



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics
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Editorial

The path to a committed faith and a robust morality is not an easy route for anyone. As soon as we go beyond what we have been told to believe and been told to do as a child we are influenced by a host of psychological pressures that push us in a variety of directions, often contradictory ones. It can be harder still for a person who has had a strong socialisation into a cultural or religious community because the sanctions are so all embracing that there is usually a tug of guilt, at least, that accompanies any move that appears to be away from what that socialisation taught.

It is especially true for many of those raised in the Catholic Church and who have attended Catholic schools because some of those reinforced sanctions have effects seen as reaching into an expected afterlife. Is it any wonder, then, that some of us have difficulty dealing with the whole question of how we are to use our conscience? We may find it feasible to question an authority that is set up in this world, but we wonder about the consequences of questioning an authority that we understand has come from the divine. Unfortunately, reactionary forces have silenced so many scholars in the Church who could help solve some of the dilemmas since the Second Vatican Council opened its refreshing doors.

Those who do not hold that the spirit moves the whole People of God prefer to act as if there needs to be a proscription to be followed to cover every situation as well as a set way of interpreting every belief. When this approach becomes cemented into the way the Church is administered and authority is exercised then the need for reform becomes compelling.

But reformers need courage. The majority doesn't give a lot of support to those who try to 'rock the boat' unless the boat rocking meets their immediate needs. In order to be committed to seeking reform, a person has to first

feel confident that what they desire is also 'good' and good for more people than just themselves. How does one obtain that confidence? The confidence can develop initially when we move from a concern about what people think about us to a genuine concern for the welfare of others. It is then enhanced when, in seeking that 'good' and the welfare of others, we choose to associate with people who strive for the same thing.

The Annual Conference of Australian Reforming Catholics this year, hopefully, will provide that opportunity. You need to be there.

John Buggy



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Letters

Every time *arcvoice* arrives I read it from cover to cover. Most items are interesting, but the last edition was absolutely 'spot on'. Every article, other than George Ripon's article about elected bishops, was like a bell which had rung opening up new thoughts. So many of the articles express how I think and feel and seemed to hold many of the frustrations I possess.

I find myself holding back from expressing many of my thoughts because of the language used by many of the far more educated theologians. I think that my language would be too simple and lack the depth which many of the writers in the discussion group use.

The article written by George Ripon seems to have within it the acceptance of a three-tiered, hierarchical structure, which assumes that this was the structure which Jesus left us. Jesus never ordained priests, and in my reading of the Bible, it is doubtful if he ordained Bishops. He appointed Peter to 'feed my lambs' as a pastoral keeper of the fold which is quite different from the Bishops of history and today. Also, the voting pattern which George proposes is so open to manipulation and control that in one election it would be perverted.

While on the subject of placing my thoughts on paper, one niggling irritation which has been in my mind for about forty years. At the ordination of a priest, the priest putting forward the candidate for ordination says something like this, 'My lord, after consultation with the People of God...'. Is there ever any consultation with anyone other than the priests in the seminary? Are they the people of God in the minds of the 'elite'?

As you may read from this letter, I am one of the people described by Ria van den Brandt, as being on the periphery. I do not know if I still call myself a Catholic. Living in a Buddhist Country where the group is important and individuality is shunned, where the family is strong and predominant, where people do not know what the Buddha taught but live his precepts, where I am respected because of my age (65), where no one is discriminated on account of colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender or any other reason, I feel that what I have been looking for is, perhaps, right under my nose. I still answer the question asked that I am a Catholic, but the only reason for that is ARC.

ARC is the only group in Catholicism which makes sense to me. The oppression of the past years makes me feel that the church has been used mainly as a mechanism for controlling a large group of people and using them for their own means, to obtain power and prestige (ie Santamaria, Opus Dei et al.) Every now and then a prophet arises, but is soon crushed by the powerful and placed outside the pale (e.g. Matthew Fox, Hans Kung, Paul Collins).

Michael Holdcroft
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Thailand

The Coming of the Kingdom

I suggest this should be the main thrust and concern of ARC rather than delve into trivialities like sexist language in our devotions. Does it really matter if we call God He or She?

Even the question of democracy in the church is a side issue when ordinary working people are faced with the spectre of Howard's Industrial Relations legislation, not to mention his involvement in the war in Iraq.

The status of our indigenous people and refugees to our shores need more attention than whether priests may be allowed to marry.

Opposition to the mining and development of uranium to fuel the nuclear industry is higher on my agenda than the status of women in the church.

These are social justice issues. The poor cry out to us. We must be their voice. This is what we will be judged on when the Kingdom eventually comes.

Margaret McLellan
Cardiff

Margaret, I have discussed your concerns with the Secretariat and we all thank you for your contribution and appreciate your views. We are sure the matters you raise are also of concern to all members of ARC. However, we have a specific brief in regard to the church, and taking on issues wider than reform of the church itself would involve a different approach from what we have been set up to do.

If we can get some of the reforms we are seeking, then the voice of the Church on social issues would be much stronger. But there are already social justice groups in the Church (e.g. Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace – CCJP) and we would join them if that were to be our focus. If we try to take on everything as a reform group, then we end up with confusing people who are not sure just what we are on about.

However much we would like to help solve all the world's problems, ARC has a focus on reform in the Catholic Church and that is no less valid because there are many other equally important issues. Any organisation can do only so much and, if we spread our concerns too widely, we will achieve nothing.

Editor

I am afraid I have had to ask to be excused from celebrating Eucharist with the Conference in October due to transfer in residence. I am disappointed to have to decline your offer, as I believe ARC is at the cutting edge of the Church. As each day goes by we read of some new stupidity from the Hierarchy or Institution that crushes the spirit of the people.

I have told Ozanam Network and Kinda/Catholic that I will no longer be available to work with them. This too saddens me, because like ARC this is the direction the Church needs to follow. The Institution will kill itself eventually, but this Church, The People of God will continue.

Kevin Gallagher
Chatswood

Just Look in the Telescope

John Crothers

It would appear that the Catholic Education Office (CEO) is the latest victim of Cardinal Pell's autocratic style of leadership. Recently after some restructuring within the CEO there was a need to fill a new CEO Director's position. The normal procedure of short-listing and interviewing of applicants was by-passed, and the Cardinal simply appointed a new Director of his own choice. The position was not even advertised.

This action sent shockwaves through the CEO and through the Catholic education system generally. A precedent has now been set which allows any or all of the Directors of Catholic education in Sydney to be chosen according to the whim of the Archbishop rather than through the conventional employment procedures that have been operating for many years in the Archdiocese.

CEO personnel have been devastated by Cardinal Pell's action. Not only does it reflect negatively on their own professionalism but also on the Sydney Catholic Education system in general. Without doubt the Catholic school system is something that the Sydney Church can be proud of. The success of the system has a lot to do with the professionalism and competency of the CEO directors and with the open and transparent procedures and practices on which the system is based.

Understandably those working in Catholic education are hesitant to speak out. They are in a very vulnerable position. The Cardinal's autocratic approach to the selection of the new CEO director only serves to illustrate how careful those working in Catholic education have to be.

The worrying thing is that Cardinal Pell's methods seem to be constantly causing tension and division in the Archdiocese. Indeed some of the decisions made by the Cardinal are so inflammatory that you wonder how they could have even been contemplated. The appointment of the Neocatechumenate priests to the parish of Redfern is a case in point. If there was one parish in Sydney where you would not send a highly conservative group like the Neocatechumenate it was to Redfern. Predictably the move has caused an enormous amount of conflict and hurt on all sides and there seems to be little hope of resolution, at least in the foreseeable future.

Trying to get the message across to the Cardinal is not easy. I realise that no one is happy to be criticised, particularly by one's colleagues, but those in leadership positions need to be prepared to listen to criticism. At a recent clergy meeting the point was raised that there was a perception

among many Sydney priests that the concerns of the parishes are irrelevant to the agenda being implemented in the Archdiocese. Even after lengthy debate on the subject the Cardinal still refused to accept that this was the actual perception of the priests, even though it was the priests themselves who were saying it.

It reminds me of the story about Galileo when he was trying to convince the Church authorities that not all the heavenly bodies revolved around the earth. He pleaded with them just to look into his telescope. There they would actually see that some of the planets have their own moons and hence it was logically impossible for the earth to be at the centre of the universe. In response to Galileo's plea the Church authorities replied that they had no need to look into the telescope. They already knew he was wrong.

It does not have to be this way. There is so much goodwill in the Sydney Archdiocese. There is no reason why the Cardinal cannot work with the people and organisations in the Archdiocese in a more open and trusting way. One does not have to be always confrontational.

It is becoming more and more evident that the real work of the Church in Sydney is suffering because of all the time and energy that is being spent in internal conflict. The low morale of the Sydney clergy is one result of this internal conflict. The hurt and insecurity experienced by those in Catholic education is another. Neither situation is helping the Church in its work of preaching the Gospel.

It seems to many of us that Cardinal Pell has never really succeeded in understanding or accepting the Sydney Church. Since his arrival five years ago he has been constantly trying to change the local Sydney Church to suit his own particular conservative model. This has obviously caused enormous tension in the Archdiocese and the development of two quite distinct models of Church, the Sydney model which has traditionally been moderate and flexible, and the Cardinal's own model which is far more rigid and right-wing.

Last year I was speaking to the Director of one of our Catholic agencies in Sydney and we were talking about the divisions that were developing in the Archdiocese. I suggested that we had two very different models of Church in the Archdiocese and we had to be careful that we didn't end up with two different churches. The Director replied, 'We already have two churches in the Archdiocese'.

It is time to act before the situation becomes any worse. Of course there will always be different viewpoints and different ways of looking at Church. This has always been the situation in Sydney, as elsewhere. But in the past there was a sense that, despite our diversity, we were all working together with a common goal. We need to start doing that again. □

The Catholic Church and Sexuality

Alan Clague

There is no consensus among practising Catholics regarding sexual morality. Many either perform forbidden practices or approve of others doing so. In addition, many have ceased active Church participation because of disagreement with Church teaching on sexuality. Such people do not have a sense of sin in these practices they perform or approve of, and in other areas of sexual or non-sexual morality they are in accord with the Church. Is there any reason to think that the Church is retaining restrictions from the past, based on traditions and prejudices of those times, that are inappropriate for today? At the Conference we should try to form an opinion on whether there are areas warranting review.

The following are some areas that are causing anguish to many Church members, together with some thoughts and questions on the fundamental moral issues involved.

Contraception:

Judaean-Christian traditions originated in a harsh agrarian society where survival was a struggle, and high fertility was essential to ensure continuation of subsequent generations. In today's world, our problem is overpopulation.

We also have the knowledge to prevent undesirable conception from occurring. Is there really a fundamental moral principle that says, "If you want to control your fertility, you must refrain from sex", or is this an attempt to control Catholics' behaviour by an unjustifiable taboo, a leftover from a harsher past?

The answer of Catholics with access to birth control can be seen by the decline in the birth rate.

Pope Paul VI ignored the advice of many theologians in this matter. Is it time to revisit this? When the most senior prelates of the Catholic Church can refuse an innocent woman the right to have her husband with AIDS use a condom for health reasons, are they actually throwing the Church into disrepute, and repelling people from the Church? Would Jesus have forbidden condoms to such women?

Homosexuality:

The sexual orientation of a significant percentage of humanity is directed towards the same sex. Within this group, as with the heterosexual community, some are promiscuous but many are not. Societies often reject minority groups. Until recently, European societies burnt "heretics" and "witches", and even left-handed people were "sinister". People with psychiatric illness were exorcised to remove their devils. Homosexuals also were attacked and forced underground. Society has changed its attitude to many minority groups.

The production of children is only one of the reasons for couples living together in a sexual relationship, not necessarily the paramount one. Mutual love and support have a high priority. Should the Church accept and welcome those living in an exclusive, loving, homosexual relationship who wish to live in a Christian environment?

Masturbation:

Almost everyone reading this article has masturbated at some time during their life. The Church condemns this activity as sinful, and traditionally sexual sins are considered to be "mortal". Thus, most Catholics enter into adulthood with a great burden of sexual guilt. Has this acceding to the drive to achieve sexual pleasure during a period of sexual deprivation really warranted being condemned to hell for eternity, or is this another taboo that has been imposed to maintain control over guilt-ridden followers?

The plea implicit in this article is for the Church to reconsider its teachings on sexuality, taking into account the considered opinions of all groups within the Church. It needs to sift out the important moral principles, applicable throughout history and into the future, from any elements that are not fundamental to morality, have become destructive to the well-being of many of today's Church members, and may ultimately cause great damage to the institution that received Jesus' command to lead all humanity to his Father.

of this and that! ...

The following poem was recited at Our Lady of Mercy College,
Parramatta. Its sentiments could well be applied to the Church.
(author unknown)

I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there,
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.
One was a teacher and the tools that were used
Were books and music and art;
One was a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle loving heart.

Day after day the teacher toiled
With touch that was deft and sure,
While the parent laboured side by side
And polished and smoothed it over.
And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought,
For the things they had moulded into the child
Could neither be sold or bought.

And each agreed they would have failed
If they had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the school,
And behind the teacher the home.

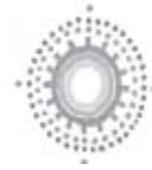
Hope

I am not an optimist,
because I am not sure that everything ends well.
Nor am I a pessimist,
because I am not sure that everything ends badly.
I just carry hope in my heart.

Hope is not a feeling of certainty
that everything ends well.
Hope is just a feeling that life and work have a meaning.
It is not an estimate of the state of the world.
It is something that you either have or you don't
Regardless of the state of the world that surrounds you.
It is a dimension of human existence.

Of course, you can also do without this dimension.
But life without hope is an empty, boring and useless life.
I cannot imagine that I could live
and strive for something if I did not carry hope in me.
I am thankful to God for this gift.
It is as big a gift as life itself.

Based on the thoughts of Vaclav Havel and Romans 5:3-5



What is our dream a century from now? who shall the shapers have been?

A century from now what shall be said of our journey in
these times?

who shall the shapers have been? ...

Who shall have shaped the future more?

The hopeful dreamers who were strong enough to suffer
for the dream?

Or the fearful pessimists who were convinced that

dreaming and hope

are for sleepers only,

not for those awake to the age?

A century from now, shall hope and humour have been
strong enough

to enable living with unanswerable questions?

Or shall the pain that a transitional age necessarily brings
have caused a retreat to old answers that no longer
acknowledge new questions?

A century from now, we shall have indeed journeyed
... backward or forward.

Direction can no longer be given by circumstance;
real journeyers know that the direction is always chosen
by those who make the journey.

Who shall choose the direction?

... So the question is still the same ...

A century from now,
what shall be said of our human journey in these times?

And who shall the shapers have been?

Lilian Smith *The Journey*, 1954



Creating a song and dance:

the prophetic role of women religious in the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand today

Elizabeth Julian RSM

A Mercy Sister presented a lengthy paper to the New Zealand Catholic Bishops at a recent Conference.

The following are the reasons why she feels deeply scandalised by the Church.

1. While the Church has addressed and continues to address the first two areas of division named by Paul (*Gal: 3:28*), ie, that between slave and free person and between Jew and Gentile, it still refuses to address the issue of sexism in the Church.
2. While the Church is called to preach a Gospel of divinely-willed equality, liberation and justice in society, it maintains structures which guarantee women's inequality.
3. While the Church is unable to find any mandate in Scripture for its claim that God willed that women be denied full access to the Sacraments, it claims it has not yet received from God any power to change this man-made teaching!
4. While the Church rightly insists that because women are human, women have full and equal human rights and responsibilities – politically, economically, socially, culturally and ecclesially – it always insists upon 'a proper or special nature', which prevents women from realising these rights.
5. While women's rights are always circumscribed by their 'special nature', men's rights are never circumscribed by their nature.
6. While our local bishops do ensure that their own documents are inclusive, they continue to allow into the country Vatican documents in exclusive language.
7. While the Church can be loud in its call to other institutions to treat women as full human beings, it refuses to do this internally.
8. While the Church teaches authoritatively that baptism is more fundamental than holy orders, and that the mission of the Church belongs to all of us, years of clericalism marginalise and exclude women.
9. While God is neither male nor female, we are forced to pray in public to a God imaged overwhelmingly and almost idolatrously as male.
10. While women have access to six sacraments in an essentially sacramental Church, they are necessary for only one – marriage!
11. While God's merciful forgiveness is freely available sacramentally, it can be mediated only through a male cleric.
12. While the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity, many women experience it as sacramental exclusion.
13. While Jesus' table fellowship was essentially and utterly inclusive, institutional arrogance sees access to the Eucharist as a reward for 'good' behaviour rather than as food for the hungry.
14. While the importance of Eucharist as source and summit of our lives is stressed, the Church's one-dimensional imagination allows people to be starved of Eucharist, rather than admit that God's eucharistic presence and grace cannot be so confined.
15. While women, precisely as women and not in spite of being women, are able to do what Christ did: bleed, feed and give life to others, male clerics have to institutionalise ways to do this.
16. While God freely chose to take up a home in the body of a woman and Jesus put his earthly existence into women's hands and allowed a woman to anoint him, the body of the resurrected Christ has somehow ended up exclusively in the hands of men.
17. While Mary is the only human being who could really say of Jesus, 'This is my body, this is my blood', the Church decrees that only males can do this.
18. While real women who really menstruate are mocked and abused by the Church, the Bishops recently complained about a TV cartoon programme depicting a statue of Mary menstruating. Experiencing some of the powerlessness women can readily identify with, the Bishops noted that many people are tired of complaints through official channels being ignored!
19. While women and men can equally image Christ through martyrdom, and women and men can represent Christ's own love in Christian marriage, half of humanity is deemed incapable of imaging Christ in the Eucharist.
20. While the Church can affirm that a humble piece of bread represents Christ and actually becomes the Body of Christ, it cannot imagine how a woman priest could be a valid representation of Christ.
21. While the Gospel teaches that the image of Christ resides most clearly in the poor and the suffering, both women and men (most clearly in Matt 25:31--46), the Church continues to be fixated on sexual similarity to the human male Jesus when it comes to imaging Christ as presider at Eucharist. □

EDITOR'S COMMENT: We challenge our Australian Bishops to invite Sister Elizabeth Julian to address them at their next conference!

International Observations

Jim Taverne

Two months ago, I received a copy of a brochure of Catholics for a Changing Church, established in London. This led to an exchange of information between ARC and 'CCC'.

To quote its website www.ccc4vat2.co.uk :

'Catholics for a Changing Church, earlier known as the Catholic Renewal Movement, began as a protest movement against *Humanae Vitae*. Within months it became a pressure-group with the positive aim of furthering the reforms of Vatican II Latterly, through its periodical, *Renew*, it has looked at the future form of the Christian faith. We feel that if we don't like what is on offer, it is incumbent on us to advance our own ideas for wider discussion, CCC is polymorphic....'

The CCC has connections with many other groups and works with them where possible. Its Patron is Hans Küng.

In his letter to the Editor, Fr. Kevin Gallagher states that 'As each day goes by we read of some new stupidity from the Hierarchy or Institution, which will kill itself eventually. But that this Church, The People of God, will continue.'

These words remind me of an article in the June 2006 issue of MV-NU (Marienburgvereniging) which quotes one of the daily papers in The Netherlands: 'Church pushes laity off the altar' to discuss the decision by the Hierarchy to forbid Word and Communion services in the absence of ordained priests.

Instead, all still mobile priests are required to 'say Mass' on Sundays one or more times in several churches located in their 'region', regardless of their experience in pastoral work. In fact, these priests would have no time for that, anyway.

What should happen is that the lay pastors are 'ordained' to add presiding at the Eucharist to their pastoral function.

Recommended Reading

Vows of Silence

The Abuse of Power in the Papacy of John Paul II

Jason Berry and Gerald Renner

New York: Free Press, 2004

Going deep behind the headlines about scandals in the Catholic Church, Jason Berry and Gerald Renner's *Vows of Silence* follows the staggering trail of evasions and deceit that leads directly to the Vatican – and taints the legacy of Pope John Paul II. Based on more than six years of investigative reporting and hundreds of interviews, this book is a riveting account of Vatican cover-ups and the tumult they have caused in the church worldwide. Both a profound criticism and a wake-up call to reform by two Catholic writers, *Vows of Silence* reveals an agenda of top-down control under John Paul II and a hierarchy so obsessed with secrecy as to spawn disinformation. *Vows of Silence* is not a book about sexual abuse; it is a book about abuse of power, throughout the Vatican.

The book cuts between the life story of Father Tom Doyle, who sacrificed a diplomatic career with the Vatican to seek justice for sex-abuse victims, and Father Marcial Maciel, an accused pedophile and founder of the militaristic religious order, the Legion of Christ. One of the most mysterious and powerful men in the Catholic Church, Maciel has built a network of priests, lay people, and elite prep schools in more than twenty countries, using the Legion as a fundraising machine to position himself as a favored figure of John Paul II.

In addition to accusations against Maciel of sexual abuse and of using Legion money for his own extravagant lifestyle, many ex-Legionaries claim that the order uses mind-control techniques to isolate seminarians and even priests from their families. And yet, because he enjoyed the protection of Pope John Paul II and members of the Roman Curia, charges against Maciel for sexual misconduct – all of which he denies – were blocked in the Vatican court system.

Primacy of Conscience?

As Cardinal George Pell continues to denounce the importance of personal conscience, he may care to reflect on the words of the present Pope who, as the theologian Joseph Ratzinger (brilliant adviser to Cardinal Frings at the Second Vatican Council), summed up perfectly the teaching of the Catholic Church after the Council:

'Over the Pope as the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there still stands one's own conscience, which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary against the requirement of ecclesiastical authority. This emphasis on the individual, whose conscience confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which is the last resort is beyond the claim of external social groups, even of the official Church, also establishes a principle in opposition to increasing totalitarianism.'

Herbert Vorgrimmler, ed. *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. V, p.134.

Step out of the shadows and feel free to 'Doubt'

Source - *Los Angeles Times*

John Patrick Shanley

(author of the play *Doubt*)

Article and quotes from the play printed with permission by John Patrick Shanley – Shanleysmoney@aol.com

Let me ask you: Have you ever held a position in an argument past the point of comfort? Have you ever defended a way of life you were on the verge of exhausting? Have you ever given service to a creed you no longer utterly believed? Have you ever told a girl you loved her and felt the faint nausea of eroding conviction? I have. That's an interesting moment. For a playwright, it's the beginning of an idea. I saw a piece of real estate on which I might build a play, a play that sat on something silent in my life and in my time. I started with a title: "Doubt."

What is Doubt? Each of us is like a planet. There's the crust, which seems eternal. We are confident about who we are. If you ask, we can readily describe our current state. I know my answers to so many questions, as do you. What was your father like? Do you believe in God? Who's your best friend? What do you want? Your answers are your current topography, seemingly permanent, but deceptively so. Because under that face of easy response, there is another You. And this wordless Being moves just as the instant moves; it presses upward without explanation, fluid and wordless, until the resisting consciousness has no choice but to give way.

It is Doubt, so often experienced initially as weakness, that changes things. When a man feels unsteady, when he falters, when hard-won knowledge evaporates before his eyes, he's on the verge of growth. The subtle or violent reconciliation of the outer person and the inner core often seems at first like a mistake. Like you've gone the wrong way and you're lost. But this is just emotion longing for the familiar. Life happens when the tectonic power of your speechless soul breaks through the dead habits of the mind. Doubt is nothing less than an opportunity to re-enter the Present.

I've set my play in 1964, when not just me, but the whole world seemed to be going through some kind of vast puberty. The old ways were still dominant in behavior, dress, morality, world view, but what had been organic expression had

become a dead mask. I was in a Catholic Church school in the Bronx, run by the Sisters of Charity. These women dressed in black, believed in Hell, obeyed their male counterparts and educated us. The faith that held us together went beyond the precincts of religion. It was a shared dream we agreed to call Reality. We didn't know it, but we had a deal, a social contract. We would all believe the same thing. We would all believe.

Looking back, it seems to me, in those schools at that time, we were an ageless unity. We were all adults, and we were all children. We had, like many animals, flocked together for warmth and safety. As a result, we were terribly vulnerable to anyone who chose to hunt us. When trust is the order of the day, predators are free to plunder. And plunder they did. As the ever-widening church scandals reveal, the hunters had a field day. And the shepherds, so invested in the surface, sacrificed actual good for perceived virtue.

I have never forgotten the lessons of that era, nor learned them well enough. I still long for a shared certainty, an assumption of safety, the reassurance of believing that others know better than me what's for the best. But I have been led by the bitter necessities of an interesting life to value that age-old practice of the wise: Doubt.

There is an uneasy time when belief has begun to slip, but hypocrisy has yet to take hold, when the consciousness is disturbed but not yet altered. It is the most dangerous, important and ongoing experience of life. The beginning of change is the moment of Doubt. It is that crucial moment when I renew my humanity or become a lie.

Doubt requires more courage than conviction does, and more energy; because conviction is a resting place and doubt is infinite; it is a passionate exercise. You may come out of my play uncertain. You may want to be sure. Look down on that feeling. We've got to learn to live with a full measure of uncertainty. There is no last word. That's the silence under the chatter of our time. □

Nietzsche on Doubt, Faith and Sin

Christianity has done its utmost to close the circle and declared even doubt to be sin. One is supposed to be cast into belief without reason, by a miracle, and from then on to swim in it as in the brightest and least ambiguous of elements: even a glance towards land, even the thought that one perhaps exists for something else as well as swimming, even the slightest impulse of our amphibious nature – is sin! And notice that all this means that the foundation of belief and all reflection on its origin is likewise excluded as sinful. What is wanted are blindness and intoxication and an eternal song over the waves in which reason has drowned.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, s.89.

A priest, Father Flynn, in his late thirties, in green and gold vestments, gives a sermon. He is working class, from the Northeast, and he introduces the play "Doubt"

What do you do when you're not sure? That's the topic of my sermon today. You look for God's direction and can't find it. Last year when President Kennedy was assassinated, who among us did not experience the most profound disorientation. Despair. "What now? Which way? What do I say to my kids? What do I tell myself?" It was a time of people sitting together, bound together by a common feeling of hopelessness. But think of that! Your *bond* with your fellow beings was your *despair*. It was a public experience, shared by everyone in our society. It was awful, but we were in it together! How much worse is it then for the lone man, the lone woman, stricken by a private calamity? "No one knows I'm sick. No one knows I've lost my last real friend. No one knows I've done something wrong." Imagine the isolation. You see the world as through a window. On the one side of the glass: happy, untroubled people. On the other side: you. Something has happened, you have to carry it, and it's incommunicable. For those so afflicted, only God knows their pain. Their secret. The secret of their alienating sorrow. And when such a person, as they must, howls to the sky, to God: "Help me!" What if no answer comes? Silence. I want to tell you a story. A cargo ship sank and all her crew was drowned. Only this one sailor survived. He made a raft of some spars and, being of a nautical discipline, turned his eyes to the Heavens and read the stars. He set a course for his home, and, exhausted, fell asleep. Clouds rolled in and blanketed the sky. For the next twenty nights, as he floated on the vast ocean, he could no longer see the stars. He thought he was on course but there was no way to be certain. As the days rolled on, and he wasted away with fevers, thirst and starvation, he began to have doubts. Had he set his course right? Was he still going on towards his home? Or was he horribly lost and doomed to a terrible death? No way to know. The message of the constellations – had he imagined it because of his desperate circumstance? Or had he seen Truth once, and now had to hold on to it without further reassurance? That was his dilemma on a voyage without apparent end. There are those of you in church today who know exactly the crisis of faith I describe. I want to say to you: Doubt can be a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty. When you are lost, you are not alone. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Quotes from the Preface to *Doubt*

- ◆ Life happens when the tectonic power of your speechless soul breaks through the dead habits of the mind. Doubt is nothing less than an opportunity to reenter the Present.
- ◆ The faith, which held us together, went beyond the precincts of religion. It was a shared dream we agreed to call Reality.
- ◆ When trust is the order of the day, predators are free to plunder. And plunder they did. As the ever-widening Church scandals reveal, the hunters had a field day. And the shepherds, so invested in the surface, sacrificed actual good for perceived virtue.
- ◆ I still long for a shared certainty, an assumption of safety, the reassurance of believing that others know better than me what's for the best. But I have been led by the bitter necessities of an interesting life to value that age-old practice of the wise: Doubt.
- ◆ The beginning of change is the moment of Doubt. It is that crucial moment when I renew my humanity or become a lie.
- ◆ Doubt requires more courage than conviction does, and more energy; because conviction is a resting place and doubt is infinite – It is a passionate exercise.

JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY is from the Bronx. He was thrown out of St. Helena's kindergarten. He was banned from St. Anthony's hot lunch program for life. He was expelled from Cardinal Spellman High School. He was placed on academic probation by New York University and instructed to appear before a tribunal if he wished to return. When asked why he had been treated in this way by all these institutions, he burst into tears and said he had no idea. Then he went into the United States Marine Corps. He did fine. He's still doing okay.



Meanwhile, down at Fisherman's Wharf, Peter has just taken delivery of the latest in Oc-Health & Safety...

Mass appeal?

Fred Jansohn

Are the Pope and senior Vatican officials fiddling while the Church burns?

From articles appearing in various US media during June 2006 it would appear so. Bringing us up to date on the issue of changing the liturgy of the Mass we are told that US bishops, yielding to Vatican pressure for an English translation that is closer to the original Latin, voted overwhelmingly (173 to 29) to change the wording of many prayers that Catholics have recited at daily Mass for more than 35 years. By all accounts more than 100 amendments to the Mass are involved. One commentator has said it could lead to 'liturgical disorientation'.

'Lord I am not worthy to receive you' will give way to '...I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof'; 'The Lord be with you/And also with you' now reads '.../And with your spirit'; 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might' changes to 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts'.

But are changes like this really necessary during a time of critical importance to the Church, when it desperately needs to reengage with an increasingly alienated membership?

The three tenets of our faith 'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again' are proposed to be replaced with 'Dying, you destroyed our death, Rising you restored our life, Lord Jesus come in glory'. While the substitute words themselves are not objectionable, gone is what was to me at least a deeper and significant meaning, proclaimed in simple, yet clear language. This would be lost on an outsider.

Moreover what merit lies in the change from the invocation of a creator of 'all things seen and unseen' to the rather leaden 'all things visible and invisible'?

Over the past 30 years church attendance everywhere has fallen dramatically; the call to the religious orders and to the priesthood is a mere trickle; some bishops and priests react with unchristian-like hostility to proposals for the

ordination of women or at suggestions that priests be allowed to marry; married couples are officially forbidden from using the contraceptive pill; no concessions are made on the issue of abortion; and in certain quarters good people who are gay are denied holy communion, publicly humiliated and branded as Godless sinners.

These are the critical issues that will make or break the Church. And yet it seems, in this instance at least, the focus of the Church in Rome consists of nothing more than window dressing.

By way of refresher, the word 'catholic' means 'of interest to all'; 'universal'. Is this now what Catholicism is all about? Is this how the Church prioritises its agenda in the name of 'universality'? It would appear the Church places greater importance on changing the wording of the Mass than to reflecting somewhat more critically and realistically on issues that alienate huge numbers of its congregation.

With the greatest of respect to my Church, its response to those issues is tantamount to pretending that nothing is wrong, fiddling while all around burns and crumbles. In its quest to connect or to reconnect, the Church is devoting attention to the wrong kind of detail, the detail that will cost it dearly, in further reduced Mass attendance, credibility and relevance in the contemporary world.

The tone is set controversially in a letter sent by the head of the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship, Cardinal Francis Arinze to the president of the U.S. Bishops' Conference, Bishop William S. Skylstad. Cardinal Arinze writes, in part: *'It is not acceptable to maintain that people have become accustomed to a certain translation for the past 30 or 40 years, and therefore that it is pastorally advisable to make no changes'*.

Cardinal Arinze would probably be surprised if he knew the issue as a whole were of marginal concern to the many millions of Catholics around the world who despair at the directions in which the current Church leadership is guiding the Church into the 21st century. These are the valued members of its disengaged community, the very members Church leaders by their routine arrogance and intolerance blithely ignore. Christ was about making change to an existing order. But was His attack not directed at the very core of prevailing thought and practice, rather than superficialities?

In addition to papal edicts no doubt we, the flock, are to assume the Church is acting from a platform created in the

Liturgical cosmetic surgery is far removed from the major attention needed on the critical issues that divide and alienate in a crumbling church.

FRED JANSOHN is a former lawyer turned qualified community services worker. He is case management coordinator at Charles O'Neill House in Surry Hills, Sydney. The House is a St. Vincent De Paul Society facility and an extension of the Matthew Talbot Hostel program for homeless men. His views are not necessarily those of the Society.

Catholic Catechism. For example at Paragraph 1202 the Catechism recites, inter alia:

Through the liturgical life of a local church, Christ...is made manifest to the particular people and culture to which that Church is sent and in which she is rooted. The Church is catholic, capable of integrating into her unity, while purifying them, all the authentic riches of cultures.

And again at para. 1204:

The celebration of the liturgy...must be proclaimed, celebrated, and lived in cultures in such a way that they themselves are not abolished by it, but redeemed and fulfilled.

Personally I find it hard to imagine what purification is achieved and how a culture is enriched, redeemed and fulfilled by what might kindly be described as an exercise in liturgical cosmetic surgery.

It is staggering to think of the many hundreds, if not thousands, of man-hours spent in deliberating these changes. Equally mind-boggling is the cost of making them a reality.

At a time when poverty is rife; civil unrest and war tear countries apart creating oceans of refugees; homelessness and alienation among many is the tragic norm; discrimination

against those from a different culture is encouraged; unemployment is high despite the statistics that appear to say otherwise; welfare services are in cost cutting mode because Governments, richer than ever, pretend to cry poor, the Church diverts its own resources to editing prayers.

Frankly, as a parishioner I would think twice before putting money in the plate knowing that a percentage is destined to help fund this extravagance.

No doubt change is necessary within the Church, as Cardinal Arinze so rightly maintains. But surely it is a change of heart and policy in respect of the critical issues described here and above. Change of that order would indeed reflect a movement with and redemption of our present culture. Unfortunately the prospect is remote. With the appointment by Pope Benedict XVI of an archconservative Cardinal, Tarcisio Bertone, to the number two position within the Church, Catholics salivating for some meaningful change will be sadly disappointed.

This article first appeared in Online Catholics Issue No. 113. It is published here their permission and with the permission of the author.

ARC's Response

When asked by *The Sydney Morning Herald* to comment on the changes in the Liturgy, John Buggy (spokesperson for Australian Reforming Catholics) replied that he had not seen the full text of the new translation, but from the examples that are available it appears that priority has been given to achieving close adherence to literal translations of the Latin instead of using language that people would more comfortably express in prayer.

Liturgy should be an expression of the way Catholics pray and if the language is unusual for them its not necessarily an advance, especially when we are trying to encourage people to participate fully in the sacraments, particularly the young.

Of particular concern is the way in which so much language used in the Church has a bias towards the incorrect notion that God is male, with the added implications of male characteristics of might, power, and dominance. New translations should address this anomaly specifically.



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John Buggy (02) 9451 8393
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ARC gratefully acknowledges
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Can you help?

We are looking for new members to join the ARC Secretariat. If you have talents and gifts to share and would like to make a personal, positive contribution towards reforming the Catholic Church, then we would love to hear from you. (NB: Internet connection essential.) Please contact:

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tel: 02 9449 2923
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PYMBLE NSW 2073

Although ARC is based in New South Wales, we are a national organisation and so are particularly interested in having more interstate members on our Secretariat.

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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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ARC Brochure

This is available on request. It includes a Membership Application form and addresses the questions:

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- How was **ARC** established?
- What does **ARC** do?
- How is **ARC** organised?

Distributing the brochure is an important way of helping our movement to grow. Enquiries:

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