



arvoice

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Editorial

Accentuate the Positive

The article 'Rethinking the Penitential Rite' (page 4) draws attention to the massive emphasis placed on all aspects of sin by the Catholic Church over the ages. This has come at the detriment of the positive message of Jesus' ministry – the bringing of good news to the poor. In the words of Johnny Mercer's song of the 1940's, the Church has been concentrating on 'eliminating the negative' of sin, while spending less effort on 'accentuating the positive' of Jesus' message of hope and love.

It is, however, too easy for a Catholic reform group like ARC to also place too much emphasis on eliminating the 'negative' of Church organisation with its patriarchal, hierarchical structure that neglects Jesus' command for its leaders to be servants, its emphasis on God's punishment rather than God's love, and its superiority over all other religions, Christian and non-Christian. There is so much fertile ground for profound, fundamental criticism of the continuing negative aspects of our Church's behaviour. Even our current reformist Pope feels compelled to insist that a basic cause of ecological damage is not over-population, so there is no need to revoke a ban on contraception. Our legitimate role of drawing attention to the need for internal reform of the Church should not result in our neglecting to 'accentuate the positive' of the nature of life in a Catholic Church that has implemented the reforms that we are advocating.

We need to formulate clearly the benefits of these proposed changes. What are the benefits of a Church that has divested power from the Curia to the diocesan bishops? What are the benefits of appointing bishops from within the diocese by the diocesan community, and not allowing the promotion of bishops from a smaller to a larger diocese? What will our local parishes look like if the parish priest is not necessarily the administrative head of

the parish? How will the spiritual nature of parish life be changed by opening up the priesthood to women and married people? What will be the effect of accepting into the parishes those who have faith in Jesus and who wish to be part of the Catholic community but who are divorced and remarried or in a homosexual relationship? We have a strong belief in the overwhelming positive outcome of changes such as these, and a major part of our face to the Christian community should be demonstrating this. However, we also need to address the problem of accommodating within the Church those who feel unable to accept such reforms if they are implemented.

Continued P.2

In This Issue

Editorial 1-2

Robert Mickens: *The fear of real Roman Curia reform* ..2-3

Margaret McLennan: *A String of Pearls* (an extract) 3

A wayfarer: Rethinking the Penitential Rite4

Frank Brennan: *The Spirit of Redfern's Ted Kennedy a decade on* 5-6

Sarah MacDonald: *Reform group's letter to Francis: Stop combining parishes into megaparishes* ... 7-8

David Gibson: *Liberation Theology's founder basks in a belated rehabilitation under Pope Francis* 8-9

Kieran Tapsell: *Canon Law on Child Sexual Abuse through the Ages*10

Margaret Knowlden: *A fly on the wall* ... 11

Illustrator: Alan Holroyd

ARC Secretariat – Have Your Say – Subscription form ... 12

There is a political analogy here. If we do not give our fellow Catholics a picture of life in the reformed Church as we see it, we are like politicians who run a negative campaign against their opponents, but decline to spell out what will happen when they are voted into power. The electorate is suspicious of politicians who do not 'come clean' with their plans for the future, and so will our fellow Catholics if we rely disproportionately on criticism to advance the reform agenda.

Alan Clague
Member of ARC Secretariat

The fear of real Roman Curia reform

Robert Mickens

With thanks to National Catholic Reporter

Apr. 27, 2015

A high-ranking Vatican official recently voiced serious doubts about the need to reform the Roman Curia. Believe it or not, he said talk of reform was exaggerated.

"I personally can see no significant reason that would necessitate a reform of the Curia at the moment," the official said. "One or two changes have been or will be made concerning personnel or structures, but that is part of the normal run of things," he continued. "To speak of 'Curia reform' is, with all due respect, somewhat of an exaggeration," he maintained.

This wasn't just any official. It was Archbishop Georg Ganswein, prefect of the papal household. He's the same one who is the private secretary and housemate of the former pope, Benedict XVI. His remarks — significant especially because he is Benedict's confidante — came recently in an exclusive interview posted on Germany's leading Catholic website, *Katholisch.de*. According to the 58-year-old archbishop, only momentous milestones in the life of the church warrant a serious reform — and not mere tweaking — of the central administrative offices in Rome.

He specifically cited the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the revised Code of Canon Law (1983) as such major occasions. The first led Paul VI to reform the Roman Curia, and the second prompted John Paul II to do so. His point was that reforms were necessary at these two junctures only to bring the Curia in line with the new directives that came from the council and the updated code.

Obviously, Pope Francis does not agree. If he did, he would not have taken the unprecedented step of establishing the Council of Cardinals just a month into his pontificate to help him reform the Curia and govern the universal church. And he would not have spent so much effort on revamping the Synod of Bishops and initiating new procedures so this body, even more than the Council of Cardinals, eventually becomes an essential component of universal church governance.

This is really what worries Ganswein and his fellow traditionalists, especially those who are members of the clergy. The truth of the matter is the reforms that Paul VI and especially John Paul II enacted were really only part of "the normal run of things" (to borrow the German archbishop's phrase).

In fact, Paul VI's reforms were actually quite gentle and cautious, given that they came in the wake of Vatican II, the most far-reaching ecclesial event since the Reformation and the Council of Trent. They could have been much bolder. But, of course, Paul was a creature of the Roman Curia. Other than one year working at the papal nunciature in Poland and nearly 10 more as archbishop of Milan, he spent his entire ordained ministry (1920-1978) in Rome.

Historians generally agree that Pope John XXIII had actually begun reforming (that is, defanging) the Roman Curia during the first session of the Vatican II. And while it continued to be in session under Pope Paul, the council fathers helped lay the groundwork for major changes to the Curia structure. But soon after they returned to their dioceses (or so one narrative goes) and the pope was left alone, the Curia's old guard began to claw back control. Its power increased as Paul's health steadily declined.

At the time of his death, the Curia had again become a sort of 10-headed beast. After his first several months in office, John Paul II apparently ditched ideas he had of reforming it. Instead, he let it run itself while he turned the papacy into a show on the road, traveling all over the world and governing by his own charisma. Eventually, he issued a major document in 1988 (*Pastor Bonus*) that made only

minor changes to the previously "reformed" Curia of Paul VI.

This is the document that the Council of Cardinals has "ripped up," according to the council's coordinator, Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga. Pope Francis and his cardinal advisers are currently involved in the slow process of reorganizing the Roman Curia from scratch. Those eager for church reform are frustrated with how aggravatingly long this is taking. But those who think the need for reform is being hyped, like Gänswain, are happy to let the Council of Cardinals take all the time it wants.

In fact, reform of the Roman Curia is more important today than at any time since Vatican II because this central structure continues to hamper the full flowering of the renewed ecclesiology that the council envisioned. The Curia, as it is, stands in the way of subsidiarity or decentralization of decision-making. And rather than fostering the episcopal collegiality that the council began to articulate, it has become a wall between the bishop of Rome and other diocesan bishops. The Curia, headed by titular bishops (bishops without a diocese), too often decides when to open doors in that wall and when to keep them tightly locked.

Roman Curia offices and their leaders have also for far too long acted as if each of them were a connatural extension of papal infallibility. One official told me recently that he was shocked after he drew up documents for the appointment of new bishop and his boss, with all seriousness, said: "Congratulations, you've made your first bishop." When the junior official replied, "No, I'm pretty sure the pope did," his superior shot back even more seriously: "In this office, we are the pope!"

Just as the Curia grew stronger as Paul VI grew weaker, it will more effectively be scaled back to its proper limits to the extent that the authority of the synod is more greatly expanded. This is not an exaggeration. It is part of what should have been done in the first Curia reforms after the council. A former Catholic priest who is now a senior Anglican/Episcopal official in Europe has been needling me for years. "When is your church going to finally implement Vatican II?" he often asks half-jokingly.

Perhaps now is the time. But only if Pope Francis is able to successfully bring about a real reform the Roman Curia and give more authority and prominence to the Synod of Bishops.

[Robert Mickens is editor-in-chief of *Global Pulse*. Since 1986, he has lived in Rome, where he studied theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University before working 11 years at Vatican Radio and then another decade as correspondent for *The Tablet* of London.]

After the Ball

The Princess jeopardised her prospects
Of a happy ever-after existence
By sinking her hands wrist-deep
In greasy dishwater.

She watched the products
Of an idyllic marriage
Hurl schoolbags/jumpers,
Switch on the box,
Argue over channel selection.

Where did I go wrong, she mused.
Whatever happened to the glass slipper?
It fitted me, once.

Was there really a fairy-godmother
Who promised me bliss?

A whip bird's cry
Stirred in her

A pool of memory
Images floated to her consciousness
Reality and fantasy mingled.

The familiar sound of a car in the drive
Made her heart lurch violently.
"Dad's home". Quoth her progeny.

She knew than in her decision to be ordinary
She had chosen well.

Extract from:

Margaret McLellan:

A String of Pearls—poems of joy
and contentment

Margaret McLellan, a long-time ARC member, has recently released her own book. Although she avoids preaching, the poems are naturally religious and occasionally political, but always in the context of joy and contentment.

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Rethinking the Penitential Rite

The other day I began the Community Mass with the following statement:

“The Penitential rite for Mass seems to have been drawn up with the purpose of making worshippers feel like the guest caught at the king’s feast without a wedding garment! It then seeks to put things right by invoking the king’s indulgence with repeated *Lord have mercy’s*.

‘Is it not more appropriate for the wedding guests to feel like the riff-raff picked up on the highways and hedgerows by the king’s messengers and compelled to come to the feast and fill the places left vacant by those who had turned down the invitation? We should be encouraged to feel like the Lost Son, overwhelmed by the sheer extravagance of his father’s welcome. So do all your breast beating on the way to Mass if you must, as the son did on his way back to his father, but once you’re there, just bask in the Father’s love.’

Should we not start presenting salvation as a life-giving process rather than one for handling the injured and wounded? I have not recorded any community reaction to this so far.

My purpose in these articles on the Penitential Rite is to shift thinking about Christ’s work of salvation from ‘sin removal’ to ‘life enhancement’. Jesus said, *“I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.”*

At another Mass I mentioned that the Church, emerging from Judaism, a religion founded on the notion of sin and sacrifice in expiation for sin, has evolved largely as an institution for the management of sin. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the sacrament of reconciliation. The other sacraments too have evolved as ways of managing sin. “No salvation without Baptism which cleanses from

Original Sin”! Matrimony, the sacrament we need if we are not to be living in sin!

My contention is that we need to make a start to presenting Christ’s Church as a life-giving institution rather than as a field hospital for handling the sick and injured. I have stopped using the invocation *“Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”* because it represents Jesus as some sort of glorified garbage collector or street sweeper cleaning up the mess we create, sweeping up behind us as we go through life. God becoming a human being (the Incarnation) has far more to it than garbage collection. Everything human has acquired a divine dimension. **Everything human has been divinised.** Discovering that dimension is our greatest happiness. St. Ignatius calls it “Finding God in all things”. (See the Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl in Mt.13:44-46).

Last week we began Ordinary time with Gospel readings from St. Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount. The passage was an enumeration of the Beatitudes, Jesus’ proclamation of the new life he had come to impart for those who sought the salvation he brought. There is no mention of sin in any of the Beatitudes. I looked into the Catechism of the Catholic Church to check whether this was the message his Church was proclaiming. This is what I found: 113 pages devoted to explaining the Ten Commandments: just four to the Beatitudes!

Mind shifts occur with the speed of Continental Drift but, when they do occur, they impact with the force of the Nepal earthquake and the place is never the same again! I believe it is to some such shift in preaching the message of Jesus that God is calling his Church at the present time.

“A Wayfarer”

Name withheld by request

Editor’s comment

The author, a priest belonging to a well-known order, has written: “I am not allowed to publish anything I write, which is why I have been sending out my commentaries as letters to the e-mail group. You are welcome to use the writing but do not put my name under it.”

Surely a church that controls its priests with such an iron fist is no better than a communist state and is badly in need of reform. People are crying out for thought-provoking messages like this one. But how often are they fobbed off with a rehash of the Sunday’s gospel.

The spirit of Redfern's Ted Kennedy A decade on

Frank Brennan

Pentecost Sunday 2015

Thank you for the privilege of being your preacher this morning here at St Vincent's Redfern as we come together on Pentecost Sunday to honour the memory of our beloved Fr Ted Kennedy who died 10 years ago. I first came here to Redfern in 1976 as an impressionable young Jesuit novice. I was Mum Shirl's driver. I learnt a lot behind that wheel visiting every court and prison in the region.

I am wearing my ordination vestment which was made by my mother and designed by Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, the Aboriginal artist from Nauiyu Nambiyu by the Daly River in the Northern Territory. Ted wore this vestment at Mum Shirl's funeral, and Bishop David Cremin wore it at Ted's. I have just returned from Boston where I spent a very snowy winter. On return I went fairly directly to Daly River because I have dedicated my latest book on constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians to Miriam Rose's nephew who tragically took his own life six years ago. I went to present the book to his family. Most of you never knew him, but most of you will remember his baby face. He was the baby held by Pope John Paul II when he met with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in Alice Springs in 1986. Sadly that boy felt there was no one to hold him later in life. He found no place of belonging, no foothold in either the Dreaming or the Market.

After Ted had suffered his crippling stroke, he wrote his reflection *Who is Worthy?* He wrote about 'the decision to live the rest of my life as if I were already dead. I am now more inclined to state things as they are, or as I see them, without fear or

compromise.' This Pentecost Sunday, he would want all of us to incarnate the same Spirit – the spirit of truth and the spirit of courage.

I was reflecting on the prayers of the faithful composed by His Honour Chris Geraghty for Ted's funeral. In those prayers, Chris described Ted as 'a pebble in the comfortable boot of the establishment, a man who spilt his guts for others'. Contemplating the Abbott Cabinet with its five Jesuit alumni, I dare say that Ted would have been an even larger pebble in this even more comfortable boot that finds an easy fit between Catholic social teaching and the demands of modern politics.

Ten years on, there are many things which are very different from Ted's day. Some of these things even he would have found unimaginable. But he would have spoken of them without fear or compromise. Consider just a handful of those changes: a pope from the South who simply asks, 'Who am I to judge?'; a 62 per cent vote of the Irish people in favour of expanding the definition of civil marriage; the long awaited beatification of Oscar Romero whose identification with the poor did not win immediate Vatican approval; the call by civic leaders for an Australian cardinal to return home and answer questions posed by a royal commission; and the election of a black US president who could stand on the Selma bridge 50 years after Martin Luther King reminding the American people that Ferguson was not just an isolated incident, but neither was such killing any longer endemic nor sanctioned by law or custom. That president was able to remind the whole world that the march is not yet over: – 'consciences can be stirred, and consensus can be built'.

Back home here in Australia, Ted would not have tired of reminding us that the indigenous imprisonment rates are now even higher than they were at the time of the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody – twelve times the national average, with the rate for indigenous juveniles now sitting at 24 times the national average. Ted would have sounded a note of languid despair that we are still asking if or how constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians might be

achieved, rather than simply asking when.

Amidst all the change, Ted would have remained constant opening this Church to the streets of Redfern, providing a sanctuary for all on the streets, and feeding the Eucharist at all hours to those who come to watch and pray. Like the disciples and their listeners in the Acts of the Apostles, we can proclaim the message of hope in such a way that everyone who gathers can hear in their own tongues of the mighty acts of God. Gathered as we are, we look around and behold different gifts, different service, and different workings – but always the same Spirit. With Ted and Shirl, we join in the prayer of today’s Sequence:

*Come, Father of the poor!
Come, source of all our store!
Come, within our bosoms shine.*

Like them we are assured ‘Solace in the midst of woe’. The Pentecost gift of the Spirit is not a cleanser to wipe away woe from our hearts or from our world. It is rather a tonic to provide solace in the midst of woe, even those woes of intractable social injustice and institutional decay.

In the words of Chris Geraghty’s funeral prayers, we pray that the Father might ‘soften hearts, strengthen backs, and let blood flow again in veins so that your oppressed poor may inherit the earth and have a share in its wealth’. We know that we continue to be locked up for fear of others and out of fear of those who are other. Jesus this day conveys the Spirit’s gift of peace here and now. We are sent from here into the world. We are commissioned to forgive those who seek mercy and to retain the sins of those who deny justice to others. We pray for the Spirit in our hearts so that we might emulate Ted’s decision to tell it as it is without fear or compromise, extending this commitment even to kindly bids to protect ourselves from our own uncircumspect selves. Filled with the Spirit, may we leave this Church fearless, unconcerned for ourselves, stirring consciences, building consensus and offering solace to all in the midst of woe.

Frank Brennan SJ is the author of *No Small Change: The Road to Recognition for Indigenous Australia* (University of Queensland Press)



Reform group's letter to Francis: Stop combining parishes into megaparishes

Sarah MacDonald

National Catholic Reporter – May. 13, 2015

The leaders of 24 international reform groups who met in Limerick, Ireland, in April are urging Pope Francis to call for a halt to the church's policy of clustering parishes into megaparishes as a response to the decline in priest numbers. In [an open letter](#), the 32 signatories – from groups such as Catholics for Renewal in Australia, A Call to Action in England, and the Society for Open Christianity for the 21st Century in Slovakia – tell Francis that the future of parish life is ‘massively threatened’.

Bishops seeking to address the priest shortage are ‘merging active and vibrant parishes into anonymous and unmanageable superstructures’, the letter said. While merging seems to be ‘the formula of the hour’, the reform leaders warn that in these new megaparishes, **personal contact between people and ministers is being lost as the sacraments are removed ever further from the everyday life of church citizens. This is leaving** the faithful ‘alienated, unsettled and insecure’ as priests are increasingly focused on administration instead of caring for souls.

Signatories included Fr. Helmut Schüller of the Austrian Pfarrer-Initiative in Austria; Martha Heizer, the excommunicated chair of We Are Church Austria; Deborah Rose-Milavec of FutureChurch in the U.S.; and Paul Collins of Catholics for Ministry in Australia. They were among delegates from more than 10 countries who met in Ireland April 13-17 to discuss the governance of the church and to develop strategies for church reform.

Redemptorist Fr. Tony Flannery, co-founder of the Association of Catholic Priests in Ireland, told NCR that clustering in Ireland usually involves about four parishes being overseen by one or two priests. However, he said, in France, it can involve up to 10 parishes, with just one priest trying to keep Masses going ‘here, there and everywhere’. ‘It is only a matter of a relatively short few years before we have the exact same situation here’, said Flannery, one of the letter's signatories.

Calling for new models of ministry and new ways of managing parish life, the letter tells Francis that there is opposition to clustering among a cross-

section of the faithful – young and old, divorced and remarried, gay and straight – and that new paths to vibrant parishes where everyone is ‘welcome without exception’ are needed. ‘Let us establish a new culture of co-responsibility and joint decision-making in all structures of our Church’, they write. ‘Let us open the priestly office to everyone who has the charism’, they continue, in what could be interpreted as a plea for married and women priests.

At the reform conference in Limerick, Fr. Shaji George Kochuthara, a Carmelite of Mary Immaculate, said in India, ‘many people feel we should do something to change the style of the church, to become a more participatory church that serves, one in which everyone feels equal and involved – not as a spectator or just there to listen’.

Francis has given people a sense of freedom to discuss things, said Kochuthara, who teaches at the seminary in Bangalore. ‘We may not agree on everything, but we should have the freedom for dialogue and a willingness to listen. For many people, it is a relief that they are listened to – not that they should get everything that they want, but a listening atmosphere should prevail in the church.’

In Flannery's view, the church needs to be more open and welcoming, and it needs to be more vibrant locally. Calling for the development of new management models and forms of pastoral ministry, the reform leaders say these would allow parishioners to participate according to their charisms. ‘Many parishes have long shown by example how things can be done differently’, they state. Their letter highlights how the faithful, ‘by their personal dedication, by strength of their baptismal calling’, help relieve priests of their administrative responsibilities in order to free them to continue offering vital pastoral services. Meanwhile, in parishes that no longer have priests, creative solutions are being developed to ensure cohesion within the parish community and in the day-to-day management of their parishes.

One source of concern for the reform leaders is the current model of parish council, which they claim isn't working. According to Flannery, ‘Its weakness lies in the fact that it is a consulting body, while decision-making is still restricted to a small clerical

group'. 'That must change if we are to have any sort of meaningful co-responsibility, from parishes right up to the Vatican', he said. 'We need real responsibility for parish councils with the power of decision-making, which would allow priests to be free to do the ministerial work', Flannery said. Should their plea fall on deaf ears, the letter's authors warn that they are concerned that priests, deacons, ministers and committed parishioners will no longer be willing 'to walk this path'.

"But we are hopeful," Flannery told *NCR*, because a lot of what is in that letter is already part of Francis' agenda. Flannery said the letter, while making some strong requests, shows strong support for that agenda. In some effusive lines, the letter-writers state:

[Sarah MacDonald is a freelance writer based in Dublin.]

Liberation Theology's founder basks in a belated rehabilitation under Pope Francis

David Gibson

May 7, 2015

It used to be that just saying the words "liberation theology" around Catholics was enough to start a schism-level fight, or at least raise a red flag in Rome. The theological movement that focused on the poor emerged out of the church's social justice ferment in the 1960s, but it was always viewed by conservatives as an irredeemably Marxist version of the gospel. Worse, they said it was a tool of Soviet communists who were using the Roman Catholic Church to foment revolution in Latin America and beyond, and at the very height of the Cold War.

The 1978 election of John Paul II, a Polish pope from behind the Iron Curtain who knew the Soviet menace all too well, followed by the election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. president in 1980, marked a turning point in the battle. Reagan and John Paul helped spell doom for the Soviet empire, and the pontiff waged a decades-long campaign inside the church — helped by his doctrinal chief, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who would later become Pope

Pope Francis, your vision of the church moves us. Instead of judging, you seek to understand. Instead of closing doors, you open hearts. Here, the original model of the Church, as Jesus has shown us through his own life, is finally perceived again.'

Elsewhere, the letter-writers commend the pope for a vision that is in line with the Second Vatican Council. They tell him he needs parishes to bring his vision of the church to life. 'Without active parishes, your vision lacks the foundation and the necessary strength to overcome opposition. Our parishes are the future of Jesus' Church; but it is exactly the future of these parishes that is massively threatened', they write.

Benedict XVI — to quash liberation theology and silence its most ardent supporters.

Today, however, it's a wholly different story — and to listen to the Rev. Gustavo Gutierrez, the Dominican priest from Peru who is known as the father of liberation theology, one might wonder what all the fuss was about. "Liberation theology, from the first line of the book until the last line, is against Marxism," Gutierrez said Wednesday (May 6) at an event in his honor Fordham University's Manhattan campus. The book he referred to was his landmark 1971 work, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation*.

For Karl Marx, Christianity was "oppression," he said. But the 85-year-old Gutierrez said his life's work is committed to the view that "Christianity is liberation." Who could argue with that? Certainly not Pope Francis, who has put poverty, and the poor, at the top of his agenda for the church. He's brushed off the "Marxist" and "communist" labels, even saying in 2013, "I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don't feel offended." But in emphasizing the "preferential option for the poor," the pope has helped to bring liberation theology in from the cold.

The Vatican's semi-official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, has written that with Francis' election, liberation theology can no longer "remain in the shadows to which it has been relegated for some years." Francis has an ally in his own doctrinal czar — a German theologian, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, who was appointed by Pope Emeritus Benedict.

Before he became a senior churchman, Müller spent every summer for 15 years in Peru, teaching theology in the poorest regions and becoming good friends with Gutierrez — and something of a convert to liberation theology.

Indeed, Gutierrez last year spoke at a Vatican book launch for a volume by Müller, “Poor for the Poor: The Mission of the Church.” That’s a long way from the days when the Vatican office Müller heads was investigating and censoring liberation theologians (Gutierrez himself was never disciplined).

The process of rehabilitation will take another step forward next week when Gutierrez will be a featured speaker at an official Vatican press conference launching a major meeting of the Vatican’s charity arm, Caritas Internationalis. It’s a remarkable turn of events for Gutierrez, a diminutive man who walks with a cane, gestures energetically with his hands and speaks halting English. Gutierrez is in a sense the Yoda of Catholicism: a small but sage presence who has known vituperation and exile, and who is now able to see his life’s work vindicated — perhaps to the point that its teaching on the poor is part of the church’s architecture, not a threat to its foundation.

“The name ‘liberation theology,’ maybe we don’t need it, you know?” he said in an animated, 90-minute discussion before a packed lecture hall. “The name liberation means salvation. The theology of liberation is the theology of salvation, that is to say, communion. “I am not exactly concerned by the future of liberation theology,” he said. “My main concern is with the future of my people, and of my church.”

Still, not everyone is buying it. Gutierrez recalled an American evangelical Protestant who came to visit him and immediately asked Gutierrez what liberation theology’s position was on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “My friend,” he responded, “do you think liberation theology is a political party and I am its general secretary?” That drew laughs, but there are still some, especially on the Catholic Church’s right flank, who believe that liberation theology was a communist plot and that people like Gutierrez are promoting a threat that has outlived the Soviet Union and the KGB.

Indeed, the Catholic News Agency this month ran an interview with Ion Mihai Pacepa, who served in communist Romania’s secret police before defecting to the U.S. in 1978, in which Pacepa argued that liberation theology was in fact “born in the KGB, and ... had a KGB-invented name.”

Though widely considered a fanciful claim, that hasn’t stopped some from picking up on his thesis, or Pacepa from pointing a finger of blame at liberation theologians, chiefly Gutierrez: “I recently glanced through Gutierrez’s book on liberation theology and I had the feeling that it was written at the Lubyanka,” he said, referring to the KGB’s infamous Moscow headquarters.

When asked at Fordham about such claims, Gutierrez seemed exasperated and simply pointed at his head and spun his finger to indicate how crazy he considered such views. “It does not deserve two minutes,” he said dismissively.

Gutierrez actually seems more worried about Francis and the opposition he is facing. He noted that critics often accuse the pope of being a Marxist and are anxious about Francis’ desire to have “a poor church for the poor”.



Kieran Tapsell was one of the two guest speakers at our ARC Conference on 30 May 2015. The on-line version of his complete paper has been made available to ARC Members. For the benefit of those who do not have access to the Internet, the Introduction to his very scholarly talk is given below. His book, *Potiphar's Wife: The Vatican's Secret and Child Sexual Abuse* is available.

Canon Law on Child Sexual Abuse through the Ages

Kieran Tapsell

In 2014 two senior members of the Marist and Christian Brothers in Australia told Justice McLellan, the Chair of the Child Sexual Abuse Royal Commission, that in the 1980s the Brothers would not have regarded touching a student's genitals as a crime but only a 'moral failure'. McLellan asked Br Shanahan:

Q. Can you explain how the Orders would have brought themselves intellectually to that position, describing it only as a moral failure and not a criminal offence? How would they have arrived at that position?

A. No, I can't explain it.

This paper is an attempt to explain it: how bishops, priests and religious all over the world came to regard the sexual abuse of children, not as crimes punishable by the State, but as moral failures that should be dealt with by treatment, and by dismissal from the priesthood or religious life only as a last resort. The explanation lies in a gradual but radical change of culture within the Catholic Church that took place in the latter part of the 19th century that can be traced through changes in canon law.

The Concepts of "Canon Law" and "Child Sexual Abuse"

The title of this paper, *Canon Law on Sexual Abuse through the Ages*, is in some senses anachronistic. Despite claims that it is the oldest continuing legal system in the Western world, canon law, in the sense of a volume of laws that applied to the whole Church, only became a reality around 1140 CE when an Italian monk, Gratian compiled and tried to harmonize canon law up until that time.

The term "child sexual abuse" is also partly anachronistic. Until about 1700CE, there was no concept of "childhood" in Western thought. Children were "small adults", and were regarded as "chattels" of their parents. Around 1700, childhood came to be seen as a separate state from adulthood, characterised by innocence and naivety. Despite that, there were very ancient laws against the sexual abuse of some children. In Ancient Rome, the *Lex Iulia de vi publica* of Caesar Augustus in 18 BC imposed capital punishment on those who ravished a "boy or a woman or anyone through force", and those who successfully seduced "free" children. This protection was not extended to slaves, and was motivated more by the impact of sexual relations upon social order rather than controlling sexual behaviour towards children generally. The age of minority, like the ages for marriage and death, were lower than they are today.

The term "child sexual abuse" is defined more broadly these days in terms of the involvement of immature children in sexual activity with adults. Nevertheless for the purposes of this discussion it is convenient to apply the term to past practice while bearing in mind that it did not always carry the wider significance that it has today.

Kieran Tapsell studied for the Catholic priesthood at St. Columba's College, Springwood, and St. Patrick's College Manly in the 1960's, during which time he studied Canon Law. After leaving the seminary, he studied Law at Sydney University. He was admitted a Solicitor and Barrister of the Supreme Court of NSW in 1973, was a partner in the firm of Watkins Tapsell from 1973 to 2004. He was an Acting District Court Judge from 1996 to 1999 and the author of many articles in legal journals on topics within his area of specialization. Since his retirement from his legal practice in 2004, he has been translating Latin American literature and newspaper columns from Spanish to English.

The link is below for an order form for *Potiphar's Wife*.
http://atfpres.com/media/order_form_Tapsell.jpg

A Fly on the Wall

Margaret Knowlden

Journey into Truth: Join us at 7.30 on Tuesday 3 February for the start of this special program. Fr John Flader, educator and columnist, will be present to launch this 24-week program that explains Catholic teachings simply and shows how they can be lived out in ordinary life. The talks are primarily aimed for those who have little or no knowledge of the Catholic faith, but they are also helpful for those who want to learn more. The setting is friendly and relaxed, and all are welcome to ask questions and speak freely.

This notice in the Parish bulletin caught my attention! I was curious to know what the 24-week program would outline since I expected that the approach to explaining the main features of our faith should be very different from the Catechism answers of past years. The Second Vatican Council emphasised that the people are the Church, leading to a more joyful, more compassionate, less judgmental, less guilt-ridden, less rule-bound expression of our faith. So I went along as the proverbial ‘fly on the wall’.

On arrival, I glanced at the contents list of the recommended textbook *Journey into Truth* and was concerned to read such topics as: Adam and Eve and The Fall, The Virgin Mary, the Rosary, etc. – not the topics that I would expect to be prominent in explaining the main tenets of our faith.

The author, Fr Flader, was introduced. He explained that he had been brought in from the Opus Dei Centre in Melbourne by then-Archbishop George Pell who, on arrival in Sydney, needed someone to run the Catholic Education Office. Then the penny dropped! Of course, he is an Opus Dei priest – something the Parish bulletin notice had failed to mention. Given the unfavourable reputation of this secret organisation, I am dismayed that the parish to which I belong would introduce one of its priests in such an underhand way.

He announced the topics to be covered over the 24 weeks: The Creed, Sacraments, Morals and Prayer. Notably absent was any mention of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council or of the books and articles by forward-thinking theologians who have been such a source of inspiration. Nor would they cover topics which flow from the main doctrines such as the primacy of conscience, care for the environment and social justice.

Early in his talk we were reminded that missing Mass on Sunday through one’s own fault is a mortal sin (which has never been the case). He stressed the need for constant prayer (including ‘ejaculations’ and the rosary) and, of course, he promoted his book, *Journey into Truth*, assuring us that it has been very well received and may soon be used in several hundred parishes in the US. We also, not surprisingly, were told of ‘miracles’ performed through Opus Dei canonised ‘saints’.

I sat next to a woman who for 20 years has run the RCIA program for her parish. She claimed the book is ‘the best resource for teaching about the Catholic Church’ and she uses it all the time. The thought that potential converts to Catholicism will be instructed in such pre-Vatican II irrelevancies should be of great concern to us all.

I attended one further session which was devoted to the “Last Things – Heaven, Hell and Purgatory”. Modern scholarship almost universally agrees that we know little about what we can expect when we die. Being with God through the resurrection of Jesus is a mystery beyond our comprehension. This session consisted of a video of Fr. Flader morbidly outlining in great detail everything about the particular and general judgments that we will endure before God, that have no scriptural foundation.

If this is the best that the Catholic Education Office can come up with in attempting to outline the main message of our faith today, then it is no wonder that we continue to experience the gradual emptying of our churches.



Illustrator’s Note: My reference is my good old Catholic Bible c1950, where the dictionary section advises: “*ejaculations*’: *Short, fervent prayers – many of which are indulged by the Church.*”

Have your say!

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Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome

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