



arvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics

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The Church of Francis three years on

Where is the Church going? – a question often asked, given that Pope Francis has been leading it now for three years. His overall message of love and compassion is clear but on some controversial issues he prefers to give hints, the result being that both progressives and conservatives put their interpretation onto what his intention means in practice. There are several articles inside this issue that help provide a useful reflection on what he is influencing and what other effects may be independent of that influence.

The progressive Francis is encountered in his statements on conscience (highlighted in the article from *The Tablet*) where he has helped people to come to a more comfortable position in what they are probably already doing in regard to relationships, marriage, divorce, and family planning. Through this influence there will be a lot less feeling of guilt. He has been very demonstrative in his inclusiveness, even to the extent of embracing a transgender person invited to the Vatican who had previously been shunned by the local priest. He emphasised the need for a new understanding when he declared that atheists are included in redemption.

The conservative Francis is sometimes puzzling. Given his liberal approach to God's grace it is surprising that Francis has such rigid views on the way that women should play their roles in the Church as well as in society. The notion that women and men should take on complementary roles has been recognised now for many years as a ploy to support the dominance of men over women. It is expected that Francis would see beyond this (as illustrated in the article from the *National Catholic Reporter*). But this "blind spot" will make it difficult for him, not only to grasp the extent of the disappointment that so many women feel, but also to understand the intrinsic nature of the "clericalism" that he says he wishes to overcome. It really places limits on such necessary Church reform.

If these two aspects are considered along with the observations contained in the articles by Gideon Goosen and Hugh Mackay, we might ask the question: "Will identification with the Church by practising its rituals be of much concern for future generations?" If, in an increasing pluralistic society, the visible face of the Church is a series of buildings controlled by men only, then its relevance will continue to be doubted. Along

with this, if the inclusive words of Francis are interpreted as "anyone can be saved if they lead good and honourable lives", such interpretation provides justification for a personal spirituality not connected with any church. More people will be satisfied to "seek strength from the 'God within'" as Hugh Mackay notes. When they exercise their compassion and kindness, inspired by Pope Francis, it will more likely be done in whatever community they form through their daily associations, quite independently of local church influence. If this occurs it would be an unintended outcome of the openness and mercy of Pope Francis.

John Buggy

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Conference and Annual General Meeting

Crypt at St Patrick's, Church Hill,
 cnr Grosvenor & Gloucester Streets, Sydney
Saturday, August 20th 2016, commencing at 9.30 a.m.

Guest Speaker: Dr Carmen Lawrence

“Morality in Public Policy”

Dr Carmen Lawrence, retired Australian politician, was the first woman to become Treasurer and Premier of a State Government. After leaving the Western Australia State Parliament she became a Member of the House of Representatives in the Australian Federal Parliament where she held various portfolios both in government and in opposition. She is now Director of the Centre for the Study of Social Change in the School of Psychology at the University of Western Australia.

Conference Program:

9.30 a.m.	Registration and coffee
10.00 a.m.	Dr Carmen Lawrence
11.10 a.m.	Morning tea
11.30 a.m.	Questions and discussion with Dr Lawrence
12.30 p.m.	Lunch
1.30 p.m.	Annual General Meeting
3.00 p.m.	Close

Please mark this date in your diary NOW and please respond to tell us you are coming so that we can plan for seating and catering. There is no charge for the conference but a donation towards the lunch would be appreciated.

Respond by e-mail
rbrian@vtown.com.au

as soon as possible
or call either Rob Brian on 02 9371 8519
or John Buggy on 02 9451 8393

And do please come. We have lots to discuss and there is a lot of optimism for change in the Church under Pope Francis for which we have been hoping for so long.

How to Help Rid the Catholic Church of Clericalism

Greg Reynolds

The Eucharist is strangling the Catholic Church. Most anthropologists assure us that rituals are essential to human life and selfdiscovery. Good rituals can be informative and formative. Bad rituals can be inhibiting and harmful.

I believe in the Eucharist as the source and summit of our life of Catholic faith.

As a diocesan priest of over 30 years, I have reflected long and hard about the power and purpose of our central sacred ritual.

One conclusion that I have come to is that many of the rubrics and traditions – that have been built into it over the centuries – are significantly reinforcing the curse of clericalism that is bedeviling our church worldwide.

While not claiming to be an expert liturgist, theologian or church historian, let me identify some of the glaring flaws that I see in the way the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is generally celebrated.

To begin with, we start and end with a procession. Why?

Rituals don't have to have a practical purpose but they should at least have some symbolic meaning. For my money, all these processions seem to do is draw attention to the superiority and implied regal status of the ordained priest. Why can't the celebrant just walk in before Mass and take his place, like everybody else? Someone announcing the opening hymn could simply indicate that it is time to rise and begin the sacred ritual.

Priests being seated on thrones or at least elaborate chairs, clearly distinguishes and separates them from those they are meant to serve, the members of the royal priesthood. Can you just imagine Jesus at the Last Supper reclining on a separate elaborate cushion? Of course not. Special thrones symbolise a very elitist and exclusive attitude.

Jesus' throne on earth was the cross. Priests sitting on thrones today is a sign of presumption. We are getting too far ahead of ourselves.

Then there is the other obvious symbol that contradicts Gospel values: extravagant vestments. I

believe that the celebrant needs to be identified and distinguished within the liturgical setting, being present sacramentally in the person of Christ. However, surely a simple stole over the shoulders is sufficient. If a symbol does not speak naturally and clearly to people then what is the point of it?

Vestments have become another creeping clerical tradition that separates the priest from his people. The wider the gap, the greater the distinction, between priest and people, the more fertile the ground for producing clericalism. I am a cradle Catholic, with no intention of becoming Protestant, but I am convinced that, so often, less can say more. There is so much the various Christian traditions can learn from one another if we can just be open to each other's traditions and seek appropriate middle ground, on so many practices.

A more difficult adjustment to make has to do with the seating arrangements of the congregation. It seems to me that the most symbolic way for a community to gather to celebrate Mass is not in a building shaped like a cross, but rather to gather in a circle. Having turned the priest around to face the flock, which was clearly a good move, the altar in many churches has become somewhat of a barrier or separation of the priest from the community; especially if one adds huge brass candle sticks.

With smaller numbers of people, a circle is not so much of a practical problem, but with big numbers it will require a certain amount of concentric circles. This at least, would be far better than rows of pews stretching back further and further away from the altar. Pews are the enemy of community; they keep the laity docile and contained, corralled. But where, you may ask, would the priest sit? Well, in the circle with everyone else, of course. What a great symbol of being one with his people. What about introducing a round table/altar, which is by no means an original idea, but speaks clearly of equality and hospitality?

With smaller numbers, one other minor innovation is to have the bread and wine passed around the group at the start of the preparation of the gifts. This is a lovely, simple way for people to more fully personally identify with the offering

through touch. And what about the bread (hosts)? As has been pointed out so often by others, we need to let go of the strict precise requirements and consecrate real looking bread that people can connect back to their homes and everyday lives. While we need to maintain links with the historical Jesus and the Last Supper, surely the greater link needs to be with the daily food in people's lives.

Recently on a trip to Timor Leste, I stayed with priests who lived on rice as their staple diet like everyone else in that struggling country, rarely eating bread. The symbolic disconnect with the Eucharistic wafer left me wondering.

There are various opportunities for women to take a more leading role in the Eucharist, if we can but shake off the shackles of rigid outdated rules.

Why not have a woman lead the Penitential Rite, read the Gospel, share in the Fraction Rite or give a formal Blessing? I can promise you that the roof will not fall in. Clericalism thrives on inequality.

I hope and pray that priests and bishops around the world can wisely step out and renew the Eucharist in creative and life-giving ways, without having to resign their parishes, a step I felt compelled, by the Spirit, to take a few years ago. I finally took this initiative as a belated response to what I had seen continuing to occur over the past 40 years: people drifting and being driven out of an institution that had imbedded in its official teachings and doctrines sexist, homophobic and elitist beliefs and attitudes.

www.inclusivecatholics.com

Editor's note:

Many of us would agree with the sentiments expressed in this article. Fr Greg Reynolds now supports a community of very loyal but dissenting Catholics who feel disenfranchised and disillusioned by the institutional Church. It is a pity that this has led to him being excommunicated by the Vatican.

To Reform or Not to Reform: 20/20 Church Vision

Gideon Goose

The churches throughout the world have been asked to respond to a document from the World Council of Churches called *Church: Towards a Common Vision*. Submissions were due by 31 December 2015. The document was developed by delegates from the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Roman Catholic churches. It is hoped that many churches will respond and that we will have a rich sources of comment as we did with the WCC document called *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (BEM, 1982).

National Councils of Churches have responded as well as some individual churches and theologians. The document, developed over two decades, is a solid theological statement, that unfortunately not many will read as it is heavy-going. (Pope Francis is not keen on heavy theological statements that few understand!)

However, the contents of the document raises questions that all of us should be asking ourselves as church communities in the context of reform. There are great opportunities here for renewal and reform – unless of course you feel that the church (Catholic or otherwise) does not need reform. We know Pope Francis is calling for reform but some bishops think all is hunky dory.



The first question I would put to any group of parishioners is: how do you imagine the church? Triangle? Circle or square? What could these images mean? Further to this, when you say ‘church’ do you mean: 1) a building, 2) clergy (hierarchy), 3) lay people, 4) a group of baptised people in a given place at a given time? In the sad sexual abuse saga, how often do bishops say they wish to protect the ‘church’ when they surely mean the hierarchy or themselves. When others say ‘the church should do something about poverty’ they might well mean ‘the hierarchy’ (not me!). So the meaning of ‘church’ can vary depending on the context. It is helpful to take more care over language. If by ‘church’ one means all baptised people together, that is fine, otherwise one should be specific and use words like, Vatican State, Curia, Pope, hierarchy, bishops, clergy, laity.

Here is another issue. The Sport Institute in Canberra is there to produce elite athletes. Cancer Support Groups are there to support cancer victims. The State Rail Authority is there to provide trains for the population. Their mission is clear. So what is the church there for? What is the mission of the church? (The document emphasises that the church is, by nature, missionary.)

When we join a parish do we get the feeling that this parish is missionary in outlook, or that it is settled and moribund? Consider this: a certain parishioner complained to the bishop that ‘his’ Saturday evening Mass at 6pm was going to be cut. All his life he had faithfully attended this Mass and it was his right to continue to have it. What do you think his idea of church mission was?

One way to assess what a given parish is up to, is to observe what it does. Perhaps the mission of the church in practice can be deduced by looking at what the church members do on a daily basis. In your parish what emphasis is given to these activities: giving to the poor, prayer groups, visiting the sick, new buildings, choir practice, healing services, providing meals for the needy, helping refugees, Bible study groups, running Bingo and Trivia nights, promoting youth groups, promoting and organizing netball, celebrating the Eucharist, holding social evenings, holding fund-raising events? Does your parish see itself as a stand-alone institution, as a branch office of Head Office, or as part of the

universal church? The document reminds us: *the local church is wholly church but not the whole church.*

When you have prioritised the above activities, it might be useful to ask yourself how you think the mission of the church can best be described. Is the mission of the church to: build more and more churches, increase membership of your church, proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to all, unite all Christians, promote social justice. How do these objectives stand in relation to each other?

Do we have some criteria against which we can measure our present-day church? Here is a checklist one could use. According to Jesus, ‘It was to be a community of witness, proclaiming the kingdom which Jesus has first proclaimed, inviting human beings from all nations to saving faith. It was to be a community of worship, initiating new members by baptism in the name of the Holy Trinity. It was to be a community of discipleship, in which the apostles, by proclaiming the Word, baptising and celebrating the Lord’s Supper, were to guide new believers to observe all that Jesus himself has commended’(#2).

And why then is it that the church is perceived by many as no longer relevant to their lives? Can your parishioners come up with some reasons why this is so? Or perhaps it is not so. Pope Francis likes to say the church is often a *field hospital*. A great clue there!

The WCC document mentions many other topics (*koinonia*/fellowship, faith, sacraments, ministry, authority, bishops, unity in diversity) but the above questions raise the core issue of the missionary nature of the church. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther, who had 20/20 vision on what the church should be, pointed this out to the displeasure of the pope and many bishops.

GIDEON GOOSEN is a Sydney-based theologian and member of the Australian Catholic Theological Association (ACTA), the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) and European Society of Catholic Theologians (ESCT).

Love and Marriage

Noelene Uren

When the engagement of Prince Charles and Lady Diana was announced, they were both asked, 'Are you in love?' A dewy-eyed nineteen-year-old Diana replied shyly, 'Yes'. An older Charles answered, somewhat tactlessly, 'Whatever love is!' Maybe a pointer to what eventually occurred.

So how do we define love? Some years ago I was in London walking along by the Serpentine with my then four-year-old grandson when he slipped his hand in mine and said, 'Love you'. Choked by this display of affection I squeezed his hand and said, 'Love you too'. A little while later we were sitting on the bank looking out over the water when he again said, 'Love you'. I kissed him on the top of his head and said, 'Love you too darling'. To which Tom replied, 'I wasn't talking to you that time. I was talking to the swans!'

To say 'I love you' can be open to a wide range of meanings. We can say we love chocolate cake, ice-cream, a particular piece of music, the list is endless.

When the Passionists ran our parish, I remember once our priest asked us to turn to the person behind us and say, 'I love you'. The woman sitting in front of me, who I didn't know, turned and said, 'I can't possibly say I love you, but I love the jacket you're wearing'. I was somewhat peeved that my jacket was more worthy of love than I was but I understood her inability to say 'I love you' to a complete stranger.

So there are many kinds of love: from the love we bestow on some treasured inanimate object, the loyal love we give to family members and close friends, the fiercely protective love we give our children to the passionate love we feel for the person we marry.

A few months ago I attended a beautiful wedding. It was a picnic in a park in Melbourne. The guests were all people who were there because the groom, my great-nephew, and his lovely wife wanted us there, not because they thought we should be invited. The couple had written their own vows and they each promised to love the other, 'through the good times and the grumpy times'.

That's what marriage is all about, isn't it? – to which those of us who are now celebrating our Golden and even Diamond wedding can attest.

The joy of love is real and, as Pope Francis said, it needs to be protected and nurtured daily. But the words of an English journalist, Joanna Moorhead, need to be considered. She wrote that she had been made 'a little uneasy' by a prayer put out by the English bishops for Valentine's Day. Entitled, 'Prayer for those seeking a spouse', it was described as 'a new prayer to assist those who want to meet their soulmate'.

The idea that there is one person in the world who will be our soulmate is an impossible goal, akin to the Hollywood dream of 'happily ever after'. It also puts a most unrealistic burden on each partner within the marriage. I sincerely hope for the sake of our young people that our bishops do not follow the example of their English brothers by publishing such a prayer.

There are many people who help to support us emotionally in our journey through life, because, as humans, we have many kinds of needs. Quoting Joanna, she wrote:

'For me, life has brought a series of soulmates; some have been bright lights in my existence for a few years, others come and go, some are always there.'

So, although our husband/wife may be the mainstay of our life, it is also true that, as the Beatles sang back in the 60's, *'I get by with a little help from my friends'*.

ref: Joanna Moorhead, www.thetablet.co.uk

Letter to the Editor

I would like to congratulate Noelene Uren for writing the article entitled '**Catholic guilt, obedience and gagging of free speech**' (*ARCvoice*, March 2016). We know from the many conversations that we have had with fellow Catholics that Noelene has managed to convey in writing how we all feel. Congratulations also to you and the ARC team for publishing her article. How long do we have to wait before these aged men in frocks, The Curia, realise how out of touch they are with their own Church? Keep up the good work!

Kevin Doherty

Pius XII - a Holy Pope?

Hans Küng

Extract from his book *Can we save the Catholic Church?*

Pius XII (1939-58) was the last uncontested representative of the Medieval Counter-Reformation/anti-Modernist paradigm. In keeping with the spirit of Pius IX, and despite numerous objections, he proceeded, in 1950, to define a new, completely unnecessary and historically unfounded, 'infallible' Marian dogma, i.e. the bodily assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. At the same time, he banned the French worker-priest movement, and prohibited the most distinguished contemporary theologians, many of them French, from teaching theology; these included Teilhard de Chardin, Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac. However, from the very beginning of his pontificate, he avoided any public condemnation of National Socialism and anti-Semitism, and he refrained from excommunicating the Catholic Nazi criminals.

This decidedly Germanophile Catholic diplomat had, by and large, a legal/diplomatic mind-set rather than a theological/biblical one, and he had enjoyed only limited experience of pastoral care. Correspondingly, his actions were not guided by pastoral considerations, but rather by the concerns of the curial institutions of the papacy. After his traumatic experiences as Nuncio in Munich during and after the short-lived Munich Soviet Republic (1918-19), he was obsessed by fear of physical contact and dread of Communism. On the whole, his attitude was authoritarian and anti-democratic, not unsympathetic to the kind of 'Fuhrer-Catholicism' that was widespread in Germany at the time of the Nazi takeover. Thus he was predisposed to form pragmatic anti-Communist alliances with the Fascist regimes in Italy, Spain and Portugal, and even with totalitarian Nazism.

One need not question his good intentions if one says that for Pacelli, the career diplomat, what counted was primarily the protection of the freedom and power of the church institutions, in particular the Roman Curia, the hierarchy, Catholic organizations, schools, associations, and the freedom of religious practice. Throughout his life, however, the concepts of human rights and democracy remained utterly foreign ideas.

For Pacelli, a scion of the city of Rome, Rome was the new Zion, the centre of the Church and of the world. He never showed any particular personal sympathy towards Jews; theologically, he viewed them as a people of God-killers and he held them responsible for the Bolshevik revolution in Bavaria in 1918-19.

A triumphalist representative of Roman ideology, he considered Christ to be a Roman, not a Jew, and Jerusalem to have been replaced by Rome. This is one of the reasons why, like the entire Roman Curia, he opposed the founding of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Pacelli was very much aware of the affinity between his own authoritarian (anti-Protestant, anti-liberal, anti-Socialist and anti-Modernist) concept of the Church, and the authoritarian concept of the state held by the Fascists and Nazis. In his view, the concepts of 'unity', 'order', 'discipline' and the 'Fuhrer principle' applied as much to the supernatural order of the Church as to the natural order of the State. Pius XII, who as pope was also his own secretary of state, greatly overestimated the power of diplomacy and concordats. Basically, he had only two political aims: fighting Communism, and maintaining the institutions of the Church. For him, the vexed question of the Jews was for the most part merely an irrelevant annoyance,

and there is mounting evidence that he was fully informed as early as 1940 about the dimensions of the Holocaust. Only towards the end of the war did he use diplomacy and charitable assistance to save individual Jews or groups of Jews, particularly in Italy and Rome. In two speeches given in 1942/43 he briefly deplored in general and abstract terms the fate of ‘unfortunate people’ persecuted because of their race. But he never publicly uttered the word ‘Jew’ in this connection. Pacelli did not protest against the Nuremberg Race Laws (1935) or the so-called *Kristallnacht* pogrom (1938). Just as his predecessor had failed to protest against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, he refrained from protesting against the Italian invasion of Albania on Good Friday 1939 and the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, which triggered World War II

It is often alleged that he intended to protest against the Nazi persecution of the Jews, but was dissuaded from doing so by Nazi reprisals against the Jews in the occupied Netherlands after the Dutch bishops denounced the Nazi deportation of Jews in mid-1942.

However, even Konrad Adenauer, the post-war German Federal Chancellor, argued that a papal protest would not have been either pointless or counter-productive: as evidence he cited the success of Bishop Clemens August von Galen’s protest against Hitler’s euthanasia program in 1941 and the support given by the Danish Lutheran bishops to the Jews of Denmark in 1943. Nevertheless, Pius XII avoided any form of public protest against anti-

Semitism. Although he was in a perfect position to speak out, he remained silent on the subject of the notorious German war crimes committed everywhere in Europe, and on the Holocaust, the worst act of mass murder of all times. When he became pope, he failed to publish the encyclical against racism and anti-Semitism that had been drawn up under his predecessor.

This is not the place to pass judgement on the personal guilt of Pius XII in this area or on his positive achievements in other areas. But one can and must ask whether he should really be canonized as Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI have advocated. Did he really show the ‘heroic virtue’ that Benedict XVI attested in raising him to the rank of ‘Venerable’ on 19 September 2009? The canonization of Pius XII would be as problematical as that of Pius IX - an avowed enemy of Jews and Protestants, of human rights, religious freedom, democracy and modern culture. It would be another Vatican farce and a repudiation of all the recent admissions of past papal guilt. I well remember the words spoken to us as students at the Collegium Germanicum by Pacelli’s loyal private secretary Father Robert Leiber SJ, at a time when the pope was still alive: ‘No, he is not a saint, but he is a great man of the Church.’ Despite Pius XII’s efforts to prolong his life and his control of the Church with dubious medical practices, the last years of his pontificate, until his death in 1958, were years of lethargy and depression for the Church. The next pope, however, would be a complete surprise.

Editor’s Note: In 1950, as a 17-year-old Catholic, I was at the Vatican for the Holy Year, waiting with a huge crowd for Pope Pius XII to appear. He eventually arrived, held aloft by stalwart bearers, and blessed us all. In my naïvety I felt sure I was in the presence of the divine and firmly believed that his eyes looked right into my soul. There was never any mention of his shameful wartime track-record as revealed in this chapter from Hans Kung’s book *Can We save the Catholic Church?* How brain-washed we all were!

Bishop Ron Mulkearns

Another Side of the Story

by Michael Morwood

The bishop of Ballarat, Ron Mulkearns, was my cousin. I was the deacon at his episcopal consecration in late 1968 and his first ordination to priesthood in May, 1969.

In the regrettable situation in which my cousin found himself as he neared death I have wanted to stand with him and honour him while also wanting to stand compassionately, sorrowfully and respectfully with people who have been hurt by his decisions and actions in the Ballarat sexual abuse scandal.

My cousin was a thoroughly decent man. There was not an ounce of evil intent in him. I do not wish to excuse any of his decisions and actions that have caused immense pain to so many people, but I do want to expose the great injustice and hypocrisy that is being cloaked over as this and other cases of bishops handling sexual abuse are investigated.

Formed by the Institution...

Behind Ron Mulkearns looms the Institution to which he gave his life. That Institution groomed him in loyalty to its cause from his earliest years, educated him in the 40s and 50s *en route* to priesthood, further educated him in Rome to be a Canon Lawyer, and appointed him at a young age, with virtually no parish pastoral experience, to be Co-Adjutor Bishop in Ballarat, a diocese to which he did not belong. He eventually succeeded an elderly bishop and found himself immersed in a typical clerical old boys' club. I know he found this difficult. And I know he did look to older minds for advice, especially with regard to appointment of clergy.

Ron, to my mind, was somewhat diffident, shy, and not especially adept at socialising. But he was a Canon Lawyer with great loyalty to and trust in the Institution – why would the Institution look for any other requirements to be a bishop?

I recall a conversation I had with Ron sometime in the '90s when he was on a Vatican commission for Priestly Life and he would travel to Rome and elsewhere for meetings. I asked him whether priestly celibacy was ever on the agenda. He said that members of the group regularly put it on the agenda. Then what happened? I asked. Vatican officials always removed it from the agenda, he said. I was flabbergasted. Why don't you object, I asked. And his reply was, 'Well, they're the boss'.

Rome must not be questioned. You do what Rome wants you to do – that's the role of a bishop.

Ron knew the drill. He accepted that Rome was 'the boss' and not to be questioned. And there can be no doubt that, when he found himself out of his depth both personally and episcopally with the reality of clerical sexual abuse, he turned to Rome for advice. And he also trusted the expertise of psychologists. He had to; he was out of his depth in this.

Secrecy and protection of the Institution at all costs...

I'd love to see the correspondence with Rome. Wouldn't we all! But two features of Rome's dealing with sensitive issues are secrecy and protection of the Institution at all costs. Rome would cover its tracks – and still does so – while the bishop would be left high and dry in damage control when the dam walls broke open. I believe that the Catholic Church in its governing processes is as totalitarian as any system of governance can be. Its control over thought and behaviour is exceptional. I'm also well aware that every person is responsible for his or her actions. And while it's no excuse to say, 'they made me do it', there is at times and in some situations reason to pause, to consider another side of the story and not to dump harsh judgment on someone who is basically decent and make him the scapegoat for everything that went wrong.

The fact is that you do not become a bishop in the Roman Catholic Church without, in many cases, leaving your intellectual integrity at the door when you sign on for the task. You have to be on record that you will not support the ordination of women priests or contraceptive practices. You have to sign on to absolute surrender of intellect to what the Church believes and teaches – and that includes such questionable issues as humanity emerging into a state of Paradise, the literalness of the infancy and resurrection accounts in the gospels, the physical resurrection of Jesus, and that Jesus actually ordained and set up a male clerical Church before he died, to name just a few.

The intellectual dishonesty, the hypocrisy, the violence and the moral bankruptcy of Institutional Roman Catholicism...

So now, let's look at the real issue underpinning the clergy sexual abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church. And that is the intellectual dishonesty, the hypocrisy, the violence and the moral bankruptcy of Institutional Roman Catholicism held together by secrecy, by bullying and by silencing – and, until recent years, rewarding those who engaged in these tactics to safeguard the Church's reputation.

Ron Mulkearns stands guilty of acting in accord with what the Institutional powers asked of him. I believe he so trusted the sacredness of that Institution that he was blinded and acted misguidedly. And I have no doubt he acted, relying on advice he trusted, according to what he thought was right. He now stands condemned for his decisions. Some people are suggesting he does not deserve to have a Cathedral funeral service. I suggest there is scapegoating here: let's put everything at the feet and in the hands of Ron Mulkearns because he was the responsible face of the Catholic Church. And I suggest that everyone look further, look beyond Ron Mulkearns, and see the dysfunctional Roman Catholic Institution that expressed itself in his thinking and in his decisions that hurt so many people.

The dysfunction and the hypocrisy of this Institution is breathtaking.

For a start, let's consider every bishop who knowingly and willingly signs on to be a bishop, knowing full well he is in disagreement with some Church teachings but is prepared to keep quiet about it.

Then, let us consider every Roman Catholic priest who privately disagrees with aspects of Church teaching but will not say so publicly for fear of being silenced – or in the case of older priests, for fear of having their pension stopped by a mean-minded and mean-spirited bishop.

And way up near the top of the list for consideration, let's put all the academic Roman Catholic theologians and moral theology professors who dare not say publicly what they really believe on some doctrinal and moral issues for fear they will lose their teaching position in a Catholic university.

I mentioned violence. Bullying and silencing and intimidation are all violent – and this goes on in diocese after diocese where 'yes-men' bishops seek to protect the Institution's power and authority by ensuring no informed, scholarly voices are raised on their watch that would question what Rome wants everyone to believe. Whatever happened to the gospel words, 'The truth will set you free'?

And I certainly want to consider the cardinal who condemned Ron in no uncertain terms at the Royal Commission into clergy sexual abuse – a cardinal known for protecting the institution and reaping his reward from Rome with bullying and silencing tactics. The hypocrisy was awesome to behold and it pinpoints something that needs attention in this sad story: the institution gets off scot-free. It is not brought to trial, to examination, and ultimately to rightful condemnation. Not only that. It can, in the words of this cardinal at the Royal Commission,

pompously condemn Ron Mulkearns from the high moral ground, see itself as pure and innocent as Snow White, and not look in the mirror and see the harm it wreaks with the intellectual dishonesty and hypocrisy at every level of Church life.

Betrayal...

And let's talk of betrayal. Ron Mulkearns would never think of betraying the Institution to which he devoted his life. The Ron I know would not think of publicly condemning its thinking, its advice or its actions. The Institution, however, hides behind its secrecy, and its tactics of self-protection. If it had any moral integrity or decency it would let the world know what advice it gave to bishops around the world in the 70s, 80s and 90s for handling clerical sexual abuse. It would face the world and proclaim: this is the advice we gave; if you want to condemn this man, then condemn us at well. We know that has not happened – and we know why. What does that say about the Institution's moral integrity?

The Institutional Roman Catholic Church will wash its hands of Bishop Ron Mulkearns, and deem him to be an embarrassment, and doubtless want to bury him accordingly. He will remain a person of dismay and even intense dislike for the victims of sexual abuse in the Ballarat Diocese. Some people will certainly raise their voices and call for the Catholic Church not to give him a funeral befitting a bishop. But in the face of all this, let us not lose sight of the other relevant issue: the hypocrisy, and the intellectual dishonesty rampant in the Roman Catholic Church. Who or what is also to blame in this shameful time for the Ballarat Diocese and other Dioceses? And when the time comes for accountability, let not the Institution escape blame for betrayal of one of its own. The damage of its totalitarian control over thought and behaviour, its paranoid secrecy, its silencing of victims of sexual abuse – its obsession with protecting its own reputation, and above all its extraordinary lack of compassion and its failure to act as Jesus would act – these are the issues that also should be headlined, scrutinised and condemned. I long for the day when this will happen in Australia.

First published in *Catholica* 05 Apr 2016

Michael Morwood is a well-known adult faith educator. His many books include *Its Time – Challenges to the Doctrine of the Faith*. Published in 2013, it is well worth reading.

It's time to be honest about Pope Francis and women

Jamie Manson – National Catholic
Reporter

May. 19, 2016

Several years ago, I asked in this column, ‘When does our hope for Pope Francis become denial?’

After last week’s frenzy over women deacons, I believe I may have found my answer. The glimmer of hope came, of course, when Francis agreed to launch a commission to study the role of women deacons in the early church. The idea of a commission was suggested to the pope by a group of women religious during their annual International Union of Superiors General (UISG) meeting. Hours later, just about everyone saw some version of a headline declaring that the pope was considering ordaining women deacons.

Unfortunately, few people had the time to read the full story behind the headline. And even fewer people had time to read Francis’ complete response to the sisters’ question about women deacons. If they had, they would have heard the pope reassert all of the theological ideas that prevent women from any form of equality in the Roman Catholic church. Here are a few choice quotes from Francis’ conversation with the UISG (with additional commentary from me):

Because women look at life through their own eyes and we men cannot look at it in this way. The way of viewing a problem, of seeing things, is different in a woman compared to a man. They must be complementary, and in consultations it is important that there are women.

Here, the pope, for the umpteenth time, declares his unwavering belief in complementarity, the idea that, by creating male and female bodies differently, God shows us that God intends for men and women to have separate roles and purposes in the church and in the family.

Francis then reinforced the ban on women homilists and women priests, saying:

There is no problem for a woman – religious or lay – to preach in the Liturgy of the Word... . But at the Eucharistic Celebration there is a liturgical-dogmatic problem, because it is one celebration – the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Liturgy, there is unity between them – and He Who presides is Jesus Christ. The priest or bishop who presides does so in the person of Jesus Christ. It is a theological-liturgical reality. In that situation, since women are not ordained, they cannot preside.

In other words, in any liturgy where the Eucharist will be consecrated, a woman’s body renders her illegitimate to speak the words of a homily. Francis further noted:

But it is necessary to differentiate clearly: one thing is the preaching in a Liturgy of the Word, and this can be done, but another thing is the Eucharistic Celebration; here there is another mystery. It is the mystery of Christ’s presence and the priest or the bishop who celebrate in persona Christi.

Francis is delicately saying that because women do not have a phallus, they cannot ‘image’ the body of Christ. In what is surely a great cosmic irony, a woman’s God-given body prevents her from transforming bread into Christ’s body.

Francis then told the UISG women what kind of image they can be for the church – and what kinds of images they cannot be:

The consecrated woman is an icon of the Church, an icon of Mary. The priest is not an icon of the Church; he is not the icon of Mary; he is an icon of the Apostles, of the disciples who were sent to preach.

Yet again, Francis is reminding women that their bodies determine their destiny in the church. So, in what is surely the greatest cosmic irony, this means that if Mary, who gave birth to the body Jesus, were on Earth today, even she could not consecrate bread and wine into his body and blood. And Mary Magdalene, who was first to preach the Good News and whom John Paul II called the ‘Apostle to the Apostles,’ could not offer a homily at Mass. Francis then tells the women that, like the church, they are called to the role of wives:

The Church is woman ... she is a woman married to Jesus Christ, she has her Bridegroom, who is Jesus Christ... . And a woman’s consecration makes her the very icon of the Church and icon of Our Lady. We men

cannot do this. This will help you to deepen, from this theological root, a great role in the Church. I hope this does not elude you.

It's hard to imagine that this nuptial symbolism, used so frequently by Pope Francis and his intellectual forbearer John Paul II to reinforce women's fixed place in the church, has eluded any of these sisters. But it was thoughtful of Francis to make sure they understand.

Francis concludes by warning women religious against 'the temptation of feminism,' saying:

We must not fall into the trap of feminism, because this would reduce the importance of a woman.

In case it eluded you, the 'importance of woman,' is what Pope Francis (quoting John Paul II) calls 'the feminine genius'. That is, the reality that God, by giving us uteruses as well as genitalia that 'complement' the male anatomy, has called women specifically to be wives and mothers, receivers and nurturers.

I am belaboring these quotes from the pope's conversation with women religious in order to make this point: Francis' theological imagination makes it impossible for women to achieve equal decision-making power and sacramental authority in this church. And it's time we faced it.

Pope Francis believes that women cannot assume these leadership roles in the church because of our bodies. He believes the God simply cannot work through the female body in the way in which God works through the male body. He believes that, when it comes to consecrating the Eucharist, the female anatomy somehow renders God powerless.

I realise that, among progressive Catholics, the source of hope for Francis comes from a place of love – a love for the church, a desire to see it serve its people well, a longing for it to be more fully a force for good in our world. But no one is served from only reading sound bites that seem to offer an inkling of hope, while downplaying or ignoring altogether the words *from the same statement* that demonstrate clearly the injustice that women are facing with this pope.

After the enthusiasm exhibited by so many last week, some may have been led to believe that sacramentally-ordained women deacons are a *fait accompli*. But the Francis' own words suggest that women are far from being recognized as genuinely equal and that there is still so much work to be done. These sound bites and headlines have only expanded the myth of Francis' revolutionary attitude toward women.

From early in Francis' pontificate, criticism of the papacy and the Vatican seemed to fall out of favor. This widespread refusal to cast a critical eye on the pope's understanding of women is simply irresponsible – and it has an especially perilous impact on poor women.

Why? Because the Roman Catholic church still has inordinate power over the bodies of women in many parts of our world. Pope Francis' unshakeable belief that the purpose of women is to be mothers, nurturers and 'complements' to men does not only reinforce the ban on women's decision-making and sacramental power in the church – these beliefs are also tied directly to the church's teachings on sexual and reproductive health, especially contraception and abortion.

For example, Pope Francis' understanding of women is part of the same ideology that led to the creation of Draconian anti-abortion laws in El Salvador as well as countless Catholic-sponsored movements to keep contraceptives out of the hands of women, particularly poor women, whose need to manage the size of their families is a matter of life and death.

This same ideology keeps women, day after day, sacramentally powerless and banned from pulpits in Catholic churches, while the people of God long for ordained ministers who can offer meaningful baptisms and funerals, thoughtful homilies, and comforting last rites. We can wax on about 'tiny steps forward' and 'slow pace of the development of doctrine'. But the beliefs about women that are espoused by Pope Francis are causing untold suffering to women, to families, and to the life of the church itself.

After years of pain and division caused by previous popes, there is little wonder that so much hope has been placed in Francis' papacy. And there are some good, concrete reasons to have hope in him. But we must be honest about the limitations that Francis places women's bodies and women's power, and we must not be afraid to let our prophetic voices rise up about it. The lives of countless women and the future of the church itself depend on it.

Jamie L. Manson is NCR books editor. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics. Her email address is jmanson@ncronline.org.

The Religion Paradox

Hugh Mackay

The chapel in the grounds of Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital was not where I was heading that day in 1978. I was wandering aimlessly, distracted and distraught over the fate of my then-wife who was lying in an old-fashioned, Florence Nightingale-style ward, beginning the long process of recovery from a stroke. We had been married not quite a year.

The chapel was suddenly there in front of me, and I entered its dim and silent space with a sense of gratitude – a place to sit quietly, perhaps to pray, perhaps to weep. No tears came, and no prayers, either, though I would have welcomed both. I sat there, alone, for a long time.

When I left, I met a woman coming in. 'All you can do is pray,' she said, but showed no sign of wanting to engage in further conversation. It was a remark I've heard many times since, from people who feel that once everything that can possibly be done has been done – to heal a sickness, save a marriage, find a missing child, recover from the ravages of addiction – prayer is the only remaining option.

For some people, calling on God in a crisis is simply a case of 'nothing to lose'. For others, it's a return to a faith they once had, but thought they'd lost, or perhaps a desperate last-ditch test to see if there is a God who might somehow intervene.

Crises bring out all sorts of primitive responses in us. The bigger the crisis, the more likely we are to respond to the idea that faith in 'something greater than ourselves' might be needed to pull us through. Martin Seligman, the high priest of the positive psychology movement, has concluded that, for most people, faith in something greater than ourselves – whether via religion, patriotism, family, or a Big Idea like 'the power of love' – is essential to a sense of meaning in our own life.

Seligman believes that the wholesale loss of this faith in something bigger than ourselves – as a result of declining religious faith and practice, the fragmentation of families and communities, and the rise of rampant individualism – is a direct contributor to the Western epidemic of depression.

One of history's most dramatic cases of someone calling on God in a crisis was John Newton, best known as the writer of the words of the hymn *Amazing Grace*. Newton had a fearsome reputation as a ruthless slave-trader, and when a storm nearly washed him overboard

from one of his vessels he called on God to save him, converted to Christianity, and ultimately joined the anti-slavery movement.

'There are no atheists in an aircraft in a storm', one of my respondents said, when I was conducting research about religious faith and its modern substitutes. 'A crisis always brings you back to religion', said another, reflecting on her own experience of having drifted away from regular church attendance, only to return to it when confronted by the combination of a dying parent and a wayward adolescent daughter. In any culture that has been as heavily influenced by religion as ours has, there are momentous occasions when even the least religious may find themselves casting around for suitably 'religious' responses – the *Lord's Prayer* or the *23rd Psalm*, for instance – to console them. That's why hospitals have chapels. It's why airports have prayer rooms. It's why many organisations have chaplains on hand, in case people feel the need of help in a personal or 'spiritual' crisis, where conventional counselling may seem inadequate or inappropriate.

A hundred years ago, 95 per cent of Australians claimed a belief in God. Today, the figure is down to 68 per cent, and that includes belief in some 'higher power' as well as God. Although 61 per cent of Australians identified themselves as Christian in the last census, a mere 15 per cent attend church once a month, and only 8 per cent weekly.

But there are some fascinating conundrums in contemporary Australians' attitudes to religion. We flock to carol services at Christmas, almost a quarter of us attend church at Easter, and the decline in church attendance has been accompanied by soaring enrolments at faith-based schools. Many parents with little or no religious faith still want their children to grasp the essentials of Christian values, at least.

The strongest contemporary trend is away from institutional religion in favour of alternative approaches to spirituality: SBNR (spiritual but not religious) is the new black. That explains the surge of interest in things like mindfulness training, yoga, meditation – all connected to the desire to tap into 'something greater than ourselves'.

What might that 'something' be? Many people still look to a traditional, supernatural God, particularly in a crisis. But a growing number seek strength from 'the God within' via spiritual resources like kindness and compassion that can enrich and enlarge us all.

Hugh Mackay's new book, *Beyond Belief*, published by Macmillan, is out now. This article was published in *The Sun-Herald*, 1 May 2016.

Heroes of the Faith

55 men and women whose lives have proclaimed Christ
and inspired the faith of others!

Edited by Roland Ashby and published by Garratt Publishing Mulgrave VIC
(www.garrattpublishing.com.au)

Review by Peter Meury

Christianity has been a great force throughout the ages, and we should be reminded of this in these times when Faith appears to have lost its shine, especially in the Western World. This book contains 55 short but in-depth profiles of men and women who have created a profound and lasting impact on the World over the last 2,000 years. Each story is presented by a different writer who has mostly experienced the help of these heroes to shape their faith and their lives. The stories are a powerful witness to Christ and his message.

The list of heroes include amongst others:

- * The witness to God's love Mother Teresa;
- * Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the 20th Century greatest witnesses to Christian belief;
- * Brother Roger of Taizé, who formed the international Taizé ecumenical Community attracting young people to Christ;
- * The pioneer of anti-hate and forgiveness Desmond Tutu;
- * Composer of international repute and Teacher in music J.S. Bach;
- * The man who courageously threw open the windows of the Catholic Church, Pope Saint John XIII;
- * Abraham Lincoln, the great believer in a just and omnipresent God;
- * Saint Francis of Assisi, who proclaimed the power and joy in the Creation;
- * The German mystic Meister Eckhart, who has been described as the man from whom God hid nothing;
- * Hildegard von Bingen, a woman of incredible insight with prophetic vision;
- * Dom Helder Camera, the fearless prelate who successfully defended the voiceless;
- * Thomas Merton, the modern man and mystic who found himself in God;
- * Martin Luther who proclaimed Justification by faith alone;
- * Trevor Huddleston, 20th Century warrior against Apartheid;
- * Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits who experienced a remarkable personal conversion experience;
- * Saint Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church who did not shy away from the hard questions with his famous masterpiece Treatise *Summa Theologiae*; etc.

Not only is this collectively and individually a profound testimony of the existence of God and that God is love, but it specifically gives a glimpse of the love of Christ and its power to change in every respect. Jesus promised to send us his Spirit in the gospel rendition of John, and the reality of this is certainly evident from these testimonies.

This collection of remarkable men and women in history is simply a cross-section of witnesses of the great forces of Christianity throughout the centuries. Not only is it inspirational, but it certainly encourages readers to aspire to greater efforts for bearing witness to the love of Christ in the modern World. □

Conscience to play greater role for remarried couples

Tablet Reporters

With thanks to *The Tablet* 16 April 2016

POPE FRANCIS' apostolic exhortation on the family has drawn praise from prelates around the world both for its idealism about love and relationships, and for its realism. Cardinal Walter Kasper, who has been highly influential on the Pope's thinking on marriage and those living in "irregular situations" said that while the document does not change church doctrine, it nevertheless "changes everything".

Amoris Laetitia (the Joy of Love), at 256 pages, reflects the Pope's response to two Synods on the Family. Speaking to *The Tablet* after its publication last week, Kasper said that by putting doctrine in a new perspective the document "overcomes a rigid casuistic approach and gives room for Christian freedom of conscience". He continued: "I don't like to say, 'This is revolutionary', because revolutionary sounds like giving up or destroying something by violence, whereas the document is a renewal and an updating of the original holistic Catholic vision."

Kasper's address to cardinals at the invitation of the Pope in February 2014 sparked the sometimes bitter debate on access to the sacraments after divorce and remarriage that lasted through the two synods. His response to *Amoris Laetitia* was typical of those cardinals who warmly welcome Francis' encouragement to bishops around the world to look at cases individually and to leave the door open for divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Communion.

The Pope's choice of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn to speak at a press conference in Rome on the exhortation was telling. He said he was proud that *Amoris Laetitia* adopted the pastoral

programme he had pioneered in his own archdiocese of Vienna 15 years ago, which after a period of discernment may allow divorced and remarried couples to receive the sacraments. The reality, he said was that all families have difficulties to contend with. "No married couple and no family should say, 'We are in order and you are not,'" he told Kathpress.

By contrast, Cardinal Raymond Burke, a leading conservative, chose to stress that *Amoris Laetitia* is not "an act of the Magisterium" and therefore not binding. "The only key to the correct interpretation of *Amoris Laetitia* is the constant teaching of the Church and her discipline that safeguards and fosters this teaching," he said.

Similarly, Cardinal Wim Eijk, president of the Dutch Bishops' Conference, insisted that nowhere in the document itself did it say that remarried divorcees can receive Communion. "The traditional praxis, that they cannot receive Communion, and which was formulated as follows by Pope John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio* in 1981 remains current," said Eijk, adding that God's mercy is not only received via the sacraments.

Archbishop Blase Cupich, hand-picked by Francis to lead Chicago archdiocese, told *The Tablet* that the problems and struggles of life were "graced moments".

What was new about the exhortation was its tone, according to Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of Durban, South Africa. Napier, a leading voice among the African cardinals, welcomed its understanding that the synod's teachings had to be adapted to the circumstances of local churches. □

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