

EDITORIAL

IN THE PAST couple of days, I was in touch with the editor of *Compass*, Barry Brundell MSC. He mentioned in his email that he had just returned home from hospital after the doctors had inserted a pacemaker. In my reply I said that if I could do anything to ease his burdens, he only had to say so, which he did. His response explains the reason for my name on the byline for this issue's editorial.

I write this the day after the end of the G20. So much of the agenda for the G20 seems to be driven by a concern for justice: the gap between rich and poor, unemployment, international tax evasion by multi-nationals, global warming and the environment (and responsibility to future generations), assistance to the marginalized and poor in developing G20 countries. Agreements on most of these were indicated in the final communiqué from the conference. In many ways, these concerns are expressions of the search to enable the exercise of fundamental human rights.

The editorial in Saturday's *Weekend Australian* is headed: 'Four billion people look for G20 summit for growth.' Words such as 'growth' and 'development' characterize these sorts of meetings and can tend to be seen only in economic terms. But we need to remember that justice is broader than that. Any economy and its development are not ends in themselves. They are at the service of other goods and values that a community must nourish if its members are to realize true development. The economy is for the sake of the human person and society 'adequately considered', in the words of Vatican II.

Aspects of this were highlighted in Pope Francis' letter to Prime Minister Tony Abbott in the days leading up to the G20. He is very specific in what he says. 'There are far too many women and men suffering severe malnutrition, a rise in the number of the unemployed, an extremely high percentage of

young people without work and an increase in social exclusion, which can lead to criminal activity, and even the recruitment of terrorists.' The Pope reminded us of the 'constant assaults' on the environment as a result of 'unbridled consumerism.'

In calling for consensus among world leaders, his hope is that assessment of the G20's results 'will not be restricted to global indices, but will also take into account real improvements in the living conditions of poorer families and the reduction of all forms of unacceptable inequality.' The Pope also used his letter to call on all G20 member states to be 'examples of generosity' in meeting the needs of victims of conflict, 'especially [those] of refugees.'

Some of these concerns about justice and equality were captured in the last editorial of *Compass* on the impact of Christianity in history and on the Gospel's imperative to work for justice and a fairer society. It is also encapsulated in Benedict XVI's distinction in *Caritas in Veritate* between a Capitalist and Market Economy. In the former, the emphasis (and measure) is on maximising wealth and profits; in the latter, the economy is oriented to the common good incorporating values such as participation, equality and solidarity. Pope Benedict also called for a greater awareness of social capital (the gifts and resources of ordinary people and of the community) and how all have a responsibility to contribute to the well-being of all.

Again, the need for world leaders to meet is not only central in a globalised world of increasing mutual interdependence. It is also a reminder and a model of the central place of dialogue in political, social, religious and personal life. Paul VI sees it as constitutive of the human person. John Paul II picks up another angle in saying that 'by dialogue we let God be present in our midst; for as we open our-

selves in dialogue to one another, we also open ourselves to God' (Address to Members of Other Religions, Madras, 5 Feb. 1986).

As long as people keep talking with each other there is hope that solutions can be found. This reminds us that, with such occasions as the G20, the comment of Aquinas is pertinent: 'all truth and goodness, whatever its source, is from the Holy Spirit.' In such meetings, especially, where there is a genuine concern to address many issues that focus on human dignity, rights and victims, the presence of Spirit should not be forgotten. More importantly, given the sheer magnitude of the problems facing world and national leaders, human wisdom and effort needs the guidance and power of God's Spirit at work in their deliberations.

Mind you, that does not mean dialogue is always peaceful and painless. At times, it needs to be, and even should be, 'robust'—a well-worn word these days. Disagreements are part of the process. On this, we only have to think of the recent Synod of Bishops. Catholic social teaching has, until recently, been uneasy in approaching the role of conflict in society, no doubt in the light of the Marxist notion of class conflict. In *Centesimus Annus*, conflict and power were addressed briefly by John Paul II. While acknowledging their destructive potential, he recognised how respect for the human person and the common good can provide them guidance and direction. Carefully understood and exercised, there is a healthy side to conflict. It expresses human finitude but also creativity. The heated clash of ideas can generate something new and unexpected. Dialogue can develop in both depth and scope.

The concerns and context of the G20 are paralleled by some of the themes in this issue, for instance, a sense of social justice in Jesus, in the Magnificat and the early Church together with the different 'faces' of spirituality in our midst.

We cannot overlook media attention to

two other events in the past week or so. The first was the installation of the new Archbishop of Sydney Anthony Fisher OP. For anyone in that position, it is both a demanding and daunting task. From his earlier roles in Sydney and Parramatta, he seems to bring a certain naturalness and poise to media interviews. He is very intelligent and competent and engages an interviewer honestly, courteously but also skilfully. It is striking how he openly appeals to his Dominican heritage and its specific perspective and practices in relation to the Christian Gospel. There is also something refreshing in the use of his Dominican habit as his principal mode of dress. Perhaps this practice is quietly subversive of an overly clerical image of the Church and its public leaders?

Finally, we cannot avoid a comment on Gough Whitlam's state memorial service in Sydney. Generally, despite some understandable variations, commentators seemed to agree in their assessment. The occasion was marked by affection, vision and wit mixed with, as someone remarked, 'a kind of sad fondness for a time lost and gone.' It was also, perhaps, a moment of reconciliation going beyond the exceptional presentation of Noel Pearson. On the ABC Insiders programme last week David Marr offered a fine summing up which I develop a bit further here: it was just exceptional in Australian political and social life to see a gathering of such a diverse range of people, in their political, religious or non-religious allegiances, coming together to pay tribute to a national figure with both common cause and a common heart.

However one views him politically or historically, two of Whitlam's endearing qualities (and perhaps a mark of greatness) resonate with the Christian Gospel: he took everyone seriously but never took himself too seriously. His self-deprecating attitude to himself is a reminder of Clive James' definition of a sense of humour as common sense dancing.

—Tom Ryan SM, Guest Editor