

## A Welcoming Word from ARC's Interim Secretariat

**W**ELCOME to all ARC Members, prospective Members and Supporters! Step by step ARC is growing and hopes to unite all those ordinary People of God who realise that they have to make an effort to reform Christ's Church.

The structure of ARC is being deliberately left open until the most workable system evolves. Members are encouraged to organise themselves regionally in the most appropriate way for themselves. Members are also encouraged to think through their Faith. ARC is developing a Panel of Roving Ambassadors who are ready to go forth to stimulate and to inform. Regional groups might avail themselves of this and/or encourage parish groups to apply for a speaker. Smaller groups might like to think through co-operatively and in greater depth, aspects of their Faith. These Think Tanks may wish to avail themselves of the expertise of one of the Consultants from the Panel of Expert Consultants.

We currently live in a very interesting epoch when knowledge has increased exponentially and continues to do so. New light has been shone on our universe both spatially and back through time, and it is now time we re-examined our beliefs in this new light.

To be a Christian there are really only four defining beliefs which we must accept: the Trinity; the Resurrection; the Eucharist of Christ; and a structure which we call Church which makes arrangements for the Public Meal and which provides a Forum for studying the life of Christ.

The first three are mysteries which we can seek to illuminate by study, dialogue and prayer. The fourth is organisational and contentious.

What is the Church? How is it organised? How should it be organised? Jesus told us that his kingdom was not of this world. The kingdom of God is within and will settle in nicely if we discern the movement of Christ's Spirit within us. When we look at the Catholic Church today and how it has been since it became the established Church of Rome we perceive what would appear to be a kingdom of this world. Is this as it should be? It is with respect to this fourth belief that tremendous re-thinking must take place. ARC must not hesitate to sail into these turbulent seas.

Wendy Altamore has had to pull out of the Interim Secretariat because of other commitments, but she still strongly supports ARC. That leaves three septuagenarians! Sprightly though we are, and, hopefully, having accumulated a certain level of wisdom from lives spent contemplating Christ and the world, we nevertheless do appeal to the young to join in the thinking through processes and become organisationally active in reform.

In conclusion we wish to encourage speaking openly. Whether the expressed thought is true or mistaken, exposing it to criticism can only have a good result. The true statement can be honed so as to be more easily understood. The mistaken statement, instead of festering within the mind, has now been released and can be taken back to the drawing board and reworked. To discourage speaking freely as a matter of policy achieves nothing but ill-health.

May Grace be with us all.

**Barbara Campbell,  
Ted Lambert, and  
Jim Taverne**

## International Observations

**T**he First International Conference of Women's Ordination Worldwide took place in Dublin, 29 June to 1 July.

1. The text of the addresses by **Mairead Corrigan Maguire** (opening), **Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin** (keynote), **Aruna Gnana-dason** (who had to send her address because the Vatican had put too much pressure on the WCC), **Joan Chittister** and **John Wijngaards** are easily obtained from [www.wow2001.org](http://www.wow2001.org) or [www.ocw.wedcentral.com.au](http://www.ocw.wedcentral.com.au).

2. Some of our brochures were sent overseas. I sent one to John Wijngaards, who responded with: "It is amazing how all over the world the same kind of movement is starting among Catholics.

**For me this is a clear sign that the Holy Spirit herself is involved! Of course, there are also typical national differences, as is only natural in a church which is truly incardinated".**

3. This year, **The Eighth May Movement** in the Netherlands has begun the program **Colours of the New Land**. The Movement wants to challenge the 'faithful' to build up the vision of the Promised Land.

Three themes are being presented for local forums at many different localities in The Netherlands:

a) the multicultural society, which - to my mind - includes the challenge of religious pluralism;

b) the North-South relations;  
c) the problem of wealth and poverty.

The local meetings are managed by - what ARC would call - 'roving ambassadors'.

All these forums will "culminate" in the Sixteenth National Manifestation on 11 May 2002.

Note: The Chairman of the Eighth May Movement and most of its executive committee are young!

**Jim Taverne**

## Sensus Fidelium

Cyril Hallam

**A**S A RESULT of Pearl Harbour I was sent to study theology at Corpus Christi College, Werribee. During the summer vacations, since there was no transport to my home in New Zealand, I divided my time between working on a farm and helping out at the YCW leaders' camp in Melbourne. There I came in contact with the *sensus fidelium* in a challenging way.

The Werribee scripture course under Albert Power SJ was so advanced that nearly all our text books were Protestant – form criticism, etc. I found that the YCW leaders, mostly factory workers, in the sessions devoted to “gospel discussions”, used to come up with the same interpretation as Fr Power, even though they had never heard of exegesis and hermeneutics.

At the subjective level, the young workers exhibited the *sensus fidei*, a quality of the subject, upon whom the grace of faith, love, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, confers a capacity to perceive the truth of faith and to discern what is contrary to the same.

At the objective level, the *sensus fidelium*, was also manifested by both workers, seminarians and Fr Power. **The *sensus fidelium* is a charisma that flows from the gift of the Spirit in baptism and confirmation and is an expression of the presence of the grace and truth, of Jesus Christ in the Church, which consists essentially of the totality and community of all believers.**

The *sensus fidelium* is thus a basic means of understanding the faith and as such exercises a truth-finding and truth-attesting function that has as its special characteristic: **it takes into account the faithful's experience of the world.**

In another part of the YCW meeting the young workers tried to apply the mind of Christ from their gospel discussions to the concrete situations in factories under war conditions.

While on the one hand the practical decisions taken were what is technically known as prudential judgements, the young workers closed the gap between *orthodoxy* – right believing – and *orthopraxis* – right acting and living.

I felt at the time, and have never changed my view, **that the YCW system of formation through action was more efficient than the intellectual and ascetical system of the semi-**

**narians.** The Latin American basic Christian communities also unite orthodoxy with orthopraxis.

**The *sensus fidelium* is a genuine criterion of theological understanding along with sacred scripture, tradition, theology and the magisterium.**

In so far as the magisterium possesses its own apostolic function to provide authentic interpretations and to issue final decisions in matters of faith, it obviously takes precedence over the *sensus fidelium*.

**On the other hand, the magisterium does not establish the faith but preserves and communicates it as handed down by the community; it is dependent upon the *sensus fidelium* and, in that sense, is subordinate to the *sensus fidelium*.**

This was brought home vividly to me on August 15, 1950. I was studying in Rome and took two US guest priests to attend the definition by Pius XII of the doctrine of the Assumption of Our Lady. My two companions cried all the time! I remember very clearly Pius XII telling all two million of us that we did not believe the dogma because he infallibly proclaimed it but he proclaimed it because we and past Catholics believed it. This was one certain occasion within living memory when the Pope acted infallibly.

On May 1, 1946, Pius XII had sent a letter, *Deiparae Virginis* [Virgin Mother of God], to all the bishops, and through them to clergy and laity, seeking their opinion. He acted *cum clero et populo vestro* [with the priests and the people], a phrase first used by St Cyprian.

When I was appointed to our new seminary in Sydney I also acted as Asian Students' chaplain in Sydney University. Those were the heady days of the student Newman Society. One of our gurus was Yves Congar, the great French Dominican theologian. There wasn't much theology in the English language around in those days. Many of us had studied French at school so we had access to French theology as well as the Cardijn Catholic Action material.

A book which excited us was Congar's *Jalons pour une theologie du Laïcat*, later translated in 1957 by Donald Attwater as *Lay People in the Church*.

Congar dealt with *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* in a chapter entitled “The Laity and the Church's Prophetic Function”. **‘In the threefold division of the**

**Church's powers that corresponds to the same division of Christ's messianic offices – priestly, Kingly and prophetic ‘**

Congar points out that, **‘prophecy is equivalent to magisterium or the teaching function. But the word is wider than this ... The prophetic function of the Church includes all the work of the Holy Spirit in her whereby, in her present state of pilgrimage, she knows God and his purpose of grace, and makes them known to others’.** (p.258)

Congar was a master of patristics, the study of the early Fathers of the Church. They clearly distinguished between the Church as institution and means of grace and the Church as life and fellowship.

**‘The co-operation of the faithful in the Church's teaching function belongs to her life and the actual exercise of apostolic powers, not to her structural powers or acts conditioning the validity of hierarchical actions. What we find in Scripture and the old tradition is the union of an hierarchical structural principle and a principle of corporate exercise. This point is so important and decisive for the very formation of a theology of Laity’.** (p.267)

Thus in our century the mariological movement culminating in the definition of the Assumption and the theology of the Laity underscoring the relationship between the *sensus fidei* and the prophetic function of the Laity laid the foundations for no. 12 of the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

**‘The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office. It spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and charity ...The body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy One (John 2:20) cannot err in matters of belief. Thanks to a supernatural sense of faith which characterises the People as a whole, it manifests this unerring quality when from the bishops down to the last member of the Laity (St. Augustine!), it shows universal agreement in matters of faith and morals.**

**‘For, by this sense of faith which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, God's People accepts not the word of men but the very word of God (1 Thess. 2.13). It clings without fail to the faith once delivered to the Saints (Jude 3), penetrates it more deeply by accurate insights, and applies it more**

**thoroughly to life. All this is done under the lead of a sacred teaching authority to which it loyally defers.'**

This doctrine was taken up again in the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* no.14, which followed the 1987 Bishop's Synod on the Laity.

There is, thus, a complementarity between the church taught and the church teaching, in the context of ecclesial communion and co-responsibility in the **mission of the Church** in being faithful to the dynamic **mission of God**.

In the contemporary context, it is worth reflecting that the Church membership is predominantly in the 'Third World', poor, coloured and oppressed. Hence the importance of fostering genuine communion of local churches.

In our globalize world every culture is simultaneously in a state of crisis – danger, opportunity. It is only the laity who are fully present to a culture of which they are the bearers and agents of change. If inculturation is to take place, the Laity have an essential role to play.

**'The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelisation of culture, or more correctly of cultures.'** (Paul VI, *On Evangelisation in the Modern World*, no.12).

Decision-making regarding rapidly changing issues of increasing complexity calls urgently for structural innovations which facilitate co-responsibility between the magisterium and the Laity.

**ARCVOICE** is a Report of news, opinion, and reflection on the renewal and reform currently experienced in the Catholic Church. Your contributions—letters, articles, comments— are most welcome. **The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor.**

Please send material to  
Australian Reforming Catholics  
Box 228 Avalon NSW 2107

### INTERIM SECRETARIAT

A team of three will oversee this initial period.

**Barbara Campbell**

tel/fax 02 9918 8892

email: [barcam@telstra.easymail.com.au](mailto:barcam@telstra.easymail.com.au)

**Ted Lambert** tel/fax 08 8255 6051

email: [lambert@chariot.net.au](mailto:lambert@chariot.net.au)

**Jim Taverne** tel 02 9449 2923

email: [jtaverne@ozemail.com.au](mailto:jtaverne@ozemail.com.au)

## Rome Has Spoken

by Maureen Fiedler and Linda Rabben (editors), Crossroad, New York, 1998.

**Reviewed by Ann Nugent**

*Rome Has Spoken*, subtitled *A Guide to Forgotten Papal Statements, and How They Have Changed Through the Centuries* is a heartening reading for all who work for the reform of the Catholic Church. The message is clear—change is possible, in fact it is historically a characteristic of our journeying church. By quoting texts from Papal pronouncements, Vatican documents, Church fathers and theologians of the status of Aquinas and Augustine, Fiedler and Rabben show how those papal statements which proved embarrassing have been conveniently forgotten or subtly changed!

*Rome Has Spoken* has eighteen chapters. Each chapter opens with several pages of quotations ranging from early church to modern times. These pages provide an easy source for locating that obscure or elusive quotation. But quotation is frivolous without context and that is provided in the essays which are at the heart of each chapter.

Topics include Infallibility, Primacy of Conscience, The Jewish People, Contraception, Copernicus and Galileo, and Women in the Church, to name a few. Each chapter gives proof upon proof that change and dissent are strong lines in church history. Discussion questions make the book useful as a group resource as well as being a valuable aid for individual scholarship.

While, as Sheila Briggs in her essay *Conscience and the Magisterium* notes, "the pontificate of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council mark a watershed in the church's relationship with the modern world", she and other essayists document the sad side-lining of the powerful teachings of Vatican II.

Richard A. McCormick's essay on *Theological Dissent* argues that the scope allowed to dissent varies at different times. If there were no dissent then the church would really be fossilised. McCormick gives firm reasons for not interpreting dissent as "ecclesial disloyalty or doctrinal corruption". The quotations in this chapter contain excerpts from the official Notification of excommunication to Tissa Balasuriya, issued by the Vatican (CDF) in 1997. Reading those words

gave me the feeling of looking at a grotesque relic from some past dark age: an instrument of torture or the preserved severed finger of an infidel.

The arguments for the ordination of women are strongly and fluently put by Maureen Fiedler. Fiedler exposes the fundamental contradiction in the Vatican's prohibition on the ordination of women. She writes, "the Vatican does not want to oppose equality, but it has not applied the teaching on non-discrimination to ecclesial roles of any significance".

The argument that women cannot "image" Christ receives short shrift—such arguments ignore that women "are made in the image of God and that Christ is the paradigmatic *imago Dei*"...and... "they confuse many Catholics for whom "imaging Jesus" means leading a virtuous life, not having the physical characteristics of a male." The editors comment "in refusing to ordain women the Vatican lends support to every other form of gender discrimination in the world, a chilling observation in present times.

In his essay on divorce and remarriage Charles N. Davis claims that it was not until the twelfth century that the Church declared marriage indissoluble except on the death of one of the partners. Before then teachings on divorce and remarriage were more flexible, another hidden change in Church history.

Writing on Scriptural Interpretation, Alice L. Laffey states baldly, "biblical (re)interpretation has always been an integral part of the Christian tradition". She exposes the shadow of Trent which shut the Bible down for Catholic laypeople: "Let us rejoice that those days are gone; hopefully they are gone forever" she concludes.

The "sea change" in Church teaching came with Vatican II. This is obvious from the quotations and essays collected in this book. Vatican II took place in living memory yet the struggle between its vision and the reactionary forces in the Church goes on.

Fiedler and Rabben have done a great service to the cause of reform. *Rome Has Spoken* ...is a well-presented, scholarly book, and comes with an editorial guarantee for the accuracy of its

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## WOMAN UNDER THE STARS

To Cecilia

Ted Lambert, April 1982

Woman under the stars  
What dreaming are you  
doing?  
Within you is the sad time  
When in that distant southern land  
Your people gleaned the stubble  
For making bricks with mud.  
Is there a God among the gleaming  
stars,  
Or not?

Woman under the stars  
The desert sky is all alight  
With a pillar of fire by night  
And does your womb feel warm?  
The waters have been parted.  
The thunder splits the mountain  
Where lightning glances from the  
rock.  
God is.

Woman under the stars  
The land has been too harsh,  
And history too violent  
For shepherd become warrior kings  
And taken into exile.  
Prophets are long since silent  
And pagans tax your land.  
How long?

Woman under the stars  
The timeless time is come.  
The galaxies are coalesced  
And centred in your yearning deeps.  
Immense eternal fires of love  
Are banked in that untarnished  
place,  
And God is fused to flesh  
In you.

Woman under the cross  
What hides the stars from view?  
Is your gaze filmed with tears  
Or is the starless night a shock  
That horror calls to be?  
And yet, as focus clears,  
And those deep gashes, five in all,  
Not stars?

Woman under the Southern Cross  
This Spirit Land is promised you.  
The timeless gatherers look up  
As well the ones whom time has  
gathered here.  
Let who was fired by love in you  
And signed our skies  
Unite all dreaming, his and yours  
And ours.



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"introductions, quotations and discussion questions." And, there's a full bibliography.

I recommend this book for readers interested in Church history in general, but particularly for those who are concerned for the future of our beloved church.

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### **ROME HAS SPOKEN, is the recommended Reference book for all ARC members.**

Available from the Eremos Institute Bookshop for \$49.95. SPECIAL DEAL to ARC Members: \$45, plus \$4 postage. For those who are ALSO Eremos Members: \$40 plus \$4 postage. Order by phone, email, fax or post from Eremos Institute, 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta NSW 2151  
Eremos tel.[02]9683 5096; fax[02]9683 6617 email [eremosinstit@hotmail.com](mailto:eremosinstit@hotmail.com)  
website [www.eremos.org.au](http://www.eremos.org.au)

### ARC THINK TANKS

#### **BLUE MOUNTAINS NSW**

Eugene Stockton, now retired from Parish Priest duties and living in his favourite stamping ground, is willing to form a Think Tank. His areas of expertise include Aboriginal affairs/ spirituality, East and West traditions of mysticism, Australian spirituality and the Bible.

Those interested, please contact the Think Tank Coordinator, Barbara Campbell, at [02] 9918 8892, who will put you all in touch and you can decide which topics to tackle and how and when to meet. This would be our First Tank off the rank!

#### **ARC FIRST CONFERENCE**

**ARC's First Conference will be held on the first or second weekend of October 2002 in Sydney. Exact details will be ready in the ARCvoice's December issue.** Make a note in your calendar and build your year around it!

## Become a member of ARC

Donations to assist in the running of ARC would be very appreciated.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount donated \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Should the donation exceed \$20, you would be entitled to become a member of ARC. (cheques payable to 'ARC')

**YES, I would like to become a member of ARC ( ) tick**

Send to: Australian Reforming Catholics Box 228 AVALON NSW 2107.