saints have given her throughout the centuries. Let us not forget that it is the saints who give direction and growth to the Church. In convening the Council, Saint John XXIII showed an exquisite openness to the Holy Spirit. He let himself be led and he was for the Church a pastor,

a servant-leader, guided by the Holy Spirit. This was his great service to the Church; for this reason I like to think of him as the the pope of openness to the Holy Spirit.”

This is the work of the Holy Spirit: to continuously reveal the original features of the Church. That is what Jesus promised His disciples, shortly before his departure: “the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you” (John 14:26). The memory of the Church and Christians is short, especially concerning the heart of the Gospel and the witness of Jesus. The Holy Spirit does not have an easy task in continuously reminding the Church of the word and example of Jesus. You have to be the Holy Spirit to not get sick of it!

During this time of Pentecost we pray for “openness to the Holy Spirit”. We ask that the Holy Spirit may renew our Church community, bring her closer to the times, reveal her original features. We pray for all those who carry responsibility in the Church community: that they, as shepherds, let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit. And especially: we thank the Holy Spirit that He hasn’t given up our Church community, despite our short memory. Perhaps because of that the Holy Spirit is as light as air and as fire: to be able to get along with us!

*Johan Bonny
Bishop of Antwerp*

Letter to the Editor

While the winds outdoors icily tested one’s **real** desire to discuss Catholic-church reforms, after one entered the Mary McKillop Mount St. building for “ARC Day”, on August 2, there radiated instant warmth and calm friendship from like-minded friends and members.

What a pleasure it proved, yet again, to find the day so thoughtfully planned and so clearly organised – in every way. Profitable interaction ensued in seriously worthwhile discussion about the proposed sub-topics for the compilation of an ARC submission to the forthcoming Synod in Rome. All of these positive factors are the regular hallmarks of ARC Meetings – which are enhanced by empathy founded on engaged listening.

Many “If only . . .”s could follow here. Mine began, “If only many more parishes w/could prepare and dialogue like this . . .” No wonder we are continuously encouraged and willing to return and to contribute to ARC’s events, despite the extremities of Sydney’s clime! Heartfelt thanks are sincerely offered to the ARC Executive, and to their kind assistants.

*Clare Maguire
Redfern Parish*

Vatican document for synod on family balances mercy and cultural blame

Joshua J. McElwee

Source: *National Catholic Reporter*

June 26, 2014

NOTE: Since the following paper was included in this edition of *ARCvoice*, Pope Francis has indicated his disappointment with the content of the document, *Instrumentum Laboris*, and has asked for it to be revised. So far there has been no indication that a revised version has been prepared. We know that at least some Bishops will be more forward-thinking when they meet for the Synod.

Editor

Struggles faced by faithful around the world in following Catholic teachings stem mainly from ineffective education in those teachings and the pervasive effect of a relativistic culture, states the guiding document for an upcoming Synod of Bishops on the family.

The document, anticipated by many Catholics as a barometer for what to expect from the Synod, also strongly reinforces church teachings regarding the indissolubility of marriage, the restriction of marriage to heterosexual couples, and that partners must be open to having children.

At the same time, the document states, the church must respond with mercy to the struggles of families to adhere to sometimes controversial teachings – like those prohibiting divorce and re-marriage, contraception, co-habitation, and same-sex marriage – and ‘support her children on the path of reconciliation’.

Released by the Vatican on Thursday, the document was prepared for an extraordinary Synod of Bishops to be held in October. called by Pope Francis last year. The 2014 synod is the first of two back-to-back yearly meetings of the world’s Catholic bishops at the Vatican

on the theme of “pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation”.

The Vatican’s office for the Synod of Bishops drafted the preparatory document after a consultation unusual for the breadth of comment it encouraged prelates to seek from priests and laity.

Over the past months, news of the synod has raised hopes that Francis may be considering a change in the church’s pastoral practices in a number of areas, particularly regarding the admittance of divorced and re-married persons to Communion.

Yet, Thursday’s document paints the upcoming meeting as an event between the prelates to evaluate how to re-articulate current teachings, not to evaluate the teachings themselves. The document, known in Latin as an *instrumentum laboris*, also blames modern culture for Catholics’ poor acceptance of certain church teachings.

Responses to the synod office’s global consultation – which saw bishops’ conferences around the world answer a long questionnaire on how Catholics perceive church teachings – were “in agreement on the underlying reasons for the difficulty in accepting Church teaching,” the document states.

Among those reasons: “the hedonistic culture; relativism; materialism; individualism; the growing secularism; the prevalence of ideas that lead to an excessive, selfish liberalisation of morals; ... [and] a culture which rejects making permanent choices.”

The document, which spans 85 pages, is to be used by bishops around the world in preparing for the 2014 and 2015 synods. It was promulgated and signed by Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, general secretary of the Vatican’s office for the synod. The document is split into three parts:

1. an examination of the faithful’s “knowledge and acceptance” of church teaching;
2. a study of “various challenges and actual situations” faced by families;
3. pastoral challenges concerning “openness to life” and raising of children.

At points, it addresses specific practices like abortion, contraception, same-sex marriage, and divorce and re-marriage. At other points, it speaks much more broadly about the passing on of the faith and the wider context of the church’s teachings on the family.

Prelates attending the Vatican synod are expected to review the document in preparation for whatever statements they might make during the meetings in October. Those statements, known as “Interventions”,

are usually limited to four or five minutes and are submitted for review before the opening of the event.

The 2014 synod, known as an extraordinary synod, will be limited mainly to leaders of national bishops' conferences. The 2015 meeting will be much larger, consisting of several elected bishop-representatives from each country.

Abortion, co-habitation, abuse

One of the first issues that the document mentions as a "critical situation" within Catholic family life is abortion. The document says many bishops' conferences around the world said they were "greatly concerned" about the issue.

"In many ways, today's society seems to promote a culture of death regarding the unborn and to manifest a culture of indifference in approaching life in general," it states. "Many responses also stress that a contraceptive mentality has a negative impact on family relationships."

But the synod document also addresses what it calls a "counter-witness" to family values from inside the church, specifically because of the continuing clergy sexual abuse crisis and of some clergy who live a "lavish lifestyle."

"Responses from almost every part of the world frequently refer to the sexual scandals within the Church (paedophilia, in particular) and, in general, to a negative experience with the clergy and other persons." It states: "Sex scandals significantly weaken the Church's moral credibility, above all in North America and northern Europe."

Part of that counter-witness, the document adds, also occurs when members of the clergy treat Catholics who are separated or divorced improperly.

"The responses lament that persons who are separated, divorced or single parents sometimes feel unwelcome in some parish communities, that some

clergy are uncompromising and insensitive in their behavior; and, generally speaking, that the Church, in many ways, is perceived as exclusive," it states.

"In this sense, an open and positive pastoral approach is needed, one which can restore confidence in the institution through a credible witness by all her members," it continues.

The document also specifically addresses cohabitation, saying it has become a "permanent form of life" for couples in Europe and North America.

"Co-habitation and *de facto* unions are a symptom of the fact that young people tend to prolong their adolescence and consider marriage too challenging and, therefore, fear embarking on an adventure considered too great for them," it states.

"In this regard, any possible response to this situation through pastoral care must assist young people overcome an overly romantic idea that love is only an intense feeling towards each other and teach them that it is, instead, a personal response to another person as part of a joint project of life,

which reveals a great mystery and great promise," the document says.

Divorce and re-marriage

The document treats at greatest length separation, divorce and re-marriage, devoting eight pages to the subject. It states several times how reports from bishops' conferences globally mentioned the pain and suffering of divorced and re-married Catholics wishing to receive Communion.

"Some Church members who are cognisant that they are in an irregular situation clearly suffer from the fact that they are unable to receive the sacraments," the document states. "Many feel frustrated and marginalised. Some wonder why other sins can be forgiven and not theirs."

"In other cases, persons do not understand how their irregular situation can be a reason for their not being



able to receive the sacraments,” the document continues. “Instead, they believe that the Church is at fault in not permitting their irregular marriage situation. This way of thinking can lead to viewing withholding the sacraments as a punishment.”

While the document does not outline coming changes to the church’s practices on the matter, it does obliquely refer to such changes, saying, “The Church needs to equip herself with pastoral means which provide the possibility of her more widely exercising mercy, clemency and indulgence towards new unions.”

The document also states that some responses recommended adopting the approach taken by Eastern Orthodox churches, which allow divorced members to re-marry in a special ceremony that emphasizes penitence at the loss of the first marriage.

“In light of this suggestion, countries having a major number of Orthodox Christians noted that, from their experience, this practice does not reduce the number of divorces,” the synod document states. “Others request clarification as to whether this solution is based on doctrine or is merely a matter of discipline.”

The document also addresses the annulment process, saying some responses urged making it easier for Catholics to receive annulments while others defended the current practice.

Among reasons given for defending the current process: “In streamlining, simplifying or reducing the process: injustices and errors could result,” or “the impression might be given that the indissolubility of the Sacrament is not respected.”

Others, the document states, asked that there be a simpler and faster annulment process that grants more authority to local bishops, involves more laypeople in the tribunals that determine which annulments are granted, and reduces costs for the separated persons.

“Clearly, in these cases, the Church must not assume an attitude of a judge who condemns, but that of a mother who always receives her children and nurses their wounds so they may heal,” the document states.

“With great mercy, the Church is called to find forms of ‘accompaniment’ which can support her children on the path of reconciliation,” it continues. “With patience and understanding, she must explain to these people that their not being able to celebrate the sacraments does not mean that they are excluded from the Christian life and a relationship with God.”

Same-sex unions, contraception

The document bluntly restates Catholic opposition to both same-sex marriage and artificial contraception.

On the first issue, the document states: “Every bishops’ conference voiced opposition to ‘redefining’ marriage.” Some responses, it says, “recommend not using phrases such as ‘gay,’ ‘lesbian’ or ‘homosexual’ to define a person’s identity.”

It states: “The great challenge will be to develop a ministry which can maintain the proper balance between accepting persons in a spirit of compassion and gradually guiding them to authentic human and Christian maturity.”

The document devotes six pages to contraception, sometimes fiercely defending Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which deemed use of artificial contraceptives by Catholics as sinful.

“The Encyclical *Humanae Vitae* certainly had a prophetic character in reiterating the unbreakable link between conjugal love and the transmission of life,” states the document. It says the positive aspects of Paul’s teaching are unknown by many.

“Some responses see a relation between the commonly-held contraception mentality and a pervasive gender ideology which tends to change some basic aspects of anthropology, including the meaning of the body and the difference between the sexes which is replaced with the idea of gender orientation to the point of subverting sexual identity,” it states.

“In this regard, many responses see a need to go beyond simply condemning this ever-pervasive ideology and to respond with persuasive argumentation against this position, now widely spreading in many western societies.”

To assist in spreading the church’s arguments against contraception, the document suggests parishes have presentations in favour of so-called natural family planning methods, ‘in collaboration with well-qualified people from both the field of medicine and the parish’.

The document also suggests ‘including the subject in the seminary formation of future priests, given that priests are sometimes unprepared to deal with these issues and sometimes provide inexact and misleading information.’

Joshua J. McElwee is NCR national correspondent.

His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org.

Reprinted by permission of National Catholic Reporter, 115 E Armour Blvd, Kansas City, MO 4111

www.ncronline.org

Max Charlesworth's A Democratic Church

Reforming the Values and Institutions of the Catholic Church

John Edwards

With Max Charlesworth's passing on the 2nd June this year, perhaps it is fitting to remember Max by revisiting his wonderful monograph, *A Democratic Church – Reforming the Values and Institutions of the Catholic Church* (John Garratt, 2008). In the final stanza to this work he suggests, in relation to the "ideal Catholic Church I have sketched", that he has "no illusions that it is likely that it will be realised in my lifetime" (p.52) and sadly that was true. But of the many reforms he suggests in the book, such as the reform of the Vatican *Curia*, I am sure he would have taken heart from Pope Francis' appointment of the Council of Eight which has that objective in sight. However, of one aspect of the reforms that lay ahead he was quite convinced when he asserts, "I don't expect change to come from on high through the popes and the bishops. Rather it will come from below as the gross discrepancies between the democratic societies we live in and the Church's present teaching and structures become more and more obvious and pressing." (p.52) It is the contradictions between the values embedded in a liberal democratic society, such as Australia, and those in a closed, hierarchical, monarchical and inegalitarian church that would trigger this change. Charlesworth's *A Democratic Church* shows the way where reforming Catholics need to go.

Max Charlesworth was a leading Australian philosopher, ethicist and committed Catholic who died at the age of 88. Most of his professional career, spanning seven decades, was spent lecturing in philosophy at various universities. His first appointment in 1956 was at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, before returning to Melbourne University where he spent most of his time. Subsequently, he moved to Deakin University in Geelong as foundation dean of humanities. He retired in 1990 to become an Emeritus Professor of philosophy at that university.



A Democratic Church is a slim volume of only fifty-two pages, yet within that span it adumbrates the key issues the church needs to address, such as democratising the papacy and episcopacy; the concentration of power in the hands of the cardinals who parade themselves as princes of the church; reforming the *Curia*; the ordination of women; the role of women in the church and the need for a feminine theology and perspective – especially on sexuality; equality of homosexual believers; the place of divorcees and re-married Catholics (something that hopefully the forthcoming Synod in Rome might address). These are all weighty matters needing urgent attention, for sure, but they are also issues replete with significant ethical dimensions – especially from the viewpoint of a liberal democratic society.

The major focus of *A Democratic Church* is on analyzing the values embedded in a liberal democratic society and the implications this has for a Catholic Church, in its current configuration, trying to impose an antithetical and contradictory set of values on citizens of a liberal democracy. As Charlesworth notes, the classic formulation of the ideal of a liberal society is J S Mill's tract *On Liberty* published in 1859. This ideal is premised upon the "principle of personal liberty, namely that, to the greatest degree possible, people should be free to follow their consciences and make their own life choices and decisions for themselves" (ibid. p.12). A corollary of this, Mill contends, is that the state should not interfere in the area of personal morality and should only intervene when necessary to protect the liberty of others, acting through the law, if their liberty is encroached upon. A liberal society promotes personal autonomy, rather than restraining it; it is pluralist, embracing a diversity of ethical and religious outlooks which do not impair the freedom and rights of others. And herein lies the basis

of the clash with theocratic institutions, such as the church in its current configuration, which seek to diminish personal autonomy, especially moral and religious autonomy. Charlesworth recognises as one of the most significant outcomes of the Second Vatican Council the Declaration on Human Freedom which acknowledges the primacy of conscience of the individual. On this point the Second Vatican Council and liberal democracies are in agreement.

Charlesworth, as noted above, acknowledges it is unlikely that change will come from within the church and suggests it will come from outside, at least in liberal democracies, arising from the conflict of values underpinning the institutional church and those of liberal democracies. However, identifying or experiencing such conflict and resolving it are two separate issues. The question is what could be the major drivers for such change? Petitions have little impact, as Charlesworth notes, citing the petition with 17000 signatures from Australian Catholics asking the Australian bishops to address the issue of shortage of priests. The petition got short shrift from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and nothing was done. However, I believe another significant driver for change is already evident within western democracies such as Australia, the US, the UK and Europe and that is the notion of ethical investments. This is the demand by investors, buyers, sponsors or donors that the companies or institutions they support act in an ethical way consistent with the values of those societies. We see this in action against retail companies which produce goods overseas using child or slave labour, or tobacco companies which destroy the health of our young who are then saddled with chronic health problems for life. Also coal-fired power stations or wood-chipping companies find banks are reluctant to lend to them. Furthermore, companies are now being held to account where women are under-represented on their boards or in the upper *echelons* of their management.

Ethical investing is also beginning to find root among reform-minded Catholics, at least in an indirect or subliminal way. Many Catholics are reluctant to donate to parishes where there is little accountability for funds expended or where a significant proportion of those funds are committed to diocesan bodies with even less accountability or with little commitment to the values

of a liberal society. Instead they donate to *Caritas* or to the St Vincent de Paul, Catholic bodies whose work and ethical commitments are clear. However, perhaps the time has come for a more overt expression of the notion of ethical investment in relation to the institutional church, one that rewards Catholic institutions which are committed to reform and democratic values. A means of doing so might be through something like an Australian Catholic Development Fund (ACDF), founded independently of the institutional church, whose funding would be directed towards church activities and institutions which pass the ethical investments test. Some parishes in the US, because of the clerical sexual abuse payouts or bankrupt dioceses, already hold parish assets and funds in parishioners' hands. But with this scheme, wealthy parishes do well and poor parishes do poorly. So a better option might be a state or national fund where some re-distribution of wealth could be undertaken for equity reasons. The ACDF would act as an online bank, thus reducing infrastructure costs, allowing account holders to open online accounts and to register the parish to which they belong, if they so wish, and to indicate how they wanted their funds expended. Account holders would also become shareholders, with one vote per person, and would vote at annual general meetings selecting directors who were representative of community and Christian values and thus ensuring the ACDF made ethical investments. That is, the ACDF would invest in parishes, schools and dioceses where openness, representativeness, transparency and accountability were evident and assured. Catholic institutions reflecting those values would thrive, those not doing so would be compelled by virtue of economic necessity to reform.

Such bodies already exist at a diocesan level in most Australian dioceses, albeit run by the dioceses themselves, as each diocese has a Catholic Development Fund to finance parish, school and diocesan developments. So the ACDF is merely an extension of this idea allowing reforming Catholics to invest in good faith in those church institutions which reflect their values. Such a development would go a long way towards helping to realise Max Charlesworth's ideal of a democratic church and of giving it a credible voice once again within a liberal democracy such as Australia.

John Edwards (john@jsedwards.com.au) is co-author with Peter R Hobson of *Religious Education in a Pluralist Society – The Key Philosophical Issues*.

Photo provided by Hilary Charlesworth and reproduced with her permission

Mary McAleese at the Sydney Town Hall

Ron Watts

On Sunday 7th September 2014, a near full house gathered at the Sydney Town Hall for the second Rosemary Goldie Memorial Lecture, to be given by Mary McAleese, former President of Ireland.

In his introductory speech, Bishop Geoffrey Robinson referred to the life of Rosemary Goldie, an Australian woman of small stature but giant intellect, who made a great contribution in the role of the laity, over 50 years of working in the Vatican, including an important role at the second Vatican Council.

The main part of the event was conducted as an interview of Mary McAleese by Andrew West, religious affairs editor for ABC National.

Mary McAleese, since the end of her second term as Ireland's president, has been based in Rome where she is studying canon law. She was brought up Catholic in the Ardoyne area of Belfast, and studied at Queen's University of Belfast where she eventually became Professor of Law. She explained that, at the time of her appointment, this was considered to be a temporary aberration, soon to revert to the prior male-dominated status. But as more women found their way to faculty appointments, a culture change was required, so that the university has become much more accepting of female participation, and provides equal opportunity training. She made the point that in the Vatican, there is little sign of such training taking place, but that a similar culture change is required – especially as Pope Francis has said that he is actively seeking ways for women to play a fuller role in the Church. He has said that female priesthood is not on the agenda, but that women should be involved in decision-making.

Discussion turned to the forthcoming Synod on the Family to be held in Rome in October. She made the point that the questionnaire aimed at setting the agenda was framed in turgid, difficult language, and only sent out to celibate bishops around the world, few of whom shared it beyond their own offices. She proposed that the 150 hand-picked synodal bishops should have been asked only one question: "How many of you have changed a nappy?" Several, she said, had approached her to say they had indeed changed a nappy – but she

had responded: "When? At 3 a.m. when the child is screaming?" The Synod of Bishops, established by Pope Paul VI, is not actually representative of the, now, 5000 bishops worldwide, but is selected by Rome. The Synod on the Family is thus skewed, and a wider forum would be more likely to be productive. There have been moves for Mary McAleese to attend and play a role in the Synod, but she has received neither invitation nor permission to attend.

The question of Church governance was brought up. Worldwide the Church has about 5000 bishops, and they should have a role in the Church's governance, but no structure to facilitate this emerged after Vatican II, and this will need to be addressed. The early church was synodal in structure and governance, and today the Orthodox and Anglican churches are much closer to this model.

As she is now engaged with Canon Law, she made the point that the current code, of 1983, says that the People of God, should express their opinions, and hold their pastors and bishops to account, but again the Vatican Council did not provide safe structures for this to occur. Especially in the context of the revelations of sexual abuse that have come to light in recent years, this failure has been corrosive of the Church in general, and the current generation of younger adults has watched the Church come under investigation like the Mafia, the suppression of reporting of how abuses have been managed being compared to the code of Omerta, as though all the genuine good in the Church has somehow been a lie.

Mary McAleese loves the Catholic Church and will never leave it, but she has penetrating criticisms to make, and an open response of willingness to change and to heal is the challenge before the institutional church.

Ron Watts is a member of the ARC Secretariat

Book Review

Tapsell, Kieran (2014)

Potiphar's Wife: The Vatican's Secret and Child Sexual Abuse

Adelaide: ATF Abbey's, 362pp, \$42.95.

We owe the author, a retired judge, a debt of gratitude for this timely book on the sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church. Clergy and lay people need to read this analytical book which exposes the truth on this matter. Will bishops do this?

This book is a close study of canon law and statements from various church officials and popes about rules and regulations regarding sexual abuse and how to deal with it, or – more to the point – how *not* to deal with it. It is a well-documented study carefully and methodically argued.

My revelations were many. The first: How central to the dispute was Pius XI's 1922 decree *Crimen Sollicitationis*. (This decree introduced secrecy on matters of sexual abuse of minors.) In reading this book I realised for the first time how central the secrecy thing is to the problem and that we must get rid of it. Once secrecy was introduced and perpetrators were not expelled, they remained in the system to re-offend and thus the number of sexual abuse cases multiplied (and bishops got frustrated, as we have heard at the current Royal Commission).

Secondly, I was struck by how radically and disastrously this policy of secrecy departed from the historical way sexual abuse by clergy was handled in the church. Basil would turn in his grave. At one time in history the church dealt with the perpetrator, punished him, and then handed him over to the secular authorities who executed him!

My conclusion was that all secrecy must be done away with and that the perpetrator should be handed over to the secular authorities. That will involve rewriting passages of the 1983 Code of Canon Law and cancelling a few previous Vatican decrees or instructions on the topic. A radical new approach is urgently needed. Will Pope Francis be up to this?

The author brings a number of issues into clear focus: The centrality of clericalism in all this and the symbiotic relationship between clericalism and canon law; the confusion among canon lawyers; the frustration of bishops with the Vatican; the cover-ups of a number of popes; and the role of the cultural behaviour known as *bellafigura* in Italy. None of the recent popes (except John Paul II) comes out of the story smelling like a saint. If bishops and the pope ignore what this book makes clear, then all hope of an effective solution will evaporate. Take and read!

Gideon Goosen

Ministry : Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ

The words of
Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P.,
(1914-2009)

Professor of Theology, University of Nijmegen

Who could be ordained... In the early Church one could be ordained a priest or deacon in an absolute manner only if a local Community supported him/her. If local support was withdrawn their appointment was null and void.

Only someone called by a particular Community to be Pastor/Leader authentically received Ordination.

Ordination was an appointment as a Minister to a Community which called a fellow-Christian and indicated him/her as its Leader.

Hands laid on one without being asked by a particular Community were null and void.

The source of Power for Ordination came from the Community, not some external force.

No shortages... In the early Church, a shortage of priests was an ecclesiastical impossibility.

The modern so-called shortage of priests stands to be criticized because in fact it has causes which stem from outside the ministry.

There are more than enough Christians, men and women, who in ecclesiological terms possess the charisma for the Ministry without having to be clericalized.

According to the early Church they meet every requirement.

Source: Catholica

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

Please send material to:

The Editor
ARCvoice

Unit 68/28 Curagal Road
NORTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074

OR (preferably) email: Mknowlden@bigpond.com
Tel: 02 9488 7927

ARC Secretariat

Barbara Brannan 02 9451 7130
barbarabrannan@mac.com

Rob Brian 02 9371 8519 rbrian@vtown.com.au

John Buggy Spokesperson 02 9451 8393
jbuggy@ozemail.com.au

Alan Clague 07 3376 3879 clague@aapt.net.au

Amanda Jordan 0419 605 428
australisaj@optusnet.com.au

Margaret Knowlden Editor 02 9488 7927
mknowlden@bigpond.com

Peter Meury 02 4388 4809 petermeury@bigpond.com

Jim Taverne 02 9449 2923 jagota@ozemail.com.au

Ron Watts 02 9868 2665 claudew@optusnet.com.au

ARC Website: www.e-arc.org

contains all back copies of ARCvoice

+ indexes of subjects and authors

join the Yahoo Group

Standby Committee

(for special events)

Maureen Brian

Maureen Couch

Norma Piper



Annual subscription (from 1 July to 30 June): \$30
Concession: \$20 for Religious & Pensioners (NOT Seniors)
Renewal [] New Member []

Name

Address

..... Postcode

Telephone (....) Mobile

Fax (....) Email

Subscription \$
Donation (always welcome) \$
TOTAL \$

Payment can be made by cheque, money order, cash or by direct deposit to ARC's Westpac Account BSB 032-089 Account No. 14-7944 (Record your name at the bank and let us know)

Would you like to share in the work for ARC in any way? circle: YES / NO If yes, please let us know what you would want to do

send to ARC c/- Rob Brian

28 Lancaster Road, DOVER HEIGHTS, New South Wales 2030