

RACISTS AMONG US

IT IS ONLY right to feel good about being Australian. We enjoy many blessings and we have a lot about which we can be proud.

Especially we can be proud of our multicultural success story. We are a very inclusive people. From the 2006 Census we learned that twenty-four percent of Australians were born overseas, and a further twenty percent have either one or both parents born overseas. Australians speak about two hundred languages.

It has been commented that we must give credit to the ordinary Australians who live in the suburbs that we live together with such harmony. 'It is ordinary Australians...with their fundamental sense of tolerance, decency and willingness to give newcomers a fair go who have lived side by side with wave after wave of new migrants and made multiculturalism work.' (Dr Nicola Henry, 'A Multicultural Australia' (*The Australian Collaboration*), summarizing Duncan *et al.*, *Imagining Australia*.)

Our noble ideal of 'a fair go for all' has been the moral principle on which our nation has been built. Because that principle has been widely adhered to, so many people have happily made Australia their home. For generations Australia has been a land of opportunity.

And we who have welcomed the stranger, the migrant and the asylum seeker have benefited. I always find my surroundings and its people interesting when I walk through the inner suburbs of Sydney. There is such a lively variety of people, sounds and sights and, in the commercial areas, shops selling goods from all parts of the world. We are by no means a boring nation.

However, we are challenged by what needs to be put right in our national life. One of the quotations I found when I googled 'patriotism' was from a speech by Carl Schurz in the US Senate many years ago: "My country, right or wrong"; if right, to be kept right; and if

wrong, to be set right.' There are inequalities and discriminations that need to be set right in our country—against women, against ethnic groups. And the often poor state of health, life-expectancy, education and welfare of our indigenous brothers and sisters is a shame on the whole nation.

One very real and pressing challenge for all of us is to deal with the racists among us. There always have been a few who expressed racist views, and these have normally been dismissed by the general population as 'ratbags'. But there has been a resurgence of violent racism recently, targeting especially our Indian guests. Such crimes are abhorrent to the rest of us, and the perpetrators must be prosecuted. Above all they must be shamed, and what better way is there of shaming them than by labeling them with the ultimate term of condemnation in our national vocabulary: 'un-Australian'?

The foregoing thoughts were stimulated by Australia Day celebrations in January. I was particularly impressed by the Australia Day address delivered by General Cosgrove, and we are grateful to General Cosgrove and the Australia Day Council of New South Wales for permission to reprint it. Particularly relevant, too, was the speech that Laurie Ferguson MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services delivered to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne last December in which he outlined our national policy towards migrants and refugees. We thank Laurie for permission to reprint his speech. Interestingly, both Peter Cosgrove and Laurie Ferguson are Catholic educated.

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We need to be vigilant and pro-active if we are to continue to live up to our reputation as a nation that welcomes the stranger.

2010 is an election year and, predictably, refugees are becoming an issue, with politi-

cians ramping up the rhetoric, on occasion indulging in their silly and cruel games of ‘Our-border-protection-policy-is-tougher-than-yours’. We all have to try to keep our politicians in line. But we also need to work to keep the public debate in line so that people who come to us for shelter will be treated with justice, fairness and generosity.

Erika Feller, the Assistant High Commissioner for Protection with the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, speaking on ABC-PM on February 18th last, reminded us of some important facts.

- Australia’s annual total of asylum seeker arrivals—including those who arrive by boat and by air—is about 6,000. This is a small number compared with the arrivals in countries such as the U.S., France, Canada, the U.K., Germany, Sweden, Belgium. Even Norway, which receives less than any of these countries, had 16,100 asylum seekers making a claim in 2009.

- Governments that put their energies into deterrents find that this approach is costly, often contravenes international conventions, and is ineffective. Ultimately it is unpopular because it is perceived to be inhumane.
- Most asylum seekers that come to Australia by boat are found to be genuine refugees from very bad situations.
- The focus of our attention needs to be on who needs protection and how to make it available.

Erika Feller also pointed out the need for all—politicians, media, associations (and we must include church communities)—to *manage* the public debate on border protection and policies on asylum seekers. It is time, she said, for strong ethical leadership supporting humane protection principles.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor

The Prophet Isaiah says we are all kin, of one flesh and blood, and perhaps never more than now. We are presented today with the disturbing reality, otherness—the simple fact of being different in some way, Muslim or migrant—has come to be defined as in and of itself evil. Increasingly we see that exclusion, us and them, has become the primary sin, skewing all our perceptions of reality and causing us to react out of fear and anger to all those who are not within in our ever narrowing circle. [...]

In light of this, we Christians must learn that salvation comes not only as we are reconciled to God and not only as we learn to live with one another, but as we take the dangerous and costly step of opening ourselves to the other. This is not easy. Jesus calls us friends, tells us to befriend and love one another in a risky and dangerous embrace which mirrors his own. When there is respect for the difference and dignity of the whole person, the love of the truth and the awareness of belonging to the one great family of peoples wanted by God and called to live under his watch in shared love, only then can the dream become real

—Chrys McVey O.P., the Las Casas Lecture 2007, delivered at Blackfriars, Oxford.

SUNSHINE AND SHADE

*Address to the New South Wales Australia Day Function at the
New South Wales Conservatorium of Music on 19 January 2010*

GENERAL PETER COSGROVE (RETD)

GOOD AFTERNOON ladies and gentlemen. I was very honoured to be asked to address you on the occasion of this annual Australia Day oration. I see from a list of the luminaries who have preceded me that the oration has become a very important part of New South Wales' observance of our national day and that has made me very aware of my obligation to speak as well as I might on a theme of significance to all of us, as Australians, as some of our overseas guests and to those not of this country who follow what we say on these seminal occasions. Just in the last several weeks, the largest country in the world, India has been watching what we've been doing in Australia very keenly and analysing most carefully things we say. I might say, that is as it should be, even if we would all wish for the reasons for such scrutiny to be different.

I have entitled what I will say to you this evening as 'Sunshine and Shade: the triumphs and tribulations of Australia in our time: things which make us great and which occasionally diminish us in our own eyes and those of the world community.' I was asked some time ago to settle on a title and a theme so you will understand that this is not some immediate reaction to recent events but there is a synchronicity which I will not fail to underscore today.

This great continent is a land of sunshine and shade: Sunshine—sometimes harsh but life-giving to the wide brown land and all who live in her; Shade—sometimes blessed in the relief that it provides from the harsh sunlight but also the repository for some of the dark moments of our existence.

Last year I was asked to deliver the Boyer lectures on ABC radio. This was another great honour and certainly one which made me put

my thinking cap on! Like all of you here over the many years of my adult life I have had a wealth of opinions on things large and small which are significant to me about our Australian way of life. In accepting to do the Boyer lectures I had to crystallise many of those opinions in the words of the lectures: a sort of 'put up or shut up' opportunity! So, like a test cricketer with a good long innings behind him, I come to you in good nick—even if I might have offered the odd catch behind during my recent stay at the crease!

Time for some sunshine! One of the most illuminating and warming aspects of our national character is our sense of compassion, generosity, selflessness and equity when we encounter the suffering and need of our neighbours in the region (and often enough, much further afield). After the first Bali bombing, many of the victims rescued and given first aid and later much more sophisticated medical treatment were ministered to by Australians. Our Disaster Victims Identification teams asked not the nationality nor ethnicity of the victims—all were treated with identical dignity and professionalism and energy. In the great grief that swept over this nation, part of that grieving was for all the innocents killed, injured or bereaved by the atrocity, not just those Australians who were victims.

When the greatest natural disaster of our lifetime, the Asian tsunami rolled ashore around the Indian Ocean on the 26th of December 2004, in a couple of short breaths well over 200,000 people were killed, the vast majority of them Indonesians and Thais and Sri Lankans. In the aftermath of this terrible tragedy, it was yet a moment to be very proud of our nation. Our men and women in uniform

and many other volunteers besides, rushed to the disaster areas with such urgency that in some cases they were the first foreigners on the ground. They encountered human and material devastation on a scale few of us can imagine and yet with a toughness and compassion that we would all envy, they got about the job of bringing hope to the hopeless and help to the helpless. Back here in Australia individuals, corporations and governments all dug deep and raised and sent staggering amounts of money for the relief operations for our hard hit neighbours. There was no stinting, no hesitation, no ambivalence, no dredging up of old sensitivities or quibbling about our own present needs—just the unqualified act of giving by the fortunate to the unfortunate. When I finally shuffle off this mortal coil, it may be this is the moment in our modern history which makes me proudest when I report in at my next destination, saying ‘Australian here!’

There was also ‘Sunshine’ for us all in 1999 when Australia played a central role in East Timor’s rocky road to independence. A profound feeling of unease felt by many people in Australia erupted into alarm and concern across the board when we saw broadcast images of violence, murder and arson leading up to the referendum and then in the aftermath. I had a front row seat in watching the force known as INTERFET, the men and women of 22 nations, bring urgent relief and safety to the people of the tiny island. Pivotal in that work were the men and women of the Australian Defence Force and many policemen and women from the AFP and State police services. Unsung but there in abundance were (I was going to say ‘ordinary’ but they were actually all extraordinary people) Australians with aid agencies, the UN and some of our other government departments, every last one of doing all in their power to help the East Timorese. Most of you will have seen much of it playing out in the media—much praise for those in the media too for the hazards they embraced in bringing the stories to you. You rightfully admired them, hundreds indeed thousands of them; so did I—the front row seat that I en-

General Peter Cosgrove was appointed in 1999 commander of the International Forces East Timor INTERFET). He was appointed chief of army in 2000, and was Australian of the Year in 2001. He retired from the army in 2005.

joyed was a rare privilege and another of those ‘Sunshine moments’.

Less well known because of all the uproar at the time in the Middle East but still very close to home, there was a lot of bright sunshine about the way in which Australians brought assistance to the Solomon Islands in 2003. The men and women who went there in their hundreds were by and large just the boys and girls typical of suburbs and towns all over Australia, yet their sensitivity and effectiveness in dealing constructively and sympathetically with the Solomon Islanders, traumatised and riven by inter-communal strife for years before the intervention, was a revelation to all who saw it.

There is a view that the events of 11th of September 2001 were so profound as to divide certain attitudes and levels of antagonism into pre-and post-9/11. Maybe so and also maybe that’s stretching it a bit but let’s bring that theory back to those periods of daylight I’ve just finished describing. Plainly Timor took place in a different time, before 9/11. Yet Bali, the Solomon Islands and the Asian tsunami all post dated 9/11. In all the cases I have described Australians behaved wholeheartedly and equitably, kindly and compassionately—in fact to a degree remarkable to many observers. Observing those Australians dealing with the people they set out to help and indeed their fellow Australians and non-Australian co-workers, would that darkest of labels, ‘racist’ have seemed justified? No, and again no!

But have past events and some commentators on those events, ‘belled the cat’? Time to pass from broad daylight into some shade. Is

there a strand of racism or perhaps pockets of racism here in Australia—undoubtedly. No multifaceted society can exist without some level of intolerance but there should be no consequent complacency on our part.

I don't think there's much to be gained by examining smaller, individual incidents which all of us will have heard about or experienced at some stage, where it is likely that there was some racist 'tinge'. One would have to live in a cocoon to avoid those casual moments which have offended our sense of equity. They occur in every society with any ethnic plurality about it. Let us instead today remember and reflect on some quite high profile, recent moments in our Australian experience. It was only about four years ago when there was significant public disorder in the Cronulla shire, violent, alcohol-fuelled and shocking. We will all remember that seemed to be an outcome of rising tension between locals and their supporters purporting to represent the amorphous majority, and an ethnic minority. Because it was so unusual and unexpected, it reverberated around the world—it was unexpected because Australia's reputation was that of an egalitarian and multi-ethnic society, tolerant, cheerful and relaxed. These perceptions can rarely be totally accurate but we flattered ourselves that they were mostly so about us! December 2005 gave us pause for thought. Yet in the aftermath, people were arrested and charged and brought before the courts for their behaviour over that period. The public thought that some of the harsh penalties handed down were appropriate and responsible authorities got busy with the vital work of bridge-building between the wider community and the group seen to be on the 'outer'. Not perhaps a perfect, enduring and 'root cause' solution but significant and well intended.

Moving further into the shade, we should consider for a moment an issue which has been brewing in this country and between Australia and India for some time but which has erupted over the last several weeks to become a major problem.

I lived for a year in India in 1994. I love

the place and the people and have been back to visit. It has its own vibrant collection of 'isms': caste-ism, nepotism and cronyism and great religious tensions and hatreds to boot. But if you are inclined therefore to think in relation to recent events about 'stones and glass houses', don't. This issue must be about us, not the messenger.

I sense in relation to the spate of attacks on largely Indian people in Melbourne and elsewhere, Australians are very concerned and disinclined to downplay, much less dismiss the potential 'racist' elements in what is becoming a litany of criminality. As usual, the poor old police are stuck in the middle, working hard, looking to be objective and reluctant to jump to conclusions and therefore copping it from all sides. The problem for us is that the criminal incidents are cowardly and sly and it is easy to conclude that they are racially-targeted. We are all dismayed that there might be some kind of warped campaign in progress. The vast majority of Australians, totally rejecting any such despicable behaviour will welcome the apprehension of those who are preying on these visitors and their rigorous prosecution. Only that outcome will satisfy our determination to be and to be known as, a just and equitable society.

In 1947 when I was born the population of Australia was 7.5 million. I grew up in Paddington in Sydney had seemed to me then that every second adult male in the suburb was a returned servicemen. Although bombed and scared and scarred by the war, the Australia in which many of us grew up, in that period seemed a cheerful place where there was optimism and perhaps relief that threats of the nature of World War II appeared to have receded for the time being. One scholar has observed that Australia in that period was in a kind of 'convalescence'. It is interesting to reflect on that—if he meant some kind of self-focused and therapeutic period of recovery, I think he was right. If he meant that there were still traces of a malaise, then I missed seeing it!

Certainly what it was, was one of the great modern immigration periods. It is that

factor that fills my memory of the time. In my suburb of Paddington and in my primary school, St Francis Xavier's, the family names increasingly were a roll-call of southern and central Europe as much as they were of British and Irish counties! Paddo was a bit rough and tumble in those days and not even the kids were unaware of the various soubriquets Aussies had and frequently used to refer to particular parts of the community. Nino Culotta that famous but fictional character reported on it!

How things have changed: if a younger Australian was transported back to those days and could listen to the casual language used by ordinary people about and sometimes to some of our recent migrants, they would faint in shock! By the standards of today, it just wouldn't do—today all that would be termed racism and there would be hell to pay! Looking back, it may have been confronting and even offensive for those new Australians who found themselves typecast with patronising verbal tags. But if racism it was, then it seemed to me at the time that it was pretty superficial. Because in the shadow of the war, it was very obvious that all of these migrants had come from a poor and damaged place to this shining new place, Australia looking to work hard, to pitch in and to make a go of it. They had made the most profound social commitment, they had volunteered to become Australians where the rest of us had had no say in the matter! Put simply, it was obvious to all of us that they had devoted themselves to assimilating into Australian society, values and culture even while cherishing and displaying their own. The heavy accents and broken English of those mums and dads are only faint echoes in the dry and arid tones of their kids and grandkids who are now indistinguishably part of our social fabric.

I wonder why what seemed so easy and unremarkable back then, the assimilation of hundreds of thousands of people for whom English was either a second language or an unknown one, is now so fraught, so front of mind. For most of my lifetime attitudes towards ethnic minorities have been irreverent but

have seemed to be without malice. I can recall on taking over a platoon of infantry soldiers in the jungle in Vietnam, the sergeant giving me a run through of the soldiers' names as we walked around meeting them. He introduced one young man as 'Wheels' which is what I called him for weeks until one day back in the base I happened to glance at the roll book and saw his real name, quite a mouthful with an eastern European origin; I challenged the sergeant as to why he called him 'Wheels' and he said plaintively 'Because I can't pronounce his real name!' 'Wheels' apparently was short for *wheelbarrow*, an infamous old Army substitute for an unpronounceable handle.

A moment or two ago I mentioned the term 'assimilation'. It's an interesting word and in an immigration context it is meant to imply the absorption of individuals and family groups into mainstream Australian society. There is an implicit understanding that this process of absorption will entail the assumption of a broad range of Australian obligations, loyalties, values and characteristics. There is nothing inherently flawed or evil in that understanding as far as it goes. For example, whether a migrant came here in 1947 or in 2009, whether the migrant stepped off a passenger liner or a sinking fishing boat near Christmas Island, all must be prepared to obey the laws of their new home. All should predispose themselves to a loyalty for and liking of our home. But that is about as far as you can go. Loyalty in its fullest sense must be earned. Our values and characteristics are not proprietorial: no section of society, no generation past or present owns or dictates those values and characteristics. Even though pundits and would-be pundits like me occasionally attempt to list our values and our national characteristics, Australian society is really best at defining them in the negative: by that I mean we all are intuitively understand when some action has deeply offended our values or when some person has displayed an 'un-Australian' characteristic. Generally and uselessly we tend to think of our values and our characteristics as 'all that is good'. Occasionally some stirrer will hand

us a characteristic he or she reckons we have that is straight-out bad and of course we all reject that out of hand!

In reflecting back to that great wave of immigration in the '50s, '60s and '70s, I think assimilation was not as useful a word as 'merge'. For sure, most of those immigrants were absorbed seamlessly into our society within one or at most two generations. But I think that it was more of a merger than perhaps we give credit for: just as so many of those immigrants now so obviously love this place as their home, respect the flag as their own and regard the old country as being just that, how much have we absorbed from them. Because it crept up on us, I think to a great degree we haven't noticed how extensively we have been enriched by their cultures and previous lifestyles.

The '50s also saw the final dismantling of the White Australia policy and an opening of Australia's doors to neighbours from Asia and Africa. With the vast majority of new immigrants thus enabled coming from Asia, a great new potpourri of cultural influences entered our broader society. Apart from a relatively few casual affronts from a white society still coming to terms with a new social pluralism, this new wave of immigration particularly from the 70s until the present day has gone very well with some exceptions. Leaping into the present day, I'll bet a great number of you are uneasy about a seam of friction between some of our ethnic minorities and elements of what I referred to earlier as the amorphous majority.

Not to beat about the bush, I refer to an ongoing estrangement between broader society and elements of our Muslim community. Our extended history way back to early colonial days shows that from time to time there have been episodes of bad blood between sections of the community based on ethnicity or very occasionally, on religion. Yet they have almost invariably been quite limited in scope and duration. Over a very long period, Muslim families have been migrating to this country. By and large they have merged into society as seamlessly as any other grouping. Mosques

have been respected places of worship around Australia for many years. It is easy to point to an estrangement between parts of the global Islamic community and all non-Muslims but especially Christians over the last 20 years or so, and obviously since the Al Qaeda attacks on 11th September 2001. I think in hindsight it could be claimed that these events and the reactions to them were simply catalysts of our further failure. By that I mean that some of our Islamic community already felt alienated and isolated from the mainstream in Australia. It is a volatile mix when especially younger people are told that they are surrounded by corrupt and impious behaviour at every hand. It is unsurprising that some of them then perform in ways which stigmatises the whole Islamic community.

All of this is exacerbated by the ongoing wider confrontation between jihadists and their range of perceived enemies around the world. In the elevated temperature and polarised views which characterise this problem, it is hard to have a neat and persuasive prescription on how we move past this. However a few observations: first, we must not be panicked into somehow changing or restricting our immigration patterns because of these sorts of issues. Secondly, we should be very careful before assigning major blame for the problem to our broad Australian way of life, as if the estrangement was all somehow our fault and we should change accordingly. The Australian people know that that is not true and wouldn't wear it anyway! Thirdly, we should continue the many and various ways we engage with the broader Islamic community and especially those who have turned away from us, to bring them back. Lastly we should remember that even over our short history we have dealt with and survived and moved on from some pretty big problems and remained as a society intact and remarkably unified.

Let me close this address in the shadow of Australia Day with some remarks about indigenous Australians. Unsurprisingly my sentiments will echo some eminent predecessors such as Peter Garrett, Lowitja O'Donoghue

and Tim Flannery. I won't therefore attempt to canvass every issue but rather to summarise what I believe is at the core of my views. We all note in the context of 26th January, that every part of this land was once trodden only by indigenous Australians, without our contemporary rules and presence. We cannot 'dis-invent' ourselves, the things we have, the life we live or the overarching rules governing that life—that's the reality. It is also a reality that indigenous Australians have been hugely disadvantaged in seeking to retain the integrity and dignity of their ancient culture. They may continue to feel as colonised as many other ancient societies did in centuries past. Yet the obverse of this colonisation is unattainable. We, the non-indigenous have nowhere to go because this is now as it has been for centuries our only home too. I believe what our indigenous people fervently desire from the rest of us is respect and the opportunity for their culture to live on; to have both the practical support and the breathing space to enable their social conditions to dramatically improve, especially in the communities; and to have this wherever possible with the least intervention and paternalism. Having said all that it is hard to see how Australians could have faced themselves in the mirror without reacting vigorously to the reports which prompted the recent interventions.

Every well-intentioned, strong initiative to try to do the right thing faces the problem of the humiliation of intrusiveness versus the effectiveness of the intent. There are no easy solutions and certainly no perfect answers.

We should not see the prospect of 'arriving at a satisfactory conclusion'. Our obligation to this foundation element of the great Australian community is endless.

Well, it is almost Australia Day! How shall we be, how shall we feel about the nation and ourselves as we emerged into the sunshine and attend one of the great public observances of the day or take the kids to the beach or fire up the barbecue. Shall we feel joyous and hopeful or remaining in the shade, shall we instead be uncertain and anxious, borne down by our imperfections and shortcomings.

I think the former—it's in our nature to be optimists, not so much because we are shallow or lazy (living the 'she'll be right' dream) but because we are a highly moral, inclusive and stable society with the precious gifts of democracy, affluence and security. Our challenges are not beyond us.

Australia is a nation of good fortune and a good future and that's a cause for celebration!

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A SENSE OF BELONGING

Address to the Parliament of the World's Religions, 4 December 2009, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne

LAURIE FERGUSON MP

I ACKNOWLEDGE THE traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered today and their continuing struggle for equity of health, education and employment access and our responsibility.

I had the great pleasure of speaking at the Melbourne pre-Parliament event in February. What is now a worldwide interfaith event has a remarkable history dating back to the first Parliament in 1893, when Swami Vivekananda's speech was considered by many to have introduced Hinduism to the scholars and thinkers of the developed world. I was impressed with this historic material. At that stage transportation led major challenges, there was no Wikipedia, and the work had been very limited written material outside the holy text themselves.

Australia's first brush with interfaith dialogue dates back to the early Macassan fishermen who according to Aboriginal oral history, interacted with the local communities and practised their Islamic prayers and traditions during their annual visits to Australia's mainland.

Today I'd like to speak to you about how the government is building a sense of belonging in a culturally diverse, multicultural Australia. I'd also like to spend some time talking about who I mean when I speak of Australians.

Australia as a Multicultural Success Story

Given that many of you are visiting Australia from overseas, what you might know of us may be based on what is portrayed in the media. Many portrayals depict a tall person of Anglo-Celtic descent; their skin tanned from working outdoors, with an easy-going manner. Despite the fact that we are the most urbanised nation

on Earth, the portrayals would also probably feature cattle and stockmen.

This doesn't illustrate the amazing breadth of Australia's cultural diversity.

Australian society is a multicultural, multilingual and multi-faith society. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), today there are approximately 22 million Australians, speaking almost 400 languages, including Indigenous languages, identifying with more than 270 ancestries and observing a wide variety of cultural and religious traditions.

Some 14 million Australians identify with a faith out of a population of around 22 million. For some 13 million people, this is Christianity, but there are many other faith communities, including those that follow Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism and Baha'i. There were also more than 3.7 million Australians who did not identify with a faith.

We are a diverse society. While many of us are migrants, or descended from recent migrants, many families have been here for longer—in the case of our Indigenous people, hundreds of generations. In fact, Australia's Indigenous peoples are custodians of some of the oldest cultural and religious traditions in the world.

One of our great Australian success stories is that our multicultural society compares well with other countries in terms of low levels of discrimination, social tension or disharmony. I understand that Australia's approach—of acknowledging and utilising the diversity of our cultures as a strength of our society—was influential in the decision of the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions to hold this event in Melbourne.

Of course, Melbourne in particular is also a

scene of much innovation in addressing these issues, such as through the Scanlon Foundation's work which I shall discuss shortly, and with past luminaries such as Frank Galbally, whose 1977 report to the Australian Government was a watershed in the harmonious settlement of migrants in this country.

Put simply, we can all belong as part of our multicultural society, here in Australia.

A survey this week by the Scanlon Foundation, a well known private philanthropic organisation in Australia, shows that the overwhelming majority of Australians—95 per cent—express a strong sense of belonging. The survey also found that 93 per cent of Australians also believe that maintaining our way of life and culture is important and 82 per cent agree that Australia is a land of economic opportunity where in the long run, hard work brings a better life.

It was encouraging to see that the 2009 survey also indicated an *increased level of trust and confidence* in the Australian Government and its policies, particularly its pursuit of social justice and equity, compared with the 2007 survey.

Nationally, the survey found that there is a relatively strong level of support for immigration and a high proportion of Australians welcome the economic benefits of immigration and the new ideas and cultures that immigrants bring. However, it is of some concern that it also showed that continued vigilance is needed. Only 28 per cent of long-time Australians in high migration areas felt safe walking alone at night compared with 62 per cent at the national level.

Likewise, levels of intolerance are also higher in areas of high migrant concentration (17 per cent among long-term Australians, 12 percent among Australia-born and 9 per cent from non-English speaking backgrounds, compared with the national average across all people of 9 per cent).

Discrimination on the basis of skin colour and national origin is about 50 per cent higher in areas of high migrant concentration, compared with the national average.

*Laurie Ferguson MP
is Parliamentary
Secretary for
Multicultural Affairs
and Settlement
Services.*

The Government's Role in Promoting a Multicultural Australia

This resilience of our society overall is no accident. Australia's social cohesion has benefited from a deliberate approach by the Australian Government and its predecessors over the years.

We realise that social cohesion and acceptance of diversity are key enablers of social and economic participation. We have invested in settlement policies and programs that help migrants start participating in all facets of Australian life. These policies are recognised as world's leading practice. During a visit to Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre in Sydney, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres said that, 'Australia has one of the best refugee resettlement programs in the world'. He told us to be more vocal in international *fora* to promote our model.

I am proud to accept this commendation on behalf of the Australian Government, and the many organisations and individuals who have contributed to this success.

These settlement services begin for those with the greatest need even before they set foot on Australian soil and might continue for some years. Our suite of settlement services delivered by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) includes our five-day offshore Australian Cultural Orientation Program (AUSCO), the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), the Settlement Grants Program (SGP), Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), Complex Case Support (CCS) and interpreting services.

In addition, we have programs that focus on all Australians that support communities under pressure. The DAP provides grants for communities to help deal with social tensions that can lead to some people feeling marginalised. The National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security (NAP) promotes, among other things, understanding and harmony between our Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Key to the success of such programs is our partnership approach with state and territory governments, the local government sector, non-government organisations and community groups.

Our knowledge and understanding of communities' needs is further enhanced through national bodies such as the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council, the Refugee Council, the Settlement Council and the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council.

Underpinning these initiatives is the government's community liaison officer network also within my portfolio of responsibilities, which can engage with some 6000 ethnic organisations and individuals to maintain a two-way flow of information on relevant issues. Furthermore, organisations such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) and other bodies provide voices for our diverse communities.

The Australian Government has also been working to build greater responsiveness and coordination of its programs under the social inclusion agenda. As many of you know, achieving access and equity of service delivery for a culturally diverse community requires strong leadership and focus from government.

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Do We Need More and Why?

While Australia is a successful multicultural society, there is no room for complacency.

An Australian study shows that a person's name alone alters the probability of being

selected for an employment interview. For those with Anglo-Saxon names, 35 per cent were invited for an interview compared with 32 per cent for Italian names, 22 per cent for Middle Eastern names and 21 per cent for Chinese names. Put another way, a Chinese Australian would need to submit five résumés to get an interview, compared with three for a person with an Anglo-Celtic Australian name and exactly the same qualifications and skills.

Similarly, another second recent study found that around 70 per cent of school students in Australia experienced some kind of admittedly undefined racist incident at some stage.

These instances reinforce that investing in Australia's social cohesion is a prudent strategy. To not make this investment would leave the actions of a misguided few as a stain on the good work of the many.

The Government's Forward Priorities

Our desire to keep improving our approach to a multicultural Australia means that we remain keen to continuously improve our existing processes and develop new policies and programs that better enable all Australians to have opportunities to participate in Australian society.

New Directions in Settlement Policy

I have been committed to Australia's refugee program throughout my parliamentary career. I see it is a program that expresses Australia's humanity and compassion; what we call 'a fair go'. I also have a long-standing commitment to the settlement sector. These people have worked tirelessly to make Australia a world leader in settlement services, as I mentioned earlier.

Australia's non-discriminatory refugee program is responsive to changing global resettlement needs to ensure that those most in need of resettlement are offered a new life in Australia. Most recently, the program has

focused on assisting refugees from protracted situations, many of whom have been languishing in camps for years—such as Bhutanese in Nepal and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Australia takes in many refugees, including children who may not have known any other life. Many refugees have no or low literacy in their own language and no English skills. Often they are illiterate in their own tongue. Older refugees have had limited opportunities for employment experience. To respond to these trends, the government undertook national consultations in the lead up to determining future providers for our core suite of settlement services.

National Settlement Consultations

We held 17 community and government consultations and 11 focus groups with refugees. These consultations were held in capital cities across June and August 2009, as well as some regional areas where many refugees live. I attended almost every consultation and the feedback that we received was very positive about our services.

However, there were also some gaps and issues around isolation, lack of youth engagement, problems accessing housing, problems accessing employment and training and some weaknesses in cultural orientation.

This helped clarify how the government can help our new arrivals make the mental and emotional re-alignment that is part of successfully settling in Australia.

Changes to Core Services

The Minister and I are looking to set out a new settlement framework—to provide a continuum of support from pre- to post-arrival for our refugee settlers, to deliver long-term sustainable settlement outcomes. This continuum covers the broad range of settlement services I mentioned earlier.

We must ensure these programs work cooperatively to support our clients on their pathway to independence. We need to provide

entrants with greater hands-on support and guidance to navigate Australian systems, to understand Australian culture and to give them every chance to make it in Australia.

We will look at working more directly with clients using a flexible client-focused approach to allow us to tap into and build on their strengths, and to develop their capacity in other areas.

Along with English proficiency, and participation in community life, we will also seek to work with clients to identify their path to meaningful and appropriate employment. This is in recognition that employment is a key settlement marker.

Part of a client-centred approach lies also in our capacity to be flexible in the intensity of support provided, such as:

- assisting people through improved pre- and post-arrival orientation information that helps them to better contextualise and absorb Australian social and cultural norms, law and order, finance and budgeting, tenancy training, health literacy and much more
- ensuring a stronger focus on youth—with greater consideration of the individual needs of our young refugees. This is important given that almost 70 per cent of the current intake is under 30 years of age (and this trend is likely to continue)
- providing entrants with more effective links to other settlement and community programs and stronger connections with community supports such as ethnic organisations, and recreation and social groups.

The feedback that I've received on our new directions has been immensely positive.

* * *

Better Ways for Local Communities to Resolve Local Issues

Earlier, I spoke of the need to do more to promote a sense of belonging for all Australians.

The program that provided support to communities to help build community relations, called *Living in Harmony*, had been operating for ten years.

The government felt that it was timely to review this program. Consequently, I launched the new Diverse Australia Program (DAP) in January, with the theme *Everyone Belongs*. It has an increased focus on addressing issues of intolerance, with more funding directed to areas of need. It empowers local groups and organisations to develop tailored solutions to local issues.

For the first time in 2008 we piloted small grants. I am pleased to say that communities have subsequently shown an increased interest in the program, leading to more than doubling of the number of projects funded in 2009. In doing so, we also assist smaller community organisations to become more experienced in seeking government funding. We were concerned that too much was going to large organisations who could pay \$5000 for university students to write 5000 submissions.

The new program retains *Harmony Day*—celebrated on 21 March each year, this day is the government’s way of encouraging school children across Australia, among others, to celebrate Australia’s cultural diversity and to raise awareness against racism and prejudice.

For *Harmony Day* in 2009, I am pleased to

say that 4401 organisations, including 2509 schools, participated.

There is also funding for emerging issues, problems that we did not see coming but will demand action.

Developing a New Cultural Diversity Policy

I would also briefly refer to the Adult Migrant English Program and the Migrant English sector. We have targeted approach for 15 to 17 year olds who have dropped out of school, increased the number of counsellors, given a stronger focus to employment outcomes and a greater assistance to individual pathways.

All Australians should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of community life and feel that they belong.

I believe that the keys to belonging are mutual respect, fairness and opportunity, leading to active citizenship.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of a very important event.

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Economically advanced nations are now heightening and expanding their borders in the face of international terrorism and undocumented migration. As a consequence, respect for human rights has been stretched beyond breaking point. Migration and border security issues have become high on the public, political and media agendas. But the UN’s Global Commission on International Migration warns, ‘Irregular migration is a particularly emotive issue, and one that tends to polarize opinion. In discussions of this issue, those who are concerned by border control and national security are often opposed by those whose main concern is the human rights of the migrants concerned. States and other stakeholders should move away from these contradictory perspectives and engage in an objective debate on the causes and consequences of irregular migration and the ways in which it might be most effectively addressed’ (Global Commission on International Migration (2005), Chapter 3, para. 15.)

—Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference), *Graced by Migration*, May 2007.

SCANDAL, ANGER AND ANXIETY

DESMOND O'DONNELL OMI

ANXIETY AND anger are part of life, and some priests recognise this when they modify the prayer before Communion to say, 'Free us from unnecessary anxiety' or something similar. However, over the past few years while counselling individual priests or giving talks to gatherings of hard-working frontline clergy, I sensed that they felt a higher than usual level of anxiety and some degree of anger. I recalled the warning in Proverbs (12.25) that, 'anxiety weighs down the human heart'

Among their main priestly anxieties they named the growing tone-deafness to religion, low Mass attendance, more marriage breakdowns, second relationships, the lost contraception issue, the diminishing desire for auricular Confession, lower numbers in the seminary, some First Communion 'pantomimes', Confirmation sometimes becoming 'the last sacrament', ambiguous faith at baptisms, weddings or funerals, some diocesan curia communication systems, changing parish structures and unfair media coverage.

However, the suffering of sexually abused children and the discovery that an even small proportion of priests are accused of contributing to this, is possibly the most immediate source of clerical anxiety or anger today. This anxiety can be conscious or subconscious, verbalized or silent, vague or focused, and it can easily lessen priestly morale and diminish pastoral energy.

Here I wish to offer a tested technique which can gradually reduce all energy-draining anxiety or anger in a relatively simple way. The use of this technique can change a high level of anxiety into healthy concern, or change burdensome anger into manageable annoyance. It

is called Rational Emotive Therapy and was proposed by Albert Ellis ¹.

Ellis points out that negative feelings depend on underlying presuppositions or expectations which we have accepted. He calls these presuppositions our Belief System. (This has nothing to do directly with faith.) An extreme situation is when a person becomes scrupulous *because* he or she believes that a cruel God expects perfect moral behaviour. An everyday example is when a priest becomes discouraged *because* he expects that the church should be full on Sundays, or feels depressed *because* he believes that cohabitation before marriage must never happen, or experiences low morale *because* he believes that priests must always be respected, or feels very angry *because* he believes that scandals should never happen. The '*because*' helps us to identify our underlying Belief System.

It is also identifiable by words like '*must*', '*should*', '*ought*'. In his lectures Ellis often used rhymes to make his point. For instance, because he discovered an alternative to psychoanalysis which claims that dysfunctionality *must* be treated by deep analysis of faulty parental relationships, he gave his students this:

Though my past was rather messy, I am now free to roam. I've stopped my nutty, musty thinking and left the old folks at home.

He points out that many of our *must-should-ought* beliefs or expectations are irrational or what he describes as 'nutty, musty thinking'. He also advised: 'never *should* on yourself'.

Another psychologist, Beck², speaks about unproductive ideas which lead to a cognitive bias. Both psychologists stated that underlying beliefs which lead to stressful feelings need to be questioned, if anxiety is to be lessened.

They recommended a constant readiness to dispute any Belief System that leads to distorted judgements which then result in excessively negative feelings. For instance, if one believes that the Church *must* always be manifestly holy, one will be excessively depressed when clerical crimes are made public. If one believes that all priests *must* live fully chaste lives and that clerical failures *must* not happen or *must not* be exposed, one will certainly be unnecessarily anxious about scandals and reports on them. Life would be better if people never failed, but to think that this *must* always be so is, as Ellis says, ‘nutty, musty’ thinking.

Feeling extreme anxiety because someone is unjust to me is built on the irrational belief that everyone *should* always treat me fairly. Of course it would be ideal if this were so. It would also have been ideal if the crime of paedophilia did not exist in society or if sexually immature men had never been ordained. But to say that these ideals *must* always happen reflects unrealistic thinking. To dispute this Belief System of unreal expectations will, in time, move one from excessive anxiety to healthy disquiet, and from oppressive anger to healthy annoyance. Here are a few current examples.

Challenged Faith

Our Belief System may be telling us that people’s faith *should* never be tested by clerical failure or that any such failure *must* damage their faith. But are these expectations true? What does history tell us? In the past, the faith of believers was severely challenged by much greater clerical scandals when, for example, a number of popes were warmongers and certainly less than chaste. How unreal—not to say unfair—it is to expect that any pope or bishop *must* be perfect.

When our anxiety results from the belief that people’s faith *should* not be tested or that it *must* be undermined by clerical failure, it is time to ask if this is true. And it is worth noting that much of the negative reaction comes, understandably, from people who were

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already hurt, from those who dislike church leaders or from some journalists who need a ‘good’ story. Most people are less than greatly bothered by the scandals, and in their wisdom they recognise that—as one lady said to me, ‘a few bad apples do not mean that the entire basket is bad’.

Decreased Mass-going

Our Belief System may also be telling us that scandals *must* result in lower Mass attendance. But is this true? There is no evidence that these are connected. Less frequent church attendance in all faiths was already on the way for other reasons, and perhaps it can be predicted to continue, as it did in France, Flanders, Spain, Quebec and is now happening in Malta and Poland (15% attend Sunday Mass in Warsaw). All of this social and religious change is well beyond clerical control. It was certainly not caused by, nor can it be changed by the priests who are already offering excellent liturgies. To set up expectations and to say that it *should not* happen is in Ellis’ phrase ‘nutty, musty thinking’ which can drain away valuable pastoral energy. While less people at Mass is far from ideal, strong anxiety or guilt about it is again built on a disputable *must*.

* * *

Respect for Clergy

Must clerical failures lead to a lessening respect for priests? Or *must* we priests be less respected because some have betrayed us? *Must* priests

continue to receive the same respect as in the past, even when they do not fail? We know now that much of what was regarded as respect in the past was not the real thing. We underestimate the feet-on-the-ground lives of people who are able to make realistic distinctions between the criminal behaviour of the few and the dedicated pastoral activity of the great majority. It is also good to be aware that we live in a great age when all respect has to be earned. It is safe to say that we can rely on people, whatever their faith, to give us the respect we earn as individuals.

Sincere people focus their reaction on accurately reported clerical crime rather than speak generically about ‘paedophile priests’. When the first revelation of the scandals emerged, the Greeley-Ward survey conducted in the year 2000 found that the great majority of Irish people still had deep respect for their local priests. And for most people the word priesthood can be vague; there are only the individual priests in their parish and priests who are their friends.

Decreasing Vocations

Must the drop in vocations to priesthood be connected to clerical failures? A few thousand young Irish men and women from dioceses throughout the country accept priests’ invitations to serve the sick in Lourdes every year. They do this at their own expense and they attend all the devotions of the pilgrimage. Many dedicated young people have also given of their time and skills to developing countries for many years. So, lack of faith, or failure in generosity, or disillusionment with clerical failures are not the cause of the vocation problem; it is much deeper than that.

Is anxiety built on the disappointed expectation that priestly vocations *must* continue to increase? And if it is, we can ask is this expectation reality-based? Vocation numbers have been falling for a long time, and while the present model of priesthood—male, celibate and life-commitment—is used, it seems

that the fall can be predicted to continue for the foreseeable future. The recent increase in seminary applicants would seem to be good news provided that we continue to discourage men who seek priesthood as an opportunity to enhance their need for power and status.

It is realistic to recognise that permanent commitment to all ways of life is decreasing, as modernity marches on. Not ideal, but who can say that it *must* never happen? While we continue to pray for and encourage carefully discerned vocations, over-anxiety about the lessening numbers is, once again, wasted pastoral energy. God may be saying something to us that we are unwilling to hear just yet.

Image of the Church

Some priests have excessive anxiety built on the expectation that the image of the Church *must* not be damaged because of the scandals. The underlying belief here is that the church *must* be perfect despite the often quoted ‘*Ecclesia semper reformanda*’. And at the same time unless we believe that all journalists and letter-writers reflect the view of the entire population, there is no hard evidence to substantiate that the image of the Church has seriously diminished for most believers. The recent scandals have given those who were already disaffected or who were already anti-church plenty of stones to throw, but whether the average Irish person or Church-goer has a lower opinion of the Church is not at all clear.

One could also ask, does any reality called ‘the Church’ really exist in the minds of most people? For the majority, the Church is embodied in their local priests and in the Mass-going congregation.

* * *

Media Coverage

Judging by priestly conversation, many feel strongly about how some of the media presents the Church, and how it seems to highlight clerical failures. Have we an underlying

belief that the media *should* always present news about the Church accurately or favourably? If we have, the media will continue to cause all of us considerable anxiety or even anger. But our expectation of the media may in itself be biased by our judgement of what is fair. Surely it can be expected that a Church which professed and preached high ideals can now be questioned and criticised about its teaching on sexuality and the practice of some of its ministers. And we know that all editors must choose a slant in the presentation of news, just as our Catholic newspapers do. We can be more realistic about press coverage of clerical failures, just as politicians and other public figures have to be every day.

More Careful Prediction

The fact all that men who might abuse children were not eliminated prior to ordination has caused considerable anxiety to many priests. It is a laudable hope that it will never happen again. But given human fallibility, *must* it be so? Anxiety can be lessened by the fact that for many years the bishops have insisted upon professional diagnostic testing for every student in our national seminary. It is noteworthy that since this initiative was introduced, together with the work of a skilled formation team, no instance of paedophile activity has been reported.

Some very recent research and opinion suggest that the risk of clerical sexual abuse of children may be partially systemic, built into present church discipline and practice on which priestly anxiety would be wasted. On this broader aspect of the subject I recommend two articles³ which in my opinion give most balanced presentations. I also recommend two books *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church* (Robinson) and *Freeing Celibacy* (Cozzens).⁴

Turning unrealistic ideals into imperative expectations can have crippling consequences. At any moment in our lives, excessive anxiety or anger about the scandals or about any of the other longer-standing problems mentioned at the beginning of this article, can be effectively lessened by the use of Rational Emotive Therapy. For all priests, this technique can prevent the loss of valuable pastoral energy at any time. St. Peter gives us the final word, 'Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you' (1 Pt.5.6)

NOTES

1. Ellis, A (1984) 'Rational Emotive Therapy' in *Current Psychotherapies*. Corsini, R.J. (Ed) Peacock Press.
2. Beck A.T.(1986) 'Cognitive Therapy' in *The Behavioural Therapist*. 9,2-3.
3. Keenan, M. *The Clergy Offender as Other* (Responding to the Ryan Report) Columba Press 2009.
4. Walsh, W. 'The Ryan Report' (*The Furrow*) Nov 2009.
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- Donald B. Cozzens, *Freeing Celibacy*, Liturgical

GRANDPARENTS

Their Witness and Presence in the Family

RON AND MAVIS PIROLA

ON OUR WEDDING day, a beautiful blessing was bestowed on us: ‘May you live to see your children and your childrens’ children’. Many years later, that blessing has been fulfilled in four children and eight grandchildren. Our family and friends have taught us that grandparenting is an adventure that is best appreciated in the context of expressions of love given and love received. In this brief presentation, we can only refer to some ways in which this is expressed.

Grandparents Often Have the Gift of Time

First of all, grandparents are usually not as rushed as modern young parents. In Australia, more than half of mothers with children under the age of fifteen work outside the home. A modern phenomenon is that weekends are especially busy times for parents as they drive their children from one activity to another and try to catch up on the household chores they couldn’t get to during the week. By contrast, many grandparents have the gift of time—time to listen, to affirm and to explore the world together.

A grandmother we know has several grandchildren and makes a point of having a special outing with a different grandchild at regular intervals. The outing is planned according to the special interests or needs of just that child so that he or she is made to feel really loved and special. In a family where usually all the children have to do the same thing together, this strengthens the sense of self-worth of the child.

* * *

Grandparents See the Inner Beauty of the Grandchild

To a grandparent, each grandchild is a wonderful mystery. Other people may look and see a pimply little child but the grandparent sees someone unique, special and loveable. But the older generation not only gives love; it receives love. Young children don’t seem to notice their grandparents’ wrinkles and the sagging skin. To them, their grandparents are simply beautiful and they tell them so repeatedly. Our own grandchildren even laugh at our jokes and ask us to tell them the same stories over and over again. So we older people are helped also to see ourselves as God sees us – loveable, good and made in his image.

The Grandparent/Grandchild Relationship is an Interplay of Mutual Benefit.

This reciprocal giving is demonstrated in many ways. For example, grandparents not only help grandchildren to play, the grandchildren in turn bring out the child within us and get us to play in ways we would never do otherwise. The other day I was talking to another older adult at a parish picnic when his five year old grandson accidentally threw a ball in our direction. My friend turned and, to the delight of the giggling little boy, pretended to be a growling monster threatening to throw him into the nearest rubbish bin but pretending not to be able to catch him. Everybody smiled and enjoyed the fun while my older friend enjoyed something he would never have done if the child had not been there.

In our own home, Mavis spends endless hours in imaginary tea parties with grandchild-

dren while at other times I am an imaginary horse on my hands and knees with grandchildren on my back. We get satisfaction out of doing something for them, but we also enjoy reliving our own childhood during those special moments.

Grandparents Provide Memories.

Memories are part of what makes us who we are and they help us to understand ourselves. Without memories our lives would be almost blank. A friend whose husband has dementia commented recently, 'He's physically there but it's as if he's not really there'. What she was highlighting was that without memories of the past, we can't engage properly in the present. For most families, the older generation is the 'Central Bank' of memories. Our grandchildren never tire of hearing stories about their own parents when they were children. Both my brothers died at the age of fifty, leaving large families. When we come together, the hunger for family memories of their father is very obvious.

Once again, the process works both ways. We help create memories with the grandchildren and these in turn revive our own memories and help us to understand ourselves better.

Grandparents and Grandchildren Help Each Other to Learn.

As a presence in the lives of grandchildren, the grandparents help pass on simple skills like how to tie shoe laces, to cook, to cut wood or to read. These are also precious opportunities to reflect to the child that he or she is loved. Recently, I helped one granddaughter to plant a tomato seed. Over the next few months it grew into a strong young plant and finally it produced its own tomatoes. It was a lesson in nature, but the biggest lesson she learned was how loved she was.

Through their involvement in the lives of grandchildren, grandparents also pass on the deeper lessons of life. Opportunities arise to discuss the inevitability of disappointments,

Prof. Ron and Mavis Pirola have four children and eight grandchildren. They have been Members of the Pontifical Council for the Family since its foundation in 1981.

the difficulty of handling failure and the importance of generosity.

Grandchildren also teach us and reduce our tendency to become fixed in our ways. For a start, they are different to our own children and they represent a new era in society. To keep up with them, we have to adapt. It is more than just new technologies and the world of iPods and X-boxes. Generation X actually thinks differently to generation Y and we are constantly having our favourite concepts challenged and tested. They keep us learning.

Grandparents are 'Significant Other Adults' in the Lives of Grandchildren

This support of grandparents starts at the most elementary level of presence – in babysitting, shopping, helping with homework and sporting activities. In Australia, nearly one fifth of grandparents are engaged in caring for grandchildren for an average of about twelve hours per week¹. That is a very high percentage when one considers how many grandparents are not able to do such caring because of geographical distance or because of poor health.

When the new capital city of Australia, Canberra, was founded, it was in the open countryside between the two largest cities, Melbourne and Sydney. Gradually, houses were built and large numbers of civil servants and their families moved in. Unfortunately, very few families came with grandparents so the city was unique in generally having only two generations living there. The absence of grandparents created social stresses that were

well recognised at the time and fortunately no longer exist as the population has aged.

Psychologists talk of the importance of ‘significant other adults’ in passing on values to children. In the pressured relationships of small nuclear families, and especially in single parent families, it is of enormous importance that parents have other relatable adults who share common values. This allows the children to hear the same messages in a variety of ways. Grandparents fulfil this role very naturally.

They can also be a ‘safety valve’ for the tensions in a family. A visit to the older generation can allow a grandchild to ‘let off steam’ in a safe environment and then return a little wiser to their parents.

Schools recognise the significance of grandparents. In Australia, a ‘Grandparents Day’ is now a regular event in the school calendar. If a child does not have a grandparent, an elderly parishioner is often invited to play a surrogate role.

Grandparents are Often Strong Witnesses to the Faith.

Nowhere is their presence more important than in passing on the faith. This is most obvious at special faith events such as the first reception of the Sacraments of Initiation. The presence of three or more generations witnesses to the love of the wider faith community.

More often, this witness is expressed through small family rituals such as grace before meals, the reading of bible stories, celebrating patron saint feast days and offering to pray for their special concerns. There are many resources, including websites, that offer ideas for family rituals and many of these are ideally suited to grandparents. This year, in preparation for Holy Week, some of our children and grandchildren gathered in our home to hear the Exodus story before a family meal. Short scripture readings were blended with quite simple re-enactments of various scenes. It all helped to strengthen our identity as a people of faith.

This faith presence and witness of grand-

parents is of special significance when one considers that over half of Australian Catholic weddings are between a Catholic and a non-Catholic. This places an extra challenge on the Catholic spouse as he or she struggles to create a climate of faith in the family. In such a situation, one young mother commented that without the loving presence and support of her own parents who witnessed to their faith, she would be tempted to stop trying.

A teenager in our parish told us that the Rosary wasn’t said in his home but that when he went to stay with his grandparents he could always hear them saying the Rosary in their room together before they went to sleep. He was sure that they said it extra loudly so that he could hear them from his bedroom but he seemed to appreciate their strong commitment to their prayers and it introduced him to the rosary.

Grandchildren also often help us to keep growing in our own faith. Every year, during Lent and Advent, our local parish school holds special liturgies where scripture is enacted by the school children. As dutiful grandparents we attend whenever possible. However, we are inspired in our own faith by the child-like expressions of faith of the youngsters.

It is important to acknowledge that most of what we are saying about grandparents applies to a large extent to older single members of the family. Single uncles and aunts also provide a major witness and presence in the family, expressed from a different perspective to that of grandparents. For example, the Exodus ritual that we just described was initiated by one of our single daughters who is also deeply involved in the lives and the faith development of her nephews and nieces.

Grandparents Provide a Sense of Continuity and Hope in the Future.

One of the biggest challenges for a child growing towards adulthood is in the realm of sexuality—their sexual identity and the value of reserving sexual activity until they can commit themselves to a permanent married

relationship. In a changing world, married grandparents can be a sign that it is not only an achievable goal but a highly desirable one. After 48 years of marriage we tell our grandchildren a wonderful secret—that Mavis is my princess and that I am her prince charming. They roll their eyes and joke about it, but they love it. Deep down every child dreams of being a fairytale prince charming or princess. As we move into adulthood, we discover that there never will be dragons to fight or castles to live in, but we never stop yearning for a love without end. Grandparents by their example can be the best teachers of the value of keeping oneself for a lifelong committed relationship.

Again, the older generation are also the beneficiaries. Grandchildren provide a sense of continuity. As we get older, we start to realise that many of our hopes and plans will never materialise. However, the most important things in life always remain and they are our relationships—with God and with each other. Grandchildren are a living expression of our relationship and provide us with a sense that our life has had meaning and purpose.

The Witness and Presence of Grandparents in the Family also Involves Suffering and Sacrifice.

One of the deepest anxieties for grandparents can be the loss of faith practice amongst their children and consequently their grandchildren. The inability to pass on the values we hold dearest can be a source of deep distress combined with a sense of helplessness when it seems that all we can do is to stand, like Mary and John at the foot of the Cross.

It is our impression that the hurt of the older generation over loss of faith practice in their grandchildren can be similar to a bereavement but without the support systems normally associated with the death of a loved one. Often friends will make comments such as ‘Well, that’s how things are these days’ or ‘They are really quite spiritual but they just don’t express it the way we do’.

Such statements contain some truth and sometimes they are all that can be said in a short conversation. However, they ignore the hurt and create a culture of denial. If hurts are denied, then they can remain unresolved and can lead to apathy and withdrawal. Since such hurts are widespread, we believe that it is an area of pastoral care that requires particular attention.

Another common source of suffering is related to divorce. Divorce radically alters the relationships within the extended family. For grandparents the pain is compounded by a greatly reduced contact with grandchildren. However, when contact can be retained, the presence of grandparents can be highly comforting and reassuring for the youngest generation as they grapple with radically changed relationships.

Grandparents as Primary Carers

A growing and specially distressing phenomenon is the number of grandparents who are engaged in primary care of grandchildren. They are only 1% of the grandparents but that is well over 20,000 in our country and the numbers seem to be growing steadily. Most often their care results from a sudden crisis related to drug or alcohol abuse amongst the parents of the grandchildren. The challenges to the older generation are enormous. They not only have the personal grief and possible sense of guilt about their own children but their grandchildren often are emotionally disturbed. There are also issues such as loss of income, loss of dreams of a quiet retirement, the re-learning of parenting skills in a very changed world and an increased stress on their own marital relationship. Suddenly they face the reality that they may die before they retire from the heavy burdens of child-rearing.

The primary care of grandchildren by grandparents occurs at all levels of our very multicultural Australian society, not just the affluent middle class and not just one particular ethnic group. Two per cent of our population is indigenous and experiences one of the worst

poverty levels in the world. In these dire circumstances, the extent to which grandparents, often the grandmother, care for grandchildren is quite inspirational.

It is worth stressing that the law does not require grandparents to undertake the primary care of their grandchildren. They could walk away from it, but rarely is this the case. Jesus was led 'like a lamb to the slaughter'² but his role was not weakness but an act of extraordinary love. Similarly, though they will feel quite desperate at times, such grandparents are acting primarily out of love.

As one such carer, talking about his grandson put it, 'Our main fear was that we would die and then what would happen to the children ... we could go another ten years without health problems but who knows what is around the corner³.' A statement such as that is an expression of selflessness with the focus on the needs of the grandchildren. Or, as another carer put it, 'It seems like you've lost your life completely and there is no end in sight, but you wouldn't have it any other way. In the end, it's all about love'.

Grandparents Witness to the Value of Life.

The final point we want to make is that grandparents witness to the importance of life. From the growing sense of their own mortality and the long experience of many years of life, they come to appreciate the wonder of each person.

Nowhere is this more evident than in their appreciation of grandchildren. As a doctor I deal constantly with patients whose health brings them face to face with the serious issues life. A yearning that is very evident in older people is for grandchildren. They may hesitate to mention it a lot to their own children for fear of putting too much pressure on them, but their longing is very evident to me.

Recently, a friend put it this way: 'Being a grandparent is like a birth three times over. This hit me in one sudden instant as I watched my first born walk from the birthing room at the hospital with *his* firstborn in his arms. It was like going in one instant from my own conception to childhood, then changing from son to parent, then from parent to grandparent. What a blessing to live this long! I had no idea what I did for my parents when our kids were born. Being a grandparent allows me to swim in an ocean of questions that only more reveal the wonder of our creator.'

NOTES

1 Australian Census Bureau, 2006

2 Is. 53:7

3 'Grandparents raising their grandchildren',

2007, Mission Australia Research and Social Policy, www.missionaustralia.com.au

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THE FACE OF GOD

TIMOTHY SMITH

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, the *anawim*, or little ones, were especially favoured by God. These people were on the margins of society and in today's terms were the unemployed, the dispossessed, widows, orphans, disabled and others. They were those whom society has rejected, and it was among these people that Jesus spent much of his time.

Even today we have such people in our society, and whilst more could be done to help them, at least today in Australian society in contrast to Jesus' time, we try help them through such means as Centrelink payments (income security), government programs (*e.g.* the housing department) and various church and charitable services.

Yet the question remains, in our modern urbanized society and especially in a large city such as Sydney, if we were to gaze upon the face of God, to see Christ in our midst so to speak, what would it look like? It is this question which this paper will hope to answer, at least for myself.

I believe the answer to this question, 'What will the face of Christ look like?' will be different for every person. For Nancy Eiseland, a Uniting Church minister who is herself disabled, the image of the resurrected Christ who is disfigured or disabled through the marks of the cross on his body is extremely liberating. For someone like Jean Vanier who founded the *L'Arche* communities, the unconditional love he has felt from its core members over the years has been a major inspiration in his life. Likewise, for Henri Nouwen, the person of Adam whom he cared for over many years had a profound effect upon his life and led him to write a book about this remarkable individual who did nothing special. Yet in doing nothing Adam profoundly affected the lives of all around him.

As a person who has worked with people

with disabilities for around fourteen years I can certainly resonate with what they are saying. I myself over the years have felt and experienced this unconditional love and acceptance of clients at times.

In particular, I would like to recount the case of a young child I worked with when I was new to the disability field. Danny was a young child approximately four years of age. He had mild autism and some very challenging behaviors such as hitting his head against the wall when he was angry. He could talk, but using only simple and single words. As such his mother was very tired and frustrated with caring for Danny and did not know what to do. To make matters worse her partner had just committed suicide. It was the time of the 1987 Wall Street crash, her partner had been heavily leveraged on the stock market and when the stock market crashed they had lost everything except his life insurance policy. This would be just enough to cover their debts and pay the house off.

So here we see an image of a mother who is suffering. She has the burden of caring for this child with special needs which she is just barely coping with. Coupled to this is the grief of losing her partner whom she loved very much and the practicalities of just putting a roof over their heads. It is a cup of suffering and a large cross to bear. It is an image of desolation, something no one should need to contemplate yet alone experience. Yet it is these emotions we find echoed in the passion of Jesus in not only the Garden of Gethsemane but in the carrying of the cross. She did not want to drink of this cup, but for the love of her son she went through the hell of her own passion and came out of it resurrected and a transformed person.

Like Jesus, she felt very abandoned at her passion by those around her. Yet if we read John's Gospel carefully, we see that Jesus is

not totally alone. As Jesus dies he is supported at his last moments by the presence of Mary his mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple (Jn. 19:26). Likewise, this woman felt at this time very alone like Jesus but she wasn't. To help her through this process was a social worker who journeyed alongside and opened doors to places she did not know existed. It was this gentle supportive presence, almost like the wings of an eagle, which helped the mother to endure and continue—wings carrying her through this very difficult time.

It was these wings that brought Danny to where I was working as a support worker at the time. She left him with us in our care for a period of time so that she could sort out her own issues. It was a place which had predominantly female staff who cared for Danny in a very gentle manner. Many of these women felt deeply for Danny's mother and in their own way suffered with her. That is, their hearts were moved with passion or compassion and they realized that the best way to help her was to care for Danny as they would care for their own children. In this way we saw that God was present in these women not only in a compassionate way, but also incarnated as a mother.

In particular, there was a male worker who worked part-time and was there for four hours of an afternoon Monday to Friday. This person was a stable male figure in Danny's unstable life at this time; a person who in many ways became a surrogate father for this child who had lost his own father tragically; a person with whom Danny formed a special bond and he would call out for him at night and during the day.

Then as we reflect upon how God was present in this tragedy, let us not forget Danny himself. At first he was very angry, confused

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and it was hell to work with him. However, over a period of time he changed and calmed down. In fact towards the end of his stay with us he would often hug the staff. In him you could see and feel the unconditional acceptance of this child who came to know those around him. He trusted those around him without reservation. Even now, many years later, I can still hear his still small voice in my mind calling out—a voice, which is small, gentle and inviting, and keeps calling me back to work with people with disabilities—a voice similar to what Samuel heard when he was first called to serve the Lord in the Temple (1 Sam. 3:1-9).

So let us return to answer the question which was asked at the start of this paper, which is, in an Australian urban context, what does the face of God look like? For me, I find Christ present in the mother who was suffering the loss of her spouse. I find Christ present as the supporting social worker helping the mother through the crisis. I find Christ present as a mother and a father caring for a child. I find Christ present in the face, unconditional love and acceptance of a child. A God who is relational and who is present in every person I meet. A God who supports us in times of despair and is incarnated into the people we meet and into the very structures of Australian society.

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Please note that some details such as location of residence, names, etc have been changed to protect confidentiality.

DOES GOD LOVE A HITLER LESS THAN A NEW BORN BABY?

MICHAEL WHELAN SM¹

WE COULD ADDRESS this question by going to the Book of Job. That book is an extended meditation on the collision of two unavoidable facts—the fact that we believe in a loving God collides with the fact that good people are sometimes crushed and wicked people sometimes thrive. Although we are not going to focus on that particular book here, it will be helpful to keep it in mind. We Christians are sometimes reticent to enter that scandalous territory with Job. The words of Job himself remind us to stand before the Mystery in courage and hope:

Then Job answered the Lord:
I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

.....

I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not
know.

.....

I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you.²

Pat Robertson, the well-known American televangelist, manifested quite a different way of thinking recently. On January 13 2010, while speaking on the Christian Broadcasting Network's '700 Club' in the United States, he said that the people in Haiti had made a pact with the devil and then suggested that the earthquake—which has probably killed in excess of 200,000 people—is God's punishment.

I doubt there are many Christians who would be prepared to agree with Pat Robertson on this. However, there is, I believe, a widespread moralism in the Christian culture that

might actually be closer to Robertson than Job. Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this is the belief in the gospel of health and wealth, found predominantly amongst evangelicals, particularly in the USA. According to this belief, God loves us and it is not His will that we be poor or sick, therefore if we 'claim' this 'truth,' health and wealth will be ours.

A more subtle form of this same kind of thinking can be found in the Catholic tradition. At the risk of being simplistic, it goes something like this:

If you behave yourself (*i.e.* do the 'right thing'), God will love you and you will be rewarded by God. If you do not behave yourself (*i.e.* do not do the 'right thing'), God will not love you and you will be punished by God.

In this presentation I am going to argue that the reward-punishment approach to God—no matter how gauche or how subtle—does not do justice to Divine Revelation. More importantly, I am going to argue that God's love is unchanging and unchangeable, that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or less. Stark as it might sound, I do believe God loves a Hitler with the same infinite love that God loves a newborn infant.

This raises at least three critical issues.

First and foremost, it raises the issue of *interpretation* of the Sacred Scriptures. For example, there are many texts—in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures—which speak of our relationship with God in terms of reward and punishment. Just this week, for instance, the Liturgy of the Word gives us the story of David's terrible choice in 2Samuel 24.³ The story begins with God's

anger blazing out against the Israelites. God incites David to take a census. Why, we do not know. David takes the census and is punished for it. He gets the choice of punishments: three years of famine on the land or flight for three months before their enemies or three days' pestilence in the land. David chooses pestilence. God duly sends the pestilence and seventy thousand men die. On Ash Wednesday this year we hear the reading from the Gospel of Matthew (6:1-6) where we are promised that God rewards us when we give alms in secret and pray in secret. And of course there is the powerful Last Judgment scene as portrayed in the same Gospel (see 25:31-46). Surely we cannot avoid thinking of our relationship with God in terms of reward and punishment?

The other two issues are more concrete and more obviously interrelated. The second issue is that of *motivation*. Put simply, why be good if God is going to love me anyway? The third issue is that of *accountability*. If we do not think in terms of reward and punishment, how is wickedness dealt with, whether it is responsibility for the ordinary transgressions of folks like you and me or responsibility for the horrendous transgressions of monsters like Hitler?

Before we address these three issues, however, I will reflect briefly on what I believe to be the two primary streams of thought about God found in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Scriptures.

* * *

There is a story told of a young newly-ordained Irish priest sent to Australia in the 1950s. He finds himself appointed to a huge parish in Western Sydney. The parish priest is a wonderfully kind man but a bit gruff. In his first conversation with the young Irish priest, he asks, 'Did they teach you how to preach in the seminary?' 'Indeed they did. We had a whole course on preaching,' the young priest answers. 'Well you can forget everything they told you,' says the parish priest. 'The people here are good, simple, down to earth folk. Many of them don't understand English too well.

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What you need is tricks to get their attention. For example, you might say, 'I'm in love with a beautiful woman' and pause. When they're all looking at you, say, 'Yes. I'm in love with Mary, the Mother of Jesus.' You need to have some tricks up your sleeve son, not theological analysis or pious exhortation.'

That Sunday the church is packed. The congregation is restless and noisy as normal. As the young priest climbs nervously into the pulpit, out of the corner of his eye he catches sight of the imposing figure of the parish priest standing in the sacristy. His mind goes blank. He blurts out: 'The parish priest is in love with a beautiful woman.' He stops and stares at the sea of expectant faces. After a long pause, he stammers, 'And for the life of me I can't remember her name!'

I would like to speak of two beautiful women and what they tell us of God's love. The first is my mother—who died on April 26 2009—and the second is Joy Lauer, wife of Tony Lauer, the former Commissioner for Police in NSW.

One day in January 1962, I was travelling back from Lighthouse Beach in Ballina with my family. There should have been thirteen of us in that Ford Customline—Mum and dad and eleven children. As it turned out, there were only twelve of us.

When we were about seven or eight kilometres from the beach, someone asked where Paul was. Paul was the baby, eighteen months old. It seems we had left him on the beach. When this fact became known in the car, my mother cried out, 'Oh my baby!' Now, you should know that my mother was a very reserved sort of person,

she did not easily manifest her emotions. But I can still hear her cry at that moment.

In the First Book of Kings (3:16-28) we hear the same cry from a mother. You know the story. There are two mothers, each with a baby. One mother accidentally rolls on her baby in the night and smothers it. She claims the other baby. Solomon must show his wisdom in deciding which one is really the mother of this surviving baby. He suggests cutting the living baby in half, knowing full well that the real mother will react instantly to that suggestion. The King James Version says it well: 'Her bowels yearned upon her son.'

The Hebrew word used here—and translated as 'bowels'—is *r'cham*. It is frequently used to refer particularly to the womb or more generally to the viscera. By extension various forms of the word came to mean 'to have compassion.' In the story of the Covenant as outlined in Exodus 33:18-34:9, the word is applied to God three different times—twice in 33:19 and once in 34:6. This is echoed beautifully in Isaiah 49:15-16:

Can a woman forget her nursing child,
or show no compassion (*r'ham*) for the child
of her womb?
Even these may forget,
yet I will not forget you.
See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my
hands.⁴ (NRSV)

We might call this *visceral* love. The Hebrew Bible has no hesitation in saying that God's love for us is like this. In the Christian Scriptures we have a similar description given to Jesus. For example in Matthew 9:36—when Jesus saw the crowd 'like sheep without a shepherd'—the Jerusalem Bible says 'he *felt sorry* for them.' The Greek word is *esplagchnisthe* and it comes from the word *splagchna* meaning the nobler viscera—heart, lungs, liver and intestines. In passing we might note the weakness of the English translation. English words like 'sorry,' 'pity' and 'compassion' hardly do justice to the deep, visceral content of these words as used in the world of Palestine—then as now.

With three notable exceptions—for example, the father of the prodigal son is 'moved with compassion' when he sees the returning son on the horizon—the word and its cognates are always used of Jesus.⁵

Joy Lauer appeared on the ABC TV program, 'Australian Story,' in March of 2003. Joy and her husband Tony, adopted a girl, Tanya, about fifteen years after the birth of the last of their three children. Tanya was an attractive and talented young girl but she became addicted to heroin. When Tanya had three children of her own—the eldest was twelve and the youngest was eighteen months—the State moved to place those children in foster care. To prevent that, Joy and Tony Lauer—now in their mid-sixties—adopted Tanya's three young children.

There is a beautiful and powerful moment in the interview in which Joy speaks of her relationship with Tanya:

People sort of say to you, 'Look, why do you bother with her? She's an addict. She's always going to be an addict. Once an addict always an addict.' But they're your children. You don't get a guarantee when you take children on. You don't get a guarantee they're all going to turn out right. You give them a good education. Do you then say, when they don't take the path you hope they will, 'Well, I'm finished with you, out you go'? You love them. You love them for what they are. And I can't turn that off. I love my children with a passion. And I love my grandchildren the same way. And drugs haven't changed that. I can't turn my love off for Tanya. Even though she's not my flesh, I love her.⁶

In the Hebrew Bible, the Prophet Hosea is asked to take a prostitute as his wife. He is to be faithful to her even though she is not faithful to him. The significant word used of this relationship is *hesed*.⁷ The nearest English word is 'kindness.' *Hesed* is generally used with the word *emet* meaning 'faithfulness.' Together they point to a faithful, committed love. For example, Abraham's servant, speaking to Isaac's wife-to-be (Genesis 24:27) and God speaking to Moses in renewing the covenant (Exodus 34:6). The concept is repeated a

number of times in the Psalms, for example Psalm 25:10, 40:11, 61:7, 85:10, 86:15, 89:14, 115:1, 117:2 and Psalm 118 where the phrase, ‘His love is everlasting!’ is repeated in the first four verses.

We might call this *deliberate* love. The Hebrew Bible has no hesitation in using the example of the prophet Hosea’s deliberate choice of a prostitute as his wife to describe how God loves us. Psalm 103 has a beautiful intermingling of the visceral with the deliberate:

Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love (*h^es^ed*) and
mercy (*r^ah^am*)
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.⁸

Verses 8-17 of this same Psalm, where the word *h^es^ed* is repeated three more times in verses 8, 11 and 16 and the word *r^ah^am* is used again in verse 13, could, I believe, be read as a summary of the covenant.

The Gospel of John puts it about as concisely as possible: ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.’⁹

* * *

We must now turn to the three critical issues mentioned earlier. It will be helpful, however, if we recognise some basic limits and possibilities as we approach those issues.

I begin with a quaint expression of Fr Austin Woodbury SM, the founder of the Aquinas Academy. He said we must never forget that our language about God is always ‘likey, notty and morey.’ That is, whatever we say about God, it is *like* this, it is *not* this, it is *more than* this. Thus, if I say, ‘God is love,’

I am actually saying something like this; ‘Go to the lookout called ‘love’—not the lookout called ‘hate’—and gaze towards the horizon of ‘love’ as we understand it and you will get a faint inkling—‘in a glass darkly’ (1 Corinthians 13:12)—of what God might be like.’

Recall the story of Moses’ encounter with God in the burning bush.¹⁰ Along with the promise, ‘I will be with you’ in verse 12, there is the wonderfully tantalizing revelation of God that simply invites us to stand unknowing before the Mystery in verse 14.¹¹ John Courtney Murray, that remarkable Jesuit scholar who contributed so much to the Second Vatican Council, says of this passage from Exodus:

The text (Ex 3:1-15) ... contains a threefold revelation—of God’s immanence in history, of his transcendence to history, and of his transparency through history. God first asserts the fact of his presence in the history of his people: ‘I shall be there.’ Second, he asserts the mystery of his own being: ‘I shall be there as who I am.’ His mystery is a mode of absence. Third, he asserts that, despite his absence in mystery, he will make himself known to his people: ‘As who I am shall I be there.’ The mode of his transparency is through his action, through the saving events of the sacred history of Israel. However, what thus becomes known is only his saving will. He himself, in his being and nature, remains forever unknown to men, hidden from them.¹²

I will now consider each of the issues raised, beginning with the last and working back to the first.

The third of the issues raised—that of *accountability*—is, I believe, the most intractable. There is, in the end, no satisfactory answer. Yes, every thoughtful and honest adult knows something of his or her accountability for decisions and actions taken. Indeed it is a sign of maturity to accept accountability for one’s decisions and actions. Likewise, law and order in the community demands that we hold people accountable for their actions. But this takes us only so far. When wicked or simply shrewd people take the reins of power—as Hitler and the Nazis did—any accountability we might expect or even demand, fails us. How then are

people like Hitler held accountable?

In the face of such a question, there is no adequate answer. We simply do not know the answer to this question and we should not pretend that we do. Like Job we stand before the Mystery of God in trust. We trust the promise, 'I am with you,' and we trust the Subject of that promise. In the end, we accept the crucifying experience of absence. Jesus' cry of desolation comes to mind: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'¹³

The second issue—that of *motivation*—calls for and allows a practical and realistic response. The motivation for seeking the good and the true and aligning my life with those, is firstly that such an orientation is the best way to thrive as a human being. We do not thrive in hatred and spitefulness and deceit and violence, *etc.* Rather, we thrive in love and care and honesty and forgiveness *etc.* Our deepest longings are for these. We are in fact repelled by the prospect of aligning ourselves with evil. Of course, thriving as a human being in this way might put you at odds with a particular society or culture. For example, many good men and women found themselves the victims of the hatred that Hitler and his agents unleashed in Germany. However, this is no reason to abandon the conviction that it is in our best interests as human beings to always seek the good and the true, no matter what the cost.

There is, I believe, an even deeper reason for seeking the good and true. The more I align myself with the good and true, the more I will recognise and actually know the Good and the True as such. I will gradually and increasingly come to know God and God's infinite love and that this love of God is unchanging and unchangeable, that there is nothing I can do to make God love me more or less. I can of course act in ways that will disconnect me from God's love, ways that might lead me to feel that I am not loved unconditionally. I suggest that would be hell. The choice is mine. God's choice has already been made and it is the choice to love you and me infinitely.

The first issue—that of interpretation—likewise calls for and allows a practical and

realistic response. We find some valuable guidance in our Catholic tradition in approaching this issue of interpretation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* gives us a guiding principle for interpreting the Sacred Scriptures:

The Christian faith is not a 'religion of the book.' Christianity is the religion of the 'Word' of God, a word which is 'not a written and mute word, but the Word is incarnate and living.' (St. Bernard, *S. missus est hom.* 4, 11: PL 183, 86.) If the Scriptures are not to remain a dead letter, Christ, the eternal Word of the living God, must, through the Holy Spirit, 'open [our] minds to understand the Scriptures' (cf Luke 24:45).¹⁴

In the word we seek the Word. This seeking cannot be done without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The word of Scripture is potentially a special place of intimacy with the Word who seeks to abide with us and in us.¹⁵

The opening comments of Pope Benedict XVI, in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, offer a further significant guidance:

'God is love, and if you who abide in love you abide in God, and God abides in you' (*1 Jn* 4:16). These words from the First Letter of John express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of humankind and its destiny. In the same verse, Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: 'We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us'. *We have come to believe in God's love*: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his or her life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. Saint John's Gospel describes that event in these words: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should ... have eternal life' (3:16).

In the Church's tradition, there is a very special ritual process for enabling this encounter with the Word. We call it *lectio divina*. This is primarily a communal activity in which the Scriptures are proclaimed and meditated in

the assembly of believers. Time is given to being still and listening. The word is ‘chewed’ like a ruminant chewing on its cud—to use a metaphor common in medieval writings—and the texts’ nutrition seeps into the community’s bloodstream.

The Liturgy of the Word in the celebration of the Eucharist is obviously a primary context for *lectio divina*. Individuals are encouraged to do this in private as well. Scholarly study of the Scriptures emerges from and flows back into *lectio divina*. Thus one modern writer speaks of this practice, referring to another metaphor commonly used in the early writings about reading the Scriptures, that of the mirror:

If all things bear the marks of their maker, of none of them, save man, is it said that it is made in his image. Evidently, then, the man who would draw near to God would do well to attend to what he can see in his image. Once he has taken up this standpoint, he will eventually discover himself in a mirror-filled room. For, apart from what God holds up to him in the universal features of his human nature, there is that other portrait of himself that God holds up to man in holy Scripture, where we shall find not only God revealing himself, but also the features, comely and unpleasant alike, of man to whom the revelation is made. We too often fail to realize that one of the primary purposes of holy Scripture, considered as a vital whole, is to show man to himself, as he was made and as he has become, as he acts and reacts in relation to his maker, with *nothing* left out. Hence the violence and crudity and sensuality that God there pushes in front of our noses, even if we would, to our very great danger, prefer to turn away. The God of the Bible does not whittle down the truth, and we must not try to do so either.¹⁶

With this in mind, let us take up the story of Jephthah from chapter eleven of the Book of Judges. I believe it can offer us a paradigm case for addressing the issue of interpretation.

Jephthah is the son of a prostitute. His step brothers cast him out because of this. But Jephthah is also a great warrior. When the Ammonites attack the Israelites over a land claim, the elders seek Jephthah’s help. At first he is reluctant

because of the earlier rejection. However, the elders agree to make him their leader if he will fight with them against the Ammonites. Jephthah agrees and seeks a negotiated settlement with the Ammonites. The Ammonites refuse negotiations so Jephthah launches an attack. Before he does this however, he promises Yahweh that, if Yahweh gives the victory to Israel, he will offer up as a holocaust the first person to come out from his house to meet him on return. The Israelites win the fight and Jephthah is greeted by his only daughter on his return. The daughter is allowed to ‘bewail her virginity’ for two months before Jephthah treated her ‘as the vow he had uttered bound him.’

What are we to make of such a story and the many like it in both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures? Are we to assume that God is well described by these stories that are so clearly extensions of the immediate human experience?

I do not believe we have to accept, on face value, the suggestion that God gave the victory to the Israelites and demanded the holocaust of Jephthah’s daughter in return. This would fly in the face of the revelation of God in and through the covenant of love.

First and foremost, this is a very human story. This story—like all the other stories of reward and punishment in the Bible—tells us much more about a particular group of human beings, their peculiar expectations and their cultural practices than it tells us of God. It might be useful to remember Luke’s image of the birth of the Saviour in the stable. The Eternal Word is born amidst the mud and the straw, the chaos and the stench. Throughout history the Word is seeking to be born in the mud and the straw, the chaos and the stench of human affairs. We must expect that. We must listen for that as a community. We must not blame God for the mud and the straw, the chaos and the stench. We must also maintain our conviction that God is Love. God always was and always will be Love, eternal, infinite, unchanging, unchangeable, unconditional Love.

* * *

St John of the Cross, one of the greatest

spiritual guides in the Christian tradition, sees our life in Christ potentially reaching a point 'where there is no longer any way because for the just man there is no law, he is a law unto himself.'¹⁷ As we mature, and we are stripped of our fears and pretences and fictions and compulsions that stand between us and the love of God, reward and punishment become less and less an issue.

Reward and punishment prevail in our treatment of brute animals. Reward and punishment are somewhat important in the life of children and the immature. But we expect adults to be motivated by something beyond reward and punishment. It is a mark of maturity to behave according to principle, even when it costs us. More particularly, it is a mark of a mature Christian life to be moved primarily by the experience of God's love and to go where that takes us, no matter what the immediate outcome.

Now it may be the case that very few people reach this kind of maturity. That is not the

point. The point is that this level of maturity is available to us as human beings. A life beyond the expectations of reward and punishment is potentially ours. Surely it is entirely appropriate to think of our relationship with God as being beyond reward and punishment also?

I conclude with a note from Pope John Paul I:

God is our father: even more, God is our mother. God does not want to hurt us, but only to do good for us, all of us. If children are ill, they have additional claim to be loved by their mother. And we too, if by chance we are sick with badness and are on the wrong track, have yet another claim to be loved by the Lord.¹⁸

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1 This is the text of a presentation given by Michael Whelan At St Mary's Parish Church in North Sydney on February 4 2010.

2 Job 42:1-5. NRSV

3 Wednesday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time, Cycle II.

4 It is beyond the scope of this presentation to attempt anything like a thorough discussion of the Hebrew word *rechem* and its cognates. For such a scholarly discussion see Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, Volume 3*, translated Mark E Biddle, Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, 1225-1230.

5 For a more complete discussion of this concept see William Barclay, *New Testament Words*, SCM Press, 1955/1980, 276-280. See also Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, editors, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, William B Eerdmans, 1994, 265-266.

6. From the transcript available on the internet at www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2003/s932510.htm.

7 For a more complete discussion of this concept, see Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *op. cit.*, Vol. 3, 449-464.

8 Verses 1-5. NRSV

9 John 3:16. NRSV.

10 Exodus 3:1-15.

11 Scholars are uncertain of the exact meaning of the so-called Tetragrammaton, or the 'four letters,' YHWH. Most English translations say 'I AM WHO I AM' or something similar. Interestingly, the KJV says, 'I AM THAT I AM.'

12 John Courtney Murray, *The Problem of God: Yesterday and Today*, Yale University Press, 1964/1977, 10f.

13 See Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. See also Psalm 22:1.

14 No 108.

15 For example, John 15:4: 'You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you.'

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18 *Osservatore Romano*, September 21 1978.

WAS SAINT JOAN OF ARC A PROPHET?

REG NAULTY

THE INTRODUCTION to The New American Bible states ‘a prophet is a man who speaks for God and to his own times.’¹ And he speaks because he is inspired. There is another sense of ‘prophecy’, continues the Introduction, which has it that a prophet makes predictions, but that is, strictly speaking, not prophecy. Some who were prophets had this gift, but it is a gift additional to prophecy.

The argument here is that St. Joan of Arc, though not a man, as the above definition seems to presume, was a prophet in both these senses; she was an inspired speaker, particularly to those in power, and she made predictions which were confirmed by the event.

In Joan’s case, this inspiration came through intermediaries. She identified them as St Michael the archangel and the saints Catherine and Margaret. Her English captors questioned her about her voices, suspecting that they might be demonic, which would have automatically brought down the death penalty, since it would have proved she was a witch.

Joan was, understandably, reluctant to discuss her voices with them, and did so only when the voices permitted her to do so. ‘She said she knew her spirits were good because they always helped her...she also admitted that initially she was uncertain that it was indeed Michael; she was afraid; she saw him many times before she knew it was St. Michael.’²

Evidential questions had been put to Joan well before her acquisition by the English. [She had been originally captured by the Burgundians. They sold her to the English for 10,000 francs.] Joan had been experiencing visions and voices from the age of thirteen. Initially, they told her to be a good girl and go often to church. Over time, it became clear that they

were delivering a mission: ‘to take up arms like a man, raise the English siege of Orleans, and see that the Dauphin [the Crown Prince] was crowned King of France. The voices told her that she would be wounded in battle, and that a great victory would be won against the English within seven years.’³

The mission must have seemed to Joan bizarre and terrifying. But her voices became so insistent that she obtained an audience with Robert Beaudricourt, who commanded the king’s forces at Valcouleur. He dismissed her as a joke, as she must have suspected he would. But she had predicted an imminent defeat for the French. When that happened, Beaudricourt sent her to the Dauphin.

She gained an audience with him in March 1429. He disguised himself as a courtier, but she identified him without any trouble. In private audience with him, she showed that she knew his daily personal prayer, which he thought no one knew. She convinced him of her mission, and asked for troops to lead to Orleans.

Charles’ courtiers thought she was mad, so he sent her to a council of theologians for questioning. It cleared her. He gave her troops for Orleans, where they defeated the English. She won another victory against them on the Loire, and Charles was crowned King Charles VII in July 1429.

So within four months, a good deal of Joan’s mission was accomplished. The English were beginning to be rolled back, and Charles was crowned king.

However, the enemy still held Paris and parts of Normandy and Burgundy. So Joan went on campaign again, which led to her capture at the siege of Compeigne. It is not clear whether Joan engaged in this siege at her

voices' command, or whether it was her own military decision.

In the event, her accusers dropped the charge of complicity with the devil, and convicted her of heresy, the ability to see apparitions, and wearing men's clothes. Joan had worn them to make travel easier, especially in the early part of her mission. Her accusers regarded her as a 'cross-dresser'.

Joan mentioned, in her defence, her knowledge of the Dauphin's prayer, which is what had convinced him, but her judges dismissed it. Confirmation of this point by Charles himself would have strengthened her case, but he never sent representations to her trial, nor did he attempt to buy her back from the English.

The highly improbable success of Joan's mission is itself an argument for divine intervention. Throughout her mission, there is evidence of information that could not have come from a natural source. So the case for her being a prophet is a strong one.

There is a question one cannot help asking about her mission. Why did God want the English out of France, and why did He want Charles VII, an unimpressive man, on the throne? One can only speculate about the answer. Joan died in 1431, late in the medieval period. The Middle Ages were passing, and a significantly different age was coming. Perhaps it was essential for God's Providential Governance of the world that France be an independ-

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ent power in the coming years.

The case of Joan of Arc shows that prophecy occurs in the post Biblical world, and by implication, may occur in our world. Though good news in itself, that creates uneasiness. Doesn't it imply that we are going to have to decide who is, and who is not, a genuine prophet? Yes, it does. But we should remember that a cynic is one who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. Some things are worth paying for. God sees the future and we do not. Surely it is worth taking a patient, though critical, attitude towards apparent prophets.

Joan's life makes the important point that though lay persons cannot be ordained priests, they can be prophets.

NOTES

1. The New American Bible. Catholic Bible Publishers. Wichita. Kansas. 1977-78 Edition. P.11.

2. Rosemary Ellen Guiley. Encyclopaedia of Angels. Facts on File. New York. 1996. P.103.

3. Ibid. p.102.

*'Children say that people are hung
sometimes for speaking the truth.'*

—Joan of Arc.

PARTICIPATING IN THE NEW CREATION

A Theological Appreciation of Work

HENRY L. NOVELLO

IT IS COMMONLY acknowledged that Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which was promulgated against the backdrop of the rise of modern industrial society, inaugurated a new beginning for Catholic social thought and that it represents a kind of *magna carta* for modern Catholic social teaching. This is evidenced by the fact that Popes subsequent to Leo XIII, namely Pius XI (1931), Paul VI (1971), and John Paul II (1991), all promulgated encyclicals that revised and updated the analyses of *Rerum Novarum* in light of changing economic, social, and political conditions. The manner in which each newly promulgated encyclical revisits and re-evaluates the earlier ones alerts us to the evolving character of Catholic social teaching as open to the dynamics of history and seeking to discover new tasks in the process of humanizing our world. In other words, Catholic social teaching is truly focused upon reading the signs of the times and is therefore an arena of the development of doctrine (Coleman & Baum, 1991, ix).

The purpose of this essay is to offer an appraisal of John Paul II's encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (*LE*) by bringing his understanding of the meaning of labour into dialogue with Miroslav Volf's proposed theology of work which is set forth in his book *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*. The essay will show that there is a significant degree of overlap between these two thinkers on the subject of human work, but it will also seek to highlight some weaknesses in the encyclical that are overcome by Volf's explicitly eschatological and pneumatological perspective of

human work.

In order to do this, the first part of the essay will present the core of *LE*, which is the portrayal of the person as the subject of work, and the implications of this view for employer-employee relations, while the second part will discuss Volf's portrayal of work as work in the Spirit, and how this perspective sheds light on potential weaknesses in *LE*. The essay will conclude by proposing that the eschatological concept of the 'new creation,' which features in Volf's theology of work, is preferable to the protological notion of 'dominion over the earth' (Gen 1:28) that forms the basis of John Paul II's reflections on the meaning and purpose of human work.

The Human Person as the Subject of Work

John Paul II begins his encyclical by pointing out that while his reflections on work are in 'organic connection' with the whole tradition of Catholic social teaching, at the same time our situation today calls for 'the discovery of the *new meanings of human work*...the *new tasks* that in this sector face each individual, the family, each country, the whole human race, and, finally, the Church herself' (*LE* 2). Talk of the need for 'discovery' implies that we do not yet possess all the elements necessary either for an adequate analysis of the current situation or for identifying definite tasks for the future (Schasching, 1982, 137).

The encyclical is therefore an attempt to offer some deeper insight into the nature of work that is both continuous with scripture and tradition, yet offers something new to the

question of the purpose of work. In particular, as will become clearer in what follows, John Paul II, as well as Volf, are keen to ascribe *inherent* and not merely instrumental value to the activity of work, so that theological reflection on work becomes fundamental (not marginal) to the task of theology (Volf, 2001, 70).

The first encyclical on human labour, *Rerum Novarum*, addressed the problem of a 'slave-like situation' introduced by the industrial revolution where labour had become a form of merchandise. Notwithstanding the many positive changes that have taken place in the organization of labour in some parts of the world, in the global context *LE* laments that the 'objective' aspect of labour prevails over the 'subjective' dimension, so that the merchandise-quality of labour is still very much a negative reality that prevents work from 'making life more human' (*LE* 3).

The subjective dimension of work is the core of John Paul II's understanding of work. While the encyclical includes many aspects of an ethical and philosophical understanding of human work, the Pontiff explicitly states that his starting-point for reflection on this important issue is 'the mystery of creation' (*LE* 4, 12). As made in the image of God (Gen 1:26), the human has received the mandate to be 'fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it' (Gen 1:28). The person is placed at the very centre of work which is designed to bring about human self-actualization.

What is presented in the biblical creation story is human work as a sharing in the activity of the Creator, so that in a sense we have here the first '*gospel of work*' (*LE* 25). In the past the concern of the Church was to bring the word of the Gospel into the world of labour (*i.e.* the Gospel *for* the world of labour), but in addition to this concern John Paul II wants to introduce the notion of the Gospel *of* human work. The latter expresses the insight that work should not merely be seen as a human activity requiring a certain moral behaviour; rather, work contains in itself an evangelical message inasmuch as it is the means whereby the person becomes more fully human. 'In this

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sense, *Laborem Exercens* intends not only to give to work its rightful place in human society but to open a new vision, and to call forth new efforts to arrive at a deeper understanding of the theological meaning of human work' (Schasching, 1982, 145). This argument is fully supported by Volf's major contention that there is an urgent need to replace an ethic of work by a comprehensive theology of work that portrays the meaning of work in terms of active cooperation with God in bringing about the 'new creation' (Volf, 2001, 69-87).

From the standpoint of the person as the subject of its work (*LE* 6), John Paul II pleads for a system of labour that places the personal-spiritual above the material and encourages workers' 'effective participation in the whole production process' (*LE* 13). If the production process does not respect the person as the subject of work, the result is not only economic damage but first and foremost damage to humankind and society (*LE* 15). True humanisation of work, as Volf also acknowledges, requires that workers have the right to participate actively in the management of their work (Volf, 2001, 70). Furthermore, the personal character of work requires the 'socializing' (*LE* 14) or joint ownership of the means of production (capital). This does not mean that the means of production should become the property of the State, as in Marxist collectivism; rather, John Paul II affirms private ownership, although this is conceived as giving each worker full entitlement to being 'part-owner of the great work-bench at which he is working with every one else,' in which

case the position of ‘rigid’ capitalism, which defends the exclusive right to private ownership of the means of production, is in need of ‘constructive revision’ (LE 14).

Given that at the beginning of work there stands the mystery of creation and the right to common use of the goods of the earth and the goods produced by labour, the right to private property must always be subordinated to the common good. Work, then, is seen by John Paul II as ‘*the essential key* to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of man’s good’ (LE 3).

This new vision is critical of both ‘liberal capitalism’ and ‘Marxist collectivism’ for not upholding the primacy of the spiritual in work, and, moreover, we must not think that what is being envisioned is some sort of ‘middle ground’ between these two economic world-views (Baum, 1991, 60); rather, both are criticized as deficient inasmuch as they are based, in their respective ways, on a purely economical model of human being that fails to uphold the dignity of humanity created in God’s image and called to participate in the activity of the Creator.

In addition to the creation story, the Pontiff relates work to the paschal mystery of Christ (LE 27), although this is more stated than developed, perhaps because an earlier encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (RH), published in 1979, had highlighted the idea that by virtue of the Incarnation the Son has ‘in a certain way united himself with each human being’ (8, 13, 18). It is this marvellous event that ultimately establishes the inalienable dignity and worth of every human being.

In light of the mystery of redemption, the Pontiff sets up an important relation between Christ and the Church by using the metaphor of the ‘way’—*Jesus Christ is the chief way for the Church* (RH 13). This means that the Church cannot be bound to any political system since she is entrusted with upholding the transcendence of the human person, which goes beyond every system and every ideology. In *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II expressly

states that the aim of the Church’s social teaching is to ‘guide’ Christian behaviour and that it ‘belongs to the field, not of *ideology*, but of *theology*’ (41).

This understanding is consistent with the Gospels, of course, where the kingdom of God proclaimed by Christ does not mount to any practical agenda designed to set up a new social-political regime in Palestine: ‘He was not a political leader in the sense of someone enunciating a detailed political and social programme that was to be implemented by particular measures. Rather, the transformation of Israel in the end time was to be the work of God coming as king’ (Meier, 2001, 624). Yet given that the Church witnesses to the power of the love that is radiated by the truth of the redemption in Christ, she is not only concerned for the eternal welfare of humans but also for their temporal welfare, hence she cannot remain insensitive to whatever serves the common good or what threatens it. The common good is here not restricted to the mere distribution of goods and wealth, but is understood in historical terms as the sum total of the socio-economic-political conditions whereby humans are enabled more fully to attain self-realization as persons (Gallagher, 1991, 43). Humans ought to imitate the Creator in working so as to ‘contribute’ by their personal industry ‘to the realization in history of the divine plan’ (LE 25).

Work in the Spirit of the New Creation

The discussion in this section will feature the thought of Volf, although the intention will be to compare and contrast his work with that of John Paul II. Volf is dissatisfied with the vocational understanding of work, still dominant in Protestant circles, and proposes ‘a shift from a vocational to a charismatic understanding of work’ (Volf, 2001, viii).

There are inherent problems with the vocational view of work developed by Luther. Because God’s spiritual call through the preaching of the Gospel reaches a person in his or her particular station in life (husband,

wife, servant, factory worker, etc.), the duties of the station become God's commandment to that person (Volf, 2001, 105-109). This notion of vocation is indifferent toward alienation in work, it can be misused ideologically to enable dehumanizing work (instead of improving the quality of work through structural change), and it is not applicable to modern industrial societies that are increasingly characterised by mobility (not permanence of one's station in life).

By following Moltmann's assertion that the Christian faith is eschatological since Christian life is life in the Spirit of the new creation, Volf proposes the development of a distinctly pneumatological view of work. He writes, significantly, that *Gaudium et spes* (38) is the most notable example of a recent charismatic interpretation of Christian service to the world, although to date no theology of work has been developed on the basis of the suggestions contained in that Vatican II document (Volf, 2001, 104-105). At the end of his encyclical on human work (*LE* 27) John Paul II also appeals to *Gaudium et spes* 38, although he only quotes that part of the document that links human work to the cross of Christ, and not the section that talks of the manifold 'gifts of the Spirit' which is Volf's focus. The whole encyclical is characterised by a lack of recognition of the pneumatological dimension of human work.

The main thesis proposed by Volf, by contrast, is that 'the Spirit of God calls and gifts people to work in active anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world' (Volf, 2001, 123). In the past theologians tended to subordinate the *vita activa* to the *vita contemplative* in the process of sanctification (i.e. work was seen as having only instrumental value for the advancement of the 'inner' person), but Volf argues that this is inadequate and appeals to Genesis 1-2 (as does John Paul II) to make the point that work comes not only under the rubric of sanctification, but God's purposes for the creation, hence it has intrinsic value (Volf, 2001, 74-75). The Spirit of the new creation, moreover, cannot be tied to the

ecclesiastical and religious sphere, because the whole of creation is the Spirit's sphere of operation. A theology of work must therefore be comprehensive in that it acknowledges the anthropological, social, and cosmological dimensions of work as cooperation with the history of God's engagement with the world.

John Paul II likewise stresses the intrinsic value of work as set in the context of the mystery of creation, yet it would be fair to say that the Pontiff is more concerned with personal self-actualization and social integration, and less with the cosmological dimension of work that recognises responsible and just human dealings with the natural world. On the basis of Genesis 1:28, the Pontiff adopts a somewhat sanguine approach to scientific and technological development as an instrument for subduing nature (*LE* 4). Are we not, though, asks Volf, in an ecological crisis? (Volf, 1984, 74-5). While it is legitimate to see one of the purposes of work as the transforming of nature (i.e. adapting nature to human needs), the divine mandate in Genesis 1:28 does not give us licence for unrestricted violence against nature. When the latter text is set in relation to Genesis 2:15 where the human is depicted as placed by God in the garden of Eden 'to till and keep it,' it becomes clear that the human's kingship over nature must not become a despotic relationship to nature.

Volf is also keen to point out that whether we view work as having instrumental or intrinsic value is dependent upon our understanding of the relationship between the present and future orders. If we hold to an apocalyptic scenario in which the present world will be *annihilated* (cf. 2 Pet 3:10) and a new creation will take its place, then all human work is rendered insignificant, at least directly; only indirectly can it serve certain goals such as sanctification and preparation for the bliss of heaven (Volf, 2001, 90). The alternative model is that of eschatological *transformation* where a continuity between the present and the future orders is highlighted. In this model where the fundamental goodness of creation is stressed, sin and evil notwithstanding, we find a strong

incentive to cultural involvement inasmuch as human work is invested with ultimate significance as contributing, in a ‘modest and broken way,’ to God’s new creation (Volf, 2001, 92; cf. *LE* 25). The Christian hope for the resurrection of the body, which involves the abolition of corruptibility and thus glorious transfiguration, together with Paul’s writings about how Christian hope cannot be thought apart from the liberation of creation itself from its bondage to decay (Rom 8: 19-23), provides more than ample support for the model of the eschatological *transformatio mundi*.

There can be no doubt that John Paul II concurs with Volf’s endorsement of the inherent value and ultimate significance of human work as contributing or sharing in the activity of God the Creator. In the very first paragraph of his encyclical the Pontiff lists one of the main purposes of work as the elevating of ‘the cultural and moral level of the society.’ Through work the human not only transforms nature, adapting it to its own needs, but also ‘achieves fulfilment as a human being’ (*LE* 9).

A problem arises, however, in connection with work as self-actualisation and the view that work not only ‘expresses’ the dignity of the human but also ‘increases’ it (*LE* 9). If the moral meaning of work lies in that it establishes the value and dignity of the person, what becomes of the lives of those (e.g. children, the elderly, the disabled, the chronically sick) who are not able to effectively work? (Volf, 1984, 73). Are their lives less valuable and less dignified than those of productive and able workers? On theological grounds, moreover, must we not assert that personal worth and value are derived not from our capacity to work but from God alone who graciously confers upon humanity a dignity beyond compare by elevating it to the glory of beholding God? On John Paul II’s own reckoning, does not the fact that each and every human is ontologically joined to the Incarnate One underscore the understanding that human worth and dignity is *received* from God? It seems that it would be better to speak of ‘self-expression’ in work instead of ‘self-actualisation’ through work, for

the latter suggests the human is ‘constituted’ through work while the former views the human as ‘developing’ through work (Volf, 2001, 132-33).

The basic point that we do not give birth to ourselves through work, but rather find ourselves by cooperating with God and enjoying communion with God, is reinforced by Volf’s portrayal of work in the Spirit. In Pauline theology, the gifts of the Spirit (*charismata*) are imparted to all Christians (not just an elite group) who form the Body of Christ, and these gifts are related to the specific tasks or functions to which God calls each Christian, which go beyond the needs of the Church to include constructive engagement with the world (Volf, 2001, 110-12). As work in the Spirit, Christian mundane work must be understood as cooperation with God (cf. Gal 2:20), and since the indwelling Spirit is a ‘guarantee’ (2 Cor 1:22) of the coming new creation, such cooperation is to be seen as active anticipation of God’s eschatological *transformatio mundi* (Volf, 2001, 115).

The notion of work in the Spirit of the new creation is able to overcome the deficiencies of Luther’s vocational model of work, for the emphasis falls not upon the origin of work (call of God) and purpose of work (service to others), but the inherent quality of work as cooperation with God in the anticipated *transformatio mundi*. Indifference to alienation in work and dehumanizing work is therefore not an acceptable Christian position or attitude. In light of the Easter and Pentecost events, God’s eschatological action must be situated not only *at the end* of history (kingdom-expectation) but also *in* history (kingdom-participation), so that work in the Spirit contributes, however limited and imperfect the contribution, to the final consummation of God’s plan for creation (Volf, 2001, 100).

Finally, given that the Spirit is present in creation and the Spirit of the Risen One is poured out on all flesh, Volf holds that the work of non-Christians can be viewed pneumatologically as well. In a manner that recalls the declarations of Vatican II (cf. LG 16; GS 22),

he contends that non-Christians can be open to the promptings of the Spirit without being aware of it, in which case their work (all noble achievements) may also be seen as cooperation with God (Volf, 2001, 119).

The difference between Christians and non-Christians lies in the nature of their receptivity to the Spirit: the former are consciously aware and thus more receptive to the activity of the Spirit as the 'first fruits' of the new creation (cf. 1 Cor 15:20), as redeeming and sanctifying the people of God and bringing them the gift of communion with the living God as their true end; whereas in the latter the Spirit is active sustaining and developing humanity and leading people to work towards the common good. The goal of the Spirit is the same in both the Church and the world, namely, the final glorification of created reality in the new creation.

Concluding Remarks

A properly developed theology of work is integral to the task of theology, as John Paul II and Volf have both acknowledged. Both reinforce the human person as the subject of work and conduct their reflections within the framework of the mystery of creation, so that human work is seen as contributing to God's purpose for the world. Volf, however, is focused on the gifts received from the Spirit of the new creation, thus he views work as active 'anticipation' of the eschatological transformation of the world and makes it clear that work must not be seen as increasing personal worth and dignity. John Paul II, on the other hand, paints a picture of work as human 'self-actualisation' by means of the faculties of rationality and freedom, so that he regards personal worth and dignity as increasing through the activity of work and coins the phrase 'the gospel of work' to highlight that human toil and labour is ultimately

meaningful because it is linked to the work of Christ.

The advantage of Volf's theology is that he keeps very much in focus the fact that the person is fundamentally a receiver, in the Spirit, and only then a doer, and he includes the whole of creation as the sphere of the Spirit's operation so that there is an inherently cosmological dimension to human work as cooperation with God, something that is not to be found in *Laborem Exercens*. Furthermore, Volf's writings do not amount to a general theory of all human work, for he draws attention to God's judgment of work, something that is also lacking in the papal encyclical, so that only work that is not rebellion against God but corresponds to the anticipated new creation is ultimately meaningful and valuable.

John Paul II and Volf have both attempted to discover new meanings of human work, yet neither of them see the Church's mission as political, economic, or social, but religious. The Christian vision for the world is theological (created in God's image, as John Paul II and Volf both underscore), christological (the Incarnate Son has joined himself to each and every human person, as John Paul II highlights), and pneumatological (this is the strength of Volf's theology), hence the Church's sense of mission cannot be drawn from ideological systems and practical agendas, all of which end up becoming ends in themselves. The Church reflects on the signs of the times and offers guiding principles and values that are consistent with the kingdom of God which is beyond every political and social system. The fact that the object of Christian faith is the Risen One who is the new creation in person, present in the power of the Spirit, serves as a reminder that Christians are required to give *witness* to the kingdom of God in the world, which can never be identified with worldly progress or achievement.

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CORRESPONDENCE

FR HUGH THOMAS C.Ss.R. WRITES:

In a mostly excellent edition of *Compass* (2009-3) there is one section which demands a challenge. It is section D of Stephen Bevans' article; 'The Mission has a Church, the Mission has Ministers'. He raises the issues of 'Non-Ordained Presiders' and 'Non-Eucharistic Catholicism'.

The very notion of 'non-Eucharistic Catholicism' is a contradiction. It goes against the central teaching of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, which calls the Eucharistic Sacrifice 'the source and summit of the Christian life' (LG no.11), words which have been an inspiration for the Church for decades and have formed the basis of liturgical renewal. To even suggest that 'a Eucharistic-centred Catholicism is only one legitimate form of Catholicism' is outrageous. It is in direct opposition to the teaching of Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*: 'The Church was born of the Paschal Mystery. For this very reason the Eucharist, which is in an outstanding way the sacrament of the paschal mystery, stands at the centre of the Church's life'. (*EdeE* no. 2). The situations of the Church in China or Nagasaki, which Stephen refers to, were altogether extraordinary and not normative.

Non-Ordained Presiders. Pope John Paul explicitly rejects this in his encyclical in the clearest and unequivocal terms:

The ministry of priests who have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders, in the economy of salvation chosen by Christ, makes clear that the Eucharist which they celebrate is a *gift which radically transcends the power of the assembly* and is in any event essential for validly linking the Eucharistic consecration to the sacrifice of the Cross and to the Last Supper. The assembly gathered together of the celebration of the Eucharist... absolutely requires the presence of an ordained minister as its president. On the other hand, the community is by itself incapable of providing an ordained minister. This minister is a gift which the assembly *receives*

through episcopal succession going back to the Apostles.' (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no.29). (Emphasis mine)

He speaks about the situation of a parish without a priest to lead it as 'distressing and irregular' (*ibid* no. 32) and of the hunger such a community should have for a priest to lead them. My own pastoral experience in giving parish missions in towns such as Beverley and Wongan Hills in WA, which used to have a resident priest and no longer have one, shows that the faith rapidly declines in such places. Once flourishing Catholic communities are quickly decimated and only a few die-hards retain the faith.

The reflections of Archbishop Hickey after his recent visit to Europe give further reason to deplore the situation of priestless parishes.

In some areas of France, Germany, Holland and Belgium parishes which had been under lay control because of the lack of priests simply refused to accept priests when they became available. They were not wanted except to consecrate hosts from time to time. Lay control had become entrenched and not even the Bishops knew what to do. (*The Record* Nov. 25, 2009).

The two most obvious solutions to the shortage of priests remain the vigorous promotion of vocations, which requires the strengthening of family life, as proposed by Ron and Mavis Pirola in the same issue of *Compass*, and the importation of priests from other countries. As a priest who served in the Philippines from 1967-1989, at a time when there was a shortage of priests there, and who was able to return home when the situation began to reverse and Australia became the needy nation, I do not apologise about bringing in priests from overseas today. When I first left Australian shores there were hundreds of Australian priests in missions in other countries. Some of these countries, like the Philippines, are now providing us with priests. This reverse cycle is not new. Missionaries went from Europe to convert Ireland; later Irish missionaries came

back to Europe to re-convert the paganised peoples there.

Stephen Bevans makes good points about the need for these foreign priests to master English, to undergo courses in accent reduction where necessary, and to be trained in understanding Australian culture. Where they cannot adjust successfully they should be sent home, just as used to happen with Australian missionaries, such as some Redemptorists, contemporaries of mine in the Philippines, who

could not adjust to the language and culture of the country to which they had been sent.

In Western Australia, where I live these days, there are more overseas born priests than Australian-born. The vast majority of these are sources of life and vigour to the parishes, schools and hospitals where they work. No we don't need to talk about 'Non-Ordained Presiders' and 'Non-Eucharistic Catholicism'.

—Fr. Hugh Thomas
C.Ss.R.

FR STEPHEN BEVANS REPLIES:

I want first of all to thank Fr. Thomas for his thoughtful and animated response to my article 'The Mission Has a Church, The Mission Has Ministers: Thinking Missiologically about the Shortage of Priests.' It is in reflecting, discussing and reflecting together that we might come to a better solution to the priest shortage.

I wonder, however, if Fr. Thomas fully recognized the tentativeness with which I proposed the two solutions to the priest shortage to which he takes exception: the possibility of non-ordained presiders at Eucharist and the validity of a non-Eucharistic Catholicism. I stated quite clearly in the article that I was not necessarily advocating these solutions. They were rather attempts to 'think outside the box' from the perspective of the priority of mission for the church. My point was that a missiological perspective—that mission creates the church, mission determines the kind of ministers in the church—might help us think differently about what the church is and how it lives its life.

The two solutions to which Fr. Thomas objects are theological probes. I am, of course, aware of statements of the Magisterium which Fr. Thomas quotes, both from *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy. However, neither of these statements is proposed as infallible by the Magisterium, and so, while I deeply respect the Magisterium, my suggestions, while perhaps seeming outrageous, are not totally

out of the question in terms of theological investigation.

Regarding non-ordained presiders, current scholarship points to the fact that there was no ordination in the sense that we understand it today in the New Testament church. In a section entitled 'Overview of New Testament Scholarship on Order' in his recent book *Orders and Ministry*, Kenan Osborne says that:

If someone asserts that the apostles were ordained bishops and priests, this judgment is a reading backward into history. It is a judgment made not on the basis of the texts themselves, but on the basis of some quasi-dogmatic issue, namely, an intellectual conviction that ordination has always been part of church history.¹

Since Eucharist was celebrated in the church from the beginning, whoever presided at Eucharist was not necessarily 'ordained' in the way we understand it today. Even if there was ordination in the early church, Raymond Brown, as I stated in my article, points out that the New Testament says nothing about who actually presided at Eucharist.² New Testament and Patristic scholar Carolyn Osiek argues that when Eucharist was celebrated in house churches in the New Testament period, 'the meal was probably led by the host or hostess of the house, the patron of the house, who then was also the patron of the community.'³

By the turn of the second century, as Ignatius of Antioch evidences, Eucharist was being presided over by the newly-emerging

monarchical bishop, but this was not necessarily so in the churches in the New Testament era. My point is only that, if it was done in the New Testament, perhaps it *could* be done again, particularly in situations of the shortage of priests. If Eucharist *is* central to the church's life and nourishes it for mission, then such extreme measures might be justified for the sake of mission.

But, I suggested tentatively, perhaps Eucharist need not be so central for the church. Fr. Thomas argues that 'the situations of the Church in China or Nagasaki... were altogether extraordinary and not normative.' Perhaps. And yet the church did survive in Japan for hundreds of years, and flourished in China for several decades, and the scarcity of priests for Eucharist in Latin America for five hundred years has not made Latin Americans one whit less Catholic.

In any case, the shortage of priests, if it is not addressed in an adequate way is making Catholicism non-Eucharistic in many parts of the United States and Australia. Can we say that people who do not have access to the Eucharist through no fault of their own are in some way less Catholic? Does it mean that they can be less committed to continuing Jesus' mission? I don't think so.

As I have said, I am not necessarily advocating these solutions. However, what I am advocating is that these ideas should be put to further scholarly study and scrutiny to see if they might indeed be ways to get out the impasse we find ourselves in. What I am advocating is that church authorities become more open to the findings of honest historical research. These solutions do not at all preclude

other solutions, like bringing priests from other vocations-rich countries (although the danger of a kind of neo-colonialism remains) and working and praying harder for more vocations (although sometimes I wonder just how much harder we can work and pray). They do not preclude thinking differently about priestly ministry—that sacramental ministry is about forming lay women and men to embrace their own baptismal priesthood. In this way perhaps we can avoid the rapidly declining faith that Fr. Thomas speaks of in places 'which used to have a resident priest and no longer have one.'

When one of my colleagues read the original version of my article he remarked that I had left out one important reflection on the crisis of the shortage of priests. Perhaps, he suggested, the crisis is actually the work of the Holy Spirit, moving us to think of new ways to understand the nature of church and of ministry within it. If this is so, and I am inclined to believe it is, we need to be open to the Spirit and continue to think of creative and perhaps daring solutions. This happened at least once before, when the Spirit led the church beyond Judaism to embrace Gentiles and their cultures. Tradition, after all, is not something that should hold us back, but something that should beckon us to new ways of understanding our faith in ever-changing circumstances.

Perhaps my suggestions are not valid solutions. But perhaps other seemingly outrageous solutions can be, if we let our commitment to mission shape our thinking.

—Fr. Steven Bevans SVD

REFERENCES

1 Kenan Osborne, *Orders and Ministry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 130. See pp. 138-158.

2 Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1970), 40-43.

3 Carolyn Osiek, 'Who did What in the Church in the New Testament?' in Richard W. Miller, ed., *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry through the Wisdom of the Past* (Ligouri, MO: Ligouri, 2005), 3

NEW RELIGIOUS BOOKS BY AUSTRALASIAN AUTHORS

KEVIN MARK

A Democratic Church: Reforming the values and institutions of the Catholic Church; Max Charlesworth; John Garratt Publishing; PB \$24.95 [9781920721602]; 56pp; 235x135mm; 2008

Volume 1, Number 1 in the *Voices: Quarterly Essays in Religion in Australia* series. This monograph contrasts the values and institutional structures taken for granted in modern liberal democratic societies and the values and structures that remain in place in the contemporary Catholic Church. Author makes proposals for reforms in the Church that will allow it to be understood by those who live in democratic societies. Topics include democratising the papacy and episcopacy; the equality of believers; freedom of speech in the Church; ecumenism and pluralism; conscience; and a charter of rights. Endnotes. Author is an emeritus professor, and formerly a Professor of Philosophy at Deakin University, Victoria. He was appointed as a consultant to the Secretariat for Non-Believers by Pope Paul VI, and was awarded an AO in 1991 for his work in bioethics and education. Other works include *Bioethics in a Liberal Society* (1993) and *Religious Inventions* (1997).

Go Forth Now; Renew the Face of the Earth: World Youth Day 2008: Phrase 3 resource; St Pauls; PB

\$16.95 [9781921472275]; 80pp; 245x170mm; 2009

Resource intended for senior secondary students, youth groups and parish groups wishing to reflect further on the addresses and homilies given by Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Australia for World Youth Day 2008. The papal texts are presented in full. Questions for reflection are presented in the margins of the pages, next the relevant parts of the texts. 'Investigate Further' boxes present suggestions for activities to deepen understanding of the topics covered. Questions for discussion are given at the end of each text. Introduction by Anthony Cleary, Director, Religious Education and Evangelisation, Catholic Education Office, Sydney. Colour photos; glossary.

John Paul II: Legacy and witness; Robert Gascoigne (editor); St Pauls; PB \$24.95 [9781921032257]; 141pp; 215x140mm; 2007

Collection of 15 essays written by Australian Catholic theologians reflecting on the life, teaching, ministry and legacy of Paul John Paul II. The essays have their origin in public forums held in Sydney and Melbourne in mid-2005 following the death of the pope on 2 April that year. The essays are grouped into four sections: His Polish Background and Personal Faith; Human Dignity, Ethics and Society; The

Church and its Sacramental Life; The Depth and Range of John Paul II's Teaching and Reflection. Contributors are Sandra Carroll, Austin Cooper OMI, Tim Costelloe SDB, Peter Cross, Matthew Del Nevo, Bruce Duncan CSsR, Robert Gascoigne, Gerald Glesson, Anne Hunt, Anthony Kelly CSsR, Richard Lennan, Neil Ormerod, Veronica Rosier OP, Tracey Rowland, and Richard Wade. Foreword by Peter W. Sheehan, Vice-Chancellor, Australian Catholic University. Introduction by volume editor, Gascoigne. Notes on contributors; endnotes.

Mary MacKillop Unveiled: Australia's first saint; Lesley O'Brien; John Garratt Publishing; PB \$29.95 [9781920721626]; 279pp; 200x130mm; 2008

Reissue of a work of popular biography intended to present to a general readership, including non-Catholics, the story of Australia's first saint, Mary MacKillop (1842-1909). Originally published in 1994 by HarperCollins Religious. The author, a young journalist, worked from primary sources and the official *positio* prepared for MacKillop's beatification. The book was commissioned by the Mary MacKillop Secretariat of the Sisters of St Joseph, the religious order MacKillop founded. Foreword by Geraldine Doogue. Photos.

Mosaic: Favourite prayers

and reflections from inspiring Australians; Rosalind Bradley (editor); ABC Books; PB \$35 [9780733320415]; 224pp; 235x150mm; 2008

Collection of over 150 favourite prayers and reflections from a broad range of Australians from a variety of backgrounds and faiths. Editor hopes that the collection will build bridges within Australia's multicultural and spiritually diverse society. Contributors range from prominent public figures to lesser-known individuals. For each contributor (presented on one or two pages), there is a heading giving the person's name; biographical notes; the text they have chosen; their reflections on their choice; and, where appropriate, brief notes on the source of the quoted text. Glossary; index of contributors; index of sources. Further details are available at <http://www.mosaicbook.com.au>. Born and raised in the UK, the editor has lived in Australia for the last 23 years, and has worked in public relations and marketing for several charities including the Fred Hollows Foundation. She has an eclectic spiritual background, and was received into the Catholic Church in 2002. She is working on sequel, *Global Mosaic*, which will have international contributors.

The Resurrection Effect: Transforming Christian life and thought; Anthony Kelly;

Kevin Mark manages the Australasian information in the Global Books in Print database and is former religious publisher for HarperCollins Publishers.

Orbis, USA, dist. by Rainbow Book Agencies; PB \$39.95 [9781570757709]; 221pp; 235x150mm; 2008

Theological exploration the resurrection of the crucified Jesus considered as the focal point affecting all Christian faith and theology. Book opens by arguing that the significance of the resurrection has been neglected in contemporary theology, and proposes a phenomenological approach to the resurrection. The New Testament is considered as arising from the resurrection, and the event itself is examined from multi-dimension aspects (paschal, paternal, filial, effusive, sacramental, and eschatological). The effect of the resurrection event on St Paul is examined, as well as the Holy Spirit as the principal manifestation of the resurrection effect. The 'salvific objectivity' of the event is considered, as well as the correlative 'salvific subjectivity' manifested in the original disciples. Three specific issues related to the resurrection are also discussed: its relationship to the Trinity; its absence from moral theology and Christian ethics; its significance for the Church's mission. Endnotes; select bibliography; subject and name index. Author is an Australian Redemptorist priest, Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University, and was appointed to the International Theological Commission by Pope John

Paul II in 2004. His numerous books include *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (with Francis J. Moloney, 2004) and *Eschatology and Hope* (2006).

Ted Kennedy: Priest of Redfern; Edmund Campion; David Lovell Publishing, dist. by Rainbow Book Agencies; PB \$24.95 [9781863551298]; 202pp; 205x135mm; 2009

Biography of Edward 'Ted' Kennedy (1931-2005), a priest of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, best known for his 30-years ministry as parish priest of Redfern. He was renowned for his commitment to social justice, and especially for his involvement with the Aboriginal community. Kennedy was often critical of the Church hierarchy, and published *Who Is Worthy? The role of conscience in restoring hope to the Church* (2000). Author incorporates accounts of Kennedy's co-workers in Redfern, notably the Aboriginal elder 'Mum Shirl' (Shirley Smith). He was awarded an OA for his service to the Aboriginal community in 2001. Author is a well-known priest who taught at the Catholic Institute of Sydney and ministered at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney. Previous works include *Rockchoppers* (1982) and *Australian Catholics* (1987).

PREPARING TO CELEBRATE THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

April — July 2010

From Easter Sunday to the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time in Year C

Prepared by Michael Trainor

PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE READINGS

The following is a brief overview of the readings of the Liturgy of the Word for major celebrations proclaimed while this issue of *Compass* is current. It focuses on the readings for Sundays between mid-April and late July, from Easter Sunday to the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C). Please feel free to use or adapt these reflections, with the customary acknowledgement of source.

1. The First reading for each Sunday, as we know, has been selected generally with the Gospel in mind. There are notable exceptions in the Sunday selections below, especially with the final Sundays of the *Easter Season*. During this time the first reading is from the Second ('New') Testament and Luke's *Book of Acts*. The aim of *Acts* is to show how the life of the Risen Jesus continues to enliven the early Christian community. This conviction reaches its liturgical highpoint in the celebration of Pentecost on May 23. The implications of these readings for our reflections on today's church and our experience of community are most relevant. At a time when church attendance is falling and ecclesial leadership tested, there is an invitation that emerges through all these readings to return to the faith conviction held by the first generations of Jesus followers and reflected in the readings: God is present and close, and desires our renewal.

Outside of Easter the June-July selections

for the first reading range from *Genesis* (Body and Blood, and the actions of the enigmatic Melchisedek; Ordinary Time 16 and 17 with its reflection on Abraham), *Deuteronomy* (Ordinary Time 15, about God's Law), *1 Kings* (Ordinary Time 13, Elijah's anointing of Elisha), and the prophetic tradition with *Isaiah* (Ordinary Time 14, God's consolation of the people). There is also an outstanding reading on the Feast of the Holy Trinity (May 30) from the Book of Proverbs celebrating God's Wisdom ('Sophia').

2. The Second Reading in the present Easter selection continues from the *Book of Revelation*. This is a prophetic letter written to churches in west Asia Minor towards the end of the first century CE, by a Seer, John. The intention of the writer is to offer consolation and perspective to Jesus followers struggling in their cultural situation. This is most relevant today. The selection from *Revelation* that we have in Easter offers ample opportunity to reflect on the potential for life in Jesus today.

Outside of Easter, in Ordinary Time, the lectionary returns to its usual presentation of selections from the Pauline literature with its semi-continuous readings. From Ordinary Time 11 to 14, the *Letter to the Galatians* (chapters 3 to 6) is proclaimed. Galatians is one of Paul's most important letters. Written probably from Ephesus c 54 CE, it addresses

concerns about how one can have communion with God (which Paul calls technically, 'justification').

For Paul, rather than a legalistic theological rigorism, Jesus is the only way to this communion. He brings about a community of faith that is inclusive and non-discriminatory. This central feature of the letter is expressed in Gal 3:27-28 and proclaimed in Ordinary Time 12 (June 20): 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. Paul's first century vision of the union formed in Jesus which dissolves all division still awaits realisation in our faith communities.

In Ordinary Time 15 to 18, our attention turns to the *Letter to the Colossians* 1-2. This letter in the Pauline genre was probably written by one of Paul's disciples, sometime in the 60s. It seeks to affirm for Christians, tempted to perform cultic and ascetic rituals to appease cosmic forces, the place of Jesus and his authority in the universe. This central theme flows over the Sundays of Ordinary Time 15 to 17 (11 and 18 July). Readings from Galatians and Colossians might provide alternatives to the main liturgical themes suggested by the first reading and the Gospel.

3. The Gospel readings during April-July are split between John and Luke. John's Gospel, with its exalted portrait of Jesus makes it an ap-

propriate focus for reflection on the meaning of the Easter life that comes from the Risen Jesus. John's Gospel provides the themes celebrated in the final weeks of Easter (Healing, Alertness, Shepherding God, Renewal and Presence).

Luke's Gospel appears on the feast of the Ascension, with its final story of Jesus' ascension and priestly blessing of his disciples. This concludes the gospel, forming a literary frame with its beginning, and completing the unfinished blessing of Zechariah in Lk 1. For the weeks into Ordinary Time, Luke continues as the main gospel of proclamation. Its urban connection and intent to make Jesus relevant for disciples living in a Greek-Roman world of the 85s CE, make this gospel important today. Our selection, from mid-June to the end of July, concludes Jesus' Galilean Ministry and begins the dominant section of the Gospel concerned with Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Here the writer explores key themes for a spirituality of discipleship: freedom of discipleship and its unencumbered nature (Ordinary Time 13), mission (Ordinary Time 14), its surprising outreach (Ordinary Time 15), christological focus (Ordinary Time 16), and prayer (Ordinary Time 17). All these themes continue to be important for our own communities as we seek to develop a contemporary and culturally critical form of discipleship.

PART TWO: NOTES ON THE READINGS

April 4—Easter: *Acts 10:34a, 36-43*. Peter sums up Jesus' ministry and the meaning of 'Holy Week' for a Gentile centurion. *1 Cor 5:6b-8*. Paul wants us to celebrate the risen Jesus with the 'unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (v 8). *Lk 24:1-12*. The women come to anoint Jesus' body, but discover the tomb empty as two men proclaim the Easter message: They learn that Jesus is risen; they are entrusted with this message. *Theme—Easter Struggle*. This is one of the most difficult times of the year for families. Joy which pervades the gospel is also tinged with the pain and difficulty of living out the Easter proclamation: the women's message of the

risen Jesus is not believed!

April 11—Easter 2: *Acts 5:12-16*. The healing power of the risen Jesus continues to pervade the life of the first Jerusalem followers of Jesus. *Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19*. John's apocalyptic image of the risen Jesus: 'the first and last...the living one' (v17). *Jn 20:19-31*. Jesus breathes his spirit of courage and forgiveness on to the assembled disciples. *Theme—Healing*. Signs of healing pervade the world: acts of kindness, the patching up of broken relationships, steps towards reconciliation. All these (and others) are signs that of the presence of the risen Jesus. What signs of his presence are tangible in this community

and can be celebrated this Easter day?

April 18—Easter 3: *Acts 5:27-32, 40-41.* Peter and John are arrested for preaching about the risen Jesus—an act which they must continue to do no matter the consequences. *Rev 5: 11-14.* John's apocalyptic vision of Jesus: exalted, honoured, worshipped and sharing in God's wisdom and power. *Jn 21:1-19.* The concluding chapter of the gospel pulls together two key themes: discipleship love, and the importance of alertness to the risen Jesus who offers direction for the future Church *Theme—Alertness.* John's final chapter prepares the gospel audience for a new moment in its history. Alertness and attention to the risen Jesus are essential. What practical ways is that happening in our midst now? Who show this kind of attentiveness?

April 25—Easter 4: *Acts 13:14, 43-52.* Paul recognises that his mission is to the Gentiles. *Rev 7:9, 14-17.* John's apocalyptic vision of those who have suffered and remained faithful to Jesus. *Jn 10:27-30.* Jesus is the shepherd who knows his sheep and protects them. *Theme—Shepherding God.* God seeks to shepherd and look after us. Jesus is God's loving presence to us revealed through this community. What are examples of how God shepherds us in our local church community? How do these examples link to Anzac?

May 2—Easter 5 *Acts 14:21-27.* Paul and Barnabas continue their preaching mission of encouragement and forming leaders among the Gentiles. *Rev 21:1-5a.* This is a delightful vision of God's presence within the human community that establishes joy and renews creation. *Jn 13:31-35.* Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure, leaving them with his injunction about love. *Theme—Easter Renewal.* God's life continues to renew us, as it did the early Christians (*Acts*), and creation (*Revelation*). Many local examples abound of people and situations that renew and encourage. These can be celebrated as signs of Jesus' ongoing Easter presence

May 9—Easter 6: *Acts 15:1-29.* A watershed story in Luke's story of the early church: the formal acceptance of the Gentiles into the life of the Christian community. *Rev 21: 10-14, 22-23.* The vision of last week continues here and celebrates God's city on earth, totally inclusive and accessible (with so many gates). With God's presence so tangible, there is no need of a temple. *Jn 14:23-29.* Jesus prepares his disciples for his departure. He promises his abiding peace and the presence of his teaching Advocate. *Theme—Easter Presence:* God's presence is tangible in, around and among us. Easter continues;

it is especially tangible in moments and places of gracious hospitality and acceptance.

May 16—Ascension: *Acts 1:1-11.* With Jesus' departure the disciples are encouraged to continue in their active ministry in the world. They cannot simply remain gazing into the heavens. *Heb 9:24f.* Jesus is with God forever, acting on our behalf. *Lk 24:46-53.* This final Gospel scene completes the events of Easter day. Jesus blesses his disciples and departs physically to God. The Gospel ends on a note of joy. *Theme—God's Presence in times of apparent aloneness:* Dealing with absence is one of the most painful experiences. This absence can occur when feeling alone, deserted or mourning the death of one close. Or it can occur in feeling the loss of an institution (like the church) that seems to have abandoned one. Reflection on all these experiences can open the door for renewal in God's desire to be with us.

May 23—Pentecost: *Acts 2:1-11.* A story reminiscent of Sinai: the covenantal renewal of God's people that brings unity and energy. *1 Cor 12:3-7, 12-13.* The Holy Spirit empowers, gifts and renews the Christian community with unity. *Jn 20:19-23.* Jesus breathes his spirit on to the frightened community of disciples and brings peace and forgiveness. *Theme—Unity of God's community.* The readings celebrate the unity of God's people that emerges through the action of the Spirit. There are many signs of that unity today, especially amongst Christian communities. These could be named and celebrated. Ecumenism is a reality already.

May 30—Holy Trinity: *Prov 8:22-31.* This is a hymn to God's eternal, creative and active *Sophia* ('wisdom'), *Rom 5:1-5.* Communion with God through Jesus brings peace and an authentic existence. *Jn 16:12-15.* Jesus' Spirit will guide his disciples into God's truth. *Theme—God's inner life of friendship.* God's life permeates the universe, our local community and each of our personal lives. We can easily see signs of this life, of God's *Sophia* encouraging us. This recognition can come despite difficulties and apparent contradictions. One obvious sign of God's Triune life is friendship.

June 6—Body and Blood of Christ: *Gen 14:18-20.* A king's hospitality with bread and wine brings about a blessing for Abram. *1 Cor 11:23-26.* Paul's eucharistic memory of Jesus' action with bread and wine. *Lk 9:11b-17.* Jesus offers sustenance and hospitality in a desert. *Theme—Hospitality.* The Eucharist is the setting for hospitality, inclusivity and nurture. Can we name ways our local com-

munity provides such eucharistic hospitality? Who does it? Where?

June 13—Ordinary Time 11: *2 Sam 12:7-10.13.* King David recognises his sinfulness when confronted by the prophet Nathan. *Gal 2:16. 19-21.* Here is Paul's radical statement of his faith in Jesus as the centre of his life. *Lk 7:36-8:3.* This is a powerful story of authentic discipleship, from a woman who focuses her total loving attention on Jesus. *Theme—Focussed on God:* Nathan helps David see his need to come back to God (1st Reading) and Jesus shows what true fidelity really consists of demonstrated by the women (Gospel). What are some of the ways that enable us in our challenged and diverse world to focus on God? Who models this kind of practice?

June 20—Ordinary Time 12: *Zech 12:10-11.* God promises to pour a spirit of compassion on the people of Jerusalem. This spirit will unite them with the one who suffers. *Gal 3:26-29.* Paul reflects on the heart of baptism: everything that distinguishes one from another (ethnic, status and gender) dissolves through union with Jesus. *Lk 9:18-24.* The disciples affirm Jesus as God's anointed one. As Messiah, Jesus will suffer, be executed. His disciples are invited to join him in this. *Theme—Compassion.* Compassion is a gift of communion, the ability to identify with those who struggle. Ultimately it is God's gift. Zechariah recognises this gift among the Israelites; the disciples are invited to identify with the suffering Jesus. Who are those in our faith community that illustrate and exercise this gift?

June 27—Ordinary Time 13: *1 King 19:16.19-21.* Elijah anoints Elisha as his prophetic successor. *Gal 5:1.13-18.* Paul encourages freedom formed through the Spirit and revealed through love. *Lk 9:51-62.* Jesus' long journey to Jerusalem begins as he calls for discipleship without compromise. *Theme—Freedom.* The Letter to the Galatians offers a powerful moment to reflect on the kind of true religious freedom that comes from God's Spirit forming us to be truly free. How does the local community encourage this kind of freedom?

July 4—Ordinary Time 14. *Is 66:10-14.* God's desire to comfort the disconsolate is tangibly and powerfully expressed in this beautiful hymn. *Gal 6:14-18.* Paul's desire of his total union with Jesus, even in suffering. *Lk 10:1-12.17-20.* Jesus sends his disciples on a difficult and, at times, unappreciated

mission. *Theme—Union with Jesus.* Paul exemplifies the meaning of Christian living—union with Jesus that permeates his whole life to the point that it becomes a reflection of Jesus' own life. There are many examples of those who live this kind of life today. These might be celebrated.

July 11—Ordinary Time 15: *Dt 30:10-14.* Moses reminds the people that God's Word ('Law'), is accessible, personal and interior. *Col 1:15-20.* A powerful hymn to Jesus, God's expression of *Sophia* ('Wisdom'), celebrating his cosmic authority to reconcile all. *Lk 10:25-37.* A parable that subverts the traditional and expected patterns of preferential behavior. *Theme—Our World:* From *Colossians*, Jesus' presence imbues the whole universe. Therefore the world is good. This challenges the conventional commercial and industrial treatment of our world. It also invites us to embrace a spirit of reconciliation.

July 18—Ordinary Time 16: *Gen 18:1-10.* Abraham offers hospitality to unexpected and unrecognised angelic visitors, and is blessed. *Col 1:24-28.* The writer encourages a disposition to make God's Word fully known, to teach through Jesus in all wisdom and bring others to genuine maturity. *Lk 10:38-42.* Luke offers us a snapshot of ministerial tension, to get all the work done or focus on Jesus. The encouragement is to focus on Jesus in the midst of life's concerns. *Theme—Hospitality.* A life of busyness and time of upheaval can leave us diving for self-survival. The readings (First Reading and Gospel) encourage a disposition of hospitality practically open to others and essentially focussed on God.

July 25—Ordinary Time 17: *Gen 18:20-32.* God is revealed as compassionate, forgiving and conversational. *Col 2:6-14.* The writer celebrates the communion that the baptised Christian shares with Jesus. *Lk 11:1-13.* This is Luke's insight into Jesus' teaching on prayer. *Theme—Communion with God.* Two readings (First Reading and Gospel) invite reflection on the centrality of prayer in our lives, as conversation with a God who is open. In a NT highpoint, *Colossians* presents Jesus as God's tangible expression in bodily form. Both themes are important and complementary. They invite us into communion with God through Jesus.

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