

REMEMBERING FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE

ANNIVERSARIES ARE significant human events. Anniversaries remind us that we are not simply flotsam in history, but people with a memory, people who can treasure what has been important to us and contributed to forging our identity. In celebrating anniversaries, then, we remember that we have come from somewhere, remember that our present owes much to the past.

No matter how much we value the past, however, we cannot live there. In fact, we can celebrate anniversaries only because we recognise that the events they commemorate are indeed in the past, only because we acknowledge the difference between the past and the present. While anniversaries remind us that the past is not eternal, they also underscore that the past has been parent to the present. Even more, anniversaries offer an opportunity to imagine, to draw trajectories from the past and present into the unknown future. In short, in ways that resonate with the liturgy of the Eucharist itself, the richest celebrations of anniversaries are not simply excuses for nostalgia, but invite reflection on the relationship between our past, our present, and our future.

This issue of *Compass* focuses on a noteworthy anniversary in the life of the church: the forty years that have passed since the close of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). Although the first six articles in this volume analyse particular documents of the Council, they also embody the conviction that we can best honour Vatican II by considering its impact on the present and future, rather than treating it as primarily a matter of archival interest. In revisiting Vatican II, therefore, the articles explore its ongoing implications for the life of the Christian community. In so doing, these articles represent a moment in the church's continuing *reception* of the Council.

In recent years, 'reception' has figured prominently in theological writing. Reception involves the community of faith in the present making its own what has been passed on to it from believers in another time and place. As described by Ormond Rush, an Australian theologian who has made a major contribution to the literature on reception, 'this process of appropriation involves the interpreter in an active and creative way; the 'effect' of past events or texts is determined to a certain degree on the active 'reception' of a receiver.' (Rush 2004, 3)

Reception, then, is fundamentally a creative process: in the light of the Holy Spirit, we seek to discern how we might be faithful in the present to the Spirit revealed in the texts we accept as sacred. In order to undertake reception authentically, we must seek ever-deeper insight into both the texts themselves and the circumstances of the present. Revisiting Vatican II, therefore, can be an expression of faith in the Holy Spirit at work in both the Council and the present-day life of the church.

The articles in this volume, all of which were part of a lecture series presented at the Catholic Institute of Sydney at the end of 2005, attempt to receive in the present several key aspects of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council: 'mission' as constitutive of the church's identity (Noel Connolly); the place of Scripture at the heart of the church (Mark Kenny and Mark O'Brien); the centrality of 'the laity' (Anthony Maher); the universal call to holiness (David Ranson); the renewal of moral theology (Laurie McNamara).

Each of the articles begins by recognising that the Council itself was a crucial moment of reception in the life of the church. Vatican II, by its concentration on both a renewed appropriation of the church's biblical and patristic patri-

mony and openness to the concerns and needs of the wider world, received the tradition in ways that established breaches in the forms of life and thought that had dominated the church since the Council of Trent (1545-1563). In so doing, Vatican II represents a beginning, an opening, as much as a completed work. From this fact emerges, in part, the imperative for ongoing creative reception of the Council.

In addition to highlighting the shifts in emphasis and direction initiated by the Council, each of the articles in this volume also focuses on changes in the world since the end of Vatican II. These changes, many of them both momentous in scope and ambiguous in meaning, have shaped a world that would have been unimaginable even as recently as 1965; it is these changes that constitute the other part of the imperative for ongoing creative reception of the Council. While refraining from claims to dogmatic certainty, the articles engage with possibilities for such

creative reception. In so doing, they sketch how Vatican II might contribute to shaping the church's future.

The anniversary of the close of Vatican II reminds us where we have come from, calls us to evaluate our present in the light of the Council, and encourages us to deepen our reception of the Council's teaching for the sake of a creative approach to the future of the church's mission in the world. The hope of this volume is that these articles will encourage readers to the reflection and conversion that mark the movement of the Spirit who enlivened Vatican II.

—**Richard Lennan,**
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Guest Editor

REFERENCES

Rush, O. (2004), *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles*, Paulist Press, Mahwah NJ.

CENTENARY OF THE MSC AUSTRALIAN PROVINCE

On Saturday 10th December last, the closest Saturday to December 8th, the one hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Australian Province of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, many friends of all walks of life came to Kensington, Sydney, to celebrate the past one hundred years of MSC life and ministry and to look ahead to the future.

The guest of honour was Her Excellency, the Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir AC. She spoke after the loyal toast and thanked the MSC for the work they have done in Australia and overseas. She mentioned Father Chevalier and the great movement he began in France which then spread throughout the world.

Other special guests included Cardinal Edward Clancy; Bishop David Walker; State

Member for Heffron, Ms Kristina Keneally; Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore; Police Commissioner Ken Moroney, and our keynote speaker, Sir Gerard Brennan. Provincials and representatives of many Religious Orders were also present to celebrate with us. Cardinal George Pell was unable to be present and he sent his regrets and a message of congratulations. Several hundreds of members of the extended MSC family and many friends of the Society also joined in the celebrations. We Missionaries of the Sacred Heart felt most honoured.

The homily from the Centenary Mass and an edited version of the keynote address are included in this issue.

—**Barry Brundell MSC, Editor**