

arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

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The Importance of Preaching well at Christmas and Easter

So often you hear Catholics who attend Mass each week say that they gain little from the sermons they hear. Apart from saying that they cannot recall what was said shortly afterwards, it is obvious that nothing has been added to what they have heard many times previously.

The excellent article on the doctrine of original sin in our last edition of *ARCvoice* took my mind back to a sermon I heard on Easter Sunday just this year. The relatively young priest decided to concentrate his sermon on the statement that 'Jesus descended into Hell' after he died (taken from the Apostles' Creed), obviously not in the readings for that day. He went on at great lengths to explain that, after his death, Jesus went there and told Adam and Eve that they would soon be with him in Heaven. I was astounded that he could be so ignorant of modern biblical scholarship and the theory of evolution (now accepted by the Church), both of which dismiss completely that Adam and Eve could be real people.

I was going to take the matter up with him and decided to refer to the most conservative source that I could find that would help my credibility with him, namely, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, only to find that it also states that Adam and Eve were real people!

This experience illustrates the enormous problem that we have with many of the contradictions in our tradition and expression of belief. Even if it does take time to reconcile such blatant inconsistencies in written form, one would expect that any priest in any parish would be aware of the inconsistency and at least avoid it on a key feast day of the Church. So many Catholics attend Mass only at Easter and Christmas. Is this not a significant opportunity to inspire them with a view of our faith that might engage and encourage them in more frequent participation? The mere fact that the regular Church-goers sit there in silence when such outlandish things are said is, no doubt, a factor in the ever-dwindling participation rates.

Christmas and Easter traditions are filled with myths (designed to aid teaching) and misconceptions (which only confuse) and we assume that priests are able to find a path through them which enables understanding of the tradition of our faith. The official Church speaks about the need for New Evangelisation. The experience above, the likes of which I am sure occur on Sunday in many parishes, points to an area of vitally needed reform that seemingly is not on the priority list of the Church even under Pope Francis. At least we hope that you will be uplifted by the sermon you receive on this Christmas and that you can make a case against what I have just written.

John Buggy

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It matters to Protestants too

Bernard Thorogood

How refreshing it is to read the news of the proposed plenary council which will think through the changed situation of the Church, the changed mind-set in which we follow our calling and the loss of influence which affects us all. It shows a realism which is surely the way of escape from the clerical closed-shop of so many discussions. The way in which the Catholic Church handles this matters to Protestants too since we are all in the one ecumenical boat on a stormy sea.

Our hope would be that the laity, from all shades of opinion, would have a big share in the planning of the council and in its membership. The Holy Spirit has never been confined to orthodoxy. The other side of that hope is that there should be genuine listening to one another.

I would hope, too, that there would be no official veto on difficult questions. It seems just too simplistic and fearful for any Christian body to rule out a topic because it is so difficult to find the way forward. We may come to the point where we confess to not having an answer, but why not try? The ministry of women in all offices and orders is a case in point which affects us greatly. Next year is the centenary of the first ordination of a woman to the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in my own tradition, which was Congregational, so all the arguments about it have long since disappeared. Could our testimony count for something?

We are all adept at complaining about modern life and attitudes, so it would be helpful if the council could give thanks for so many blessings which we enjoy. I can never read of the advances in medical science without seeing them as the healing ministry of Christ in a new format, the longing of God for all to live to the full.

Then the council might well reflect that the Christendom pattern was not some ideal world, for it meant much superficial observance – ritual demanded by social approval. Our modern situation may be much closer to the norm of the leaven in the dough, the salt in the food, the minority in the mass. And the power that Christendom gave to the hierarchy of all the churches was a very ambiguous gift, tempting the church to seek privilege and enjoy the top seats at the table.

Could we hope that the ecumenical spirit might be evident, the recognition that all the disciples of Christ are within the household of God, that each tradition has gifts to share and much to learn. We are all in the schoolroom of faith and need each other. We Protestants greatly need the understanding and the practice of global unity which Catholicism has lived. Might the council say what Catholicism has to learn?

I am sure the council will be doing some Bible study. The conversation about how we receive and interpret the text is vital for modern discipleship. We have many scholarly helps to understand the context of the ancient world and we have escaped from the 'proof text' type of preaching. But we are not very clear on what we mean by the authority of the text and its power to touch our daily lives.

Plenty to think about, and our prayerful good wishes to the planners, who have a considerable task ahead!

Bernard Thorogood

BERNARD THOROGOOD is a retired Uniting Church minister and a long time member of ARC

Erratum

In *ARCvoice* No. 62, the author of the article 'Myth, Sex and Original Sin' on Page 12 was wrongly given as Alan Holroyd. It should have been Alan Clague. Our sincere apologies for this error. The corrected version is on our Website.

Catholics For Renewal Inc.

www.catholicsforrenewal.org.au



Selection of Bishops in Australia

Dear friend,

At this critical time for the Church in Australia a number of dioceses (six, as of 31 March 2016) are without bishops, and given Canon Law requirement that Bishops at the age of 75 submit their resignation to the pope for consideration, several Australian diocesan bishops are likely to be appointed in the not too distant future, including a new archbishop for Melbourne. In consultation with others, Catholics for Renewal has created a ‘free form’ survey inviting a wide representation of Catholics in Australia to suggest in their own way what qualities and attributes they would like in a bishop to serve the needs of their Diocese/Archdiocese.

Leadership of the bishop is absolutely central to the ministry of the local church. Pope Francis says that he wants bishops who ‘are pastors, close to the people, fathers and brothers; that they are gentle, patient and merciful; animated by inner poverty, the freedom of the Lord and also by outward simplicity and austerity of life, that they do not have the psychology of ‘Princes’. Be careful that they are not ambitious, that they do not seek the episcopate...and that they are married to a Church without being in constant search of another.’

The church needs bishops with real leadership qualities, who encapsulate and reflect in themselves and in their whole approach the kind of love, mercy, acceptance, forgiveness and service that Christ taught and exemplified, and accordingly what the Catholic church should be about. The bishop also works in a specific context, that of our diocese. So we ask you firstly: What are the most pressing pastoral and ministerial needs of our diocese? Secondly: what are the attributes, qualities and personal charisma that your bishop needs to demonstrate the leadership required to address your diocesan priorities?

The two main survey questions are also based on the process set out in Canon Law (ref.4) for the selection of Bishops. Canon law requires that the condition and needs of the diocese be investigated first, followed by a process of selecting the most suitable candidate for the diocese.

The survey ended before *ARCVoice* went to print. However, those ARC members without access to the Internet may like to consider how they would have replied to the following three questions—and perhaps send us a ‘Letter to the Editor’!:

What are the most pressing needs of your Diocese/Archdiocese?

What are the most important attributes/qualities for a bishop to serve the needs of your Diocese/ Archdiocese?

Background Reading

For those seeking further background reading the following references (available from catholicsforrenewal.org.au) might assist:

1. *Possible Needs of Australian Dioceses* - some examples
2. *Choosing the next Archbishop of Melbourne: how it should occur, and why this is important* (Dr Peter Wilkinson 1 June 2016)
3. *Selecting nine new Australian bishops this year - involving the faithful*. Originally published in *The Swag*. Peter Johnstone, President, Catholics for Renewal Inc. Republished 8th June 2016 with permission from SWAG. (*The Swag*, the journal of the Australian National Council of priests, has recently run a series of articles on the selection of bishops)
4. Canons 377-380 of the Code of Canon Law

Catholic Church's total ban on contraception challenged by scholars

'The damage inflicted particularly on the poor, on women, on children, on relationships, on health, on society and not least on the Church itself, is a millstone around our necks and we are drowning. It needs to be removed in conscience, in justice and in Christ for, as this Scholars' Statement explains compellingly, it has no basis in divine law.'

Professor Mary McAleese

The Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, an independent think-tank based in the UK, has brought together leading Catholic scholars to compile the most thorough re-assessment of *Humanae Vitae* since it was issued by the Vatican in the late 1960s.

The year-long international collaboration by experts on biology, ethics and theology has resulted in an extensive report evaluating the morality of using contraceptives from within the Catholic tradition. It presents a totally updated assessment of the famous 1968 papal document '*Humanae Vitae*' which banned the use of so-called 'artificial' contraceptives for family planning. The Report: '*The Ethics of Using Contraceptives – Promoting Good Health & Good Conscience*' is accompanied by a more concise Scholars' Statement that has already been endorsed by over one hundred prominent Catholic academics, including Mary McAleese, the former President of Ireland, and leading Catholic theologian, Charlie Curran.

In developing countries, over a quarter of medical facilities are under Catholic control and access to contraception for family planning is blocked. Local church leaders in parishes throughout the world also rigorously reinforce the ban on contraceptives via pastoral letters, in sermons from the pulpit, in the confessional and in all Catholics schools where sex education is dangerously limited.

Our collaborative report sends a message that academia and scholarship are united in calling for the Roman Catholic hierarchy to realize the injustice it is inflicting in the name of a law with no basis and to open up a long suppressed debate. With the weight of authority of such respected theologians, we want to encourage church leaders at a grass-roots level to dare to oppose the indiscriminate ban on contraceptives and to help them advise families in their care.

The Wijngaards Institute has been invited to officially launch our Report, titled '*Promoting good health & good conscience*' at an event hosted by the United Nations on the 20th of September. Our findings

explain how the responsible use of contraceptives fits within the moral framework of the Catholic faith and aligns with the UN's need for religious scholars to publicly raise questions and provide educational resources that can help navigate the relationship between religious belief, women's health and human flourishing.

'The Catholic tradition has insisted that its specific moral teachings are based primarily on human reason. The document clearly, concisely and convincingly shows why artificial contraception for the purpose of family planning can be a morally good and even obligatory choice for couples.'

Professor Charles E. Curran

BACKGROUND: In preparation for the 50th anniversary of the publication of '*Humanae Vitae: On the Regulation of Birth*,' the Wijngaards Institute gathered an interdisciplinary task force of 23 experts to re-assess the ethics of using contraception. The widely endorsed Statement is a summary of their work and is available at

www.wijngaardsinstitute.com/statement-ethics-using-contraceptives

It is the most comprehensive collection of declarations by prominent Catholic academics since the immediate aftermath of the publication of *Humanae Vitae* in the late 1960s.

GOAL: to encourage the Roman Catholic hierarchy to reverse their stance against so-called 'artificial' contraceptives. We have circulated the Statement to senior academics and church officials in Rome and a copy will be delivered to **Pope Francis on September 20th**. Archbishop Auza, the **Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations** will receive a copy on the same day. We are calling for a 'development of doctrine' to update the received teaching on contraception so as to make it compatible with current scientific and theological knowledge. At the conclusion of our Statement, we ask for an official re-opening of the discussion of the morality of using

contraceptives via a truly independent process of consultation –**similar to the commission on women deacons that Pope Francis recently agreed to establish.**

A NEW PAPAL ERA: we believe the **1.2 billion Catholics** are ready for a development of doctrine. **Both Pope Benedict and Pope Francis changed the tone of teaching on contraceptives** by stating that the use of condoms for prophylactic (protective) purposes to minimize the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STIs, can be the responsible thing to do. Seeing Catholic scholarship so publicly rejecting the total ban supports the recent papal approach and will give more local Catholic leaders the courage to give people in their care the right advice. We know it is possible - for example, the Catholic Sisters in Africa who provide condoms to women whose husbands are infected with HIV/AIDS and the many Catholic priests and doctors who protested against the harsh stand of their bishops in the Philippines.

REPORT LAUNCH: UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNWomen, together with the World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief USA and the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, will co-host a Symposium on the occasion of the UN General Assembly as a Side Event. *Keeping the Faith in Development: Gender, Religions & Health* will take place on September 20th following an Interfaith Prayer Breakfast organized by UNAIDS in New York (*see separate flyer*). The Symposium will present the result of three new reports that merge religious scholarship with human rights engagement specifically on gender equality and women's empowerment. Dr. Luca Badini-Confalonieri, the lead author and Research Director of the Wijngaards Institute will present our report, *Promoting good health & good conscience* to help address the taboos that international development and faith communities encounter when addressing reproductive health challenges and propose theological and practical responses that respect the tenets of our faith.

EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT: We want to help alleviate the suffering and poverty that is caused by the condemnation and denial of access to adequate reproductive healthcare for families. We plan an outreach project to make our findings and recommendations known to Catholic Church officials and opinion leaders worldwide - e.g. bishops, priests, religious sisters, management and medical staff of Catholic health care facilities, Catholic chaplains and social workers as well as ordinary Catholics. We will also make our resources available to UN departments and international development agencies and provide moral leadership that is grounded in the ethical and social justice teaching of the Church.

CO-AUTHORS & ENDORSEMENTS: We are a network of prominent Catholic theologians, ethicists and physicians who respectfully oppose the ban on contraception by Catholic Church authorities. Nearly fifty years after Pope Paul VI published *Humanae Vitae*, the Wijngaards Institute coordinated an interdisciplinary task force of leading experts whose full report is approximately 20,000 words and **challenges and updates the studies done by the Vatican in the 1960s.** The summary Statement has been co-signed by **over one hundred prominent Catholic scholars from around the world**, who publically support the validity and necessity of our appeal, including a powerful appeal on behalf of poor families:

‘We, women, have been treated as infants for many centuries. And Church documents such as *Humanae Vitae* have controlled and submitted women's bodies, especially of poor women, leading many of them to a dreadful life and even to death. It is vital to give women and men the right of planning their family and living love with happiness and true ethics.’

*Prof Luiza Tomita
Theology, Salesian University, São Paulo, Brazil*

THE WIJNGAARDS INSTITUTE: The Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research is an independent think-tank founded in 1983 to overcome prejudices on gender equality, sexual and reproductive ethics, sexual orientation and church authority. We are committed Catholics who consider it our duty to examine the original sources of Christianity and determine what beliefs of our faith are unchangeable. We coordinate leading academics worldwide to collaborate on reports developing solutions in areas of belief and practice to help religious traditions reform. Examples include our Declaration on authority in the Church (www.churchauthority.org) and our appeal to reinstate the women's diaconate (*documented-appeal-reinstatement-ordained-women-deacons*) both of which led to tangible results. We are supported by an international network of theologians and have endorsements and contributions from many priests and several Roman Catholic bishops. Our team of global volunteers provides academic and educational resources for an on-line audience of over one million online visitors annually. The Institute is named after our founder, Dr. John Wijngaards, a theologian who resigned his active priestly ministry to speak out about the Church's duty to ordain women as priests and the urgent need for other reforms. He was the first Catholic theologian based in India to publicly protest against *Humanae Vitae* when it was published.



Meet Church Curmudgeon: the grumpiest, funniest guy on Twitter

Mary Rezac



He hates the way things are done these days, and church sure ain't what it used to be.

Church Curmudgeon may be one of the most cantankerous guys on Twitter, but he's also one of the most hilarious. His complaints range from sinful dancing to boring homilies to music that's too loud to shenanigans from the "youths" at church.

While the character himself is actually Southern Baptist, it turns out grumpy old men who complain about things in church are not just reserved to one denomination. His nearly 90,000 followers on Twitter come from all walks of life – Catholic, Evangelical, and even some atheists.

We tracked down the guy behind the wisecracking angry old man staring back at you from the Twitter handle @ChrChCurmudgeon. Here's the story behind the sass:

What was the inspiration for Church Curmudgeon?

'Back when I was first getting on Twitter, there were a few anonymous accounts that would be parody pastors or worship leaders. And I thought why shouldn't there be somebody like the grumpy old guy at the back of the church who complains about everything? And so I decided to be that guy.

'I am a music minister so I had a lot of experience with the older folks in the congregation and people who would complain about the music and this that and the other thing, and how things used to be done, and how they aren't done that way anymore. I thought I could add a humorous side to that.'

What is the value of the Church Curmudgeon in the church community in real life?

'Early on in my ministry, I was encouraged to get to know the seniors group at my church. I was encouraged to go to their potlucks and bible studies and get to know them as people, because they are people who have a lot more life experience and a lot more life wisdom than I did. They've been through wars, they've been through depression, children and grandchildren and building businesses and working their whole lives - they've had a lot of life experiences and they've been through much, and I can learn a lot from them.

'So essentially with the Church Curmudgeon, what I wanted to do was humanize them.'

What made you take to Twitter?

'I've always had a wisecracking sense of humor where I like to put in my two cents. It's gotten me in trouble in staff meetings and things, but I love to have a little wisecrack here and there, I love puns, I love wordplay and all of that, and Twitter was kind of just a really good way to scratch that itch.

'I could say something useful or just something funny or that brought a different light to a situation, or just kind of crack wise, and I'd get a positive response from it.'

What is the value of humor and satire?

'I like to poke fun at myself a lot through the Church Curmudgeon, because the target of his ridicule is often the music guy, and that's me. So I get to poke fun at the way I do things.'

‘I am a Baptist and I like to poke fun at Baptists. A lot of people think I’m being mean-spirited at times, especially on Facebook - some people take things so seriously.’

‘But I’ve always believed that you do have to take yourself lightly. There are matters that we need to treat with a great deal of gravity, and I try to do that appropriately, but at the same time, I think that sometimes you laugh the hardest at a funeral, because you’re remembering what’s important, and you realize that there is so much joy and mirth and life that we do need to have that brought out to us, and it reminds us of great truths.’

Church Curmudgeon is a Southern Baptist, but much of what he says applies to Christians across the board. Why is that?

‘I have been in lots of different evangelical churches, and so I have some broad church knowledge. I grew up Mennonite, I’ve been in Presbyterian churches, independent churches, non-denominational churches, megachurches, mini churches. I’ve experienced all kinds of church life here and there. And I’ve realized from my friendships but also from my church audience, there’s a lot of these things that apply very broadly, so it resonates.’

The main reason he’s Southern Baptist is because, as a character, he needed something that he really was, you know? It helps to settle your character a little bit. I don’t think that limits him to speaking only to Southern Baptists; I think it just helps him be a developed character.

What are some of the Curmudgeon music complaints that you hear as a music minister?

‘It’s too loud, too many new songs, they’re too repetitive, you played that too fast or you played that too slow. There have been days when I have gotten equal and opposite complaints.’

‘But I really must say I’ve been blessed to have congregations that really love me as a person and who respond to what I do. I have had relatively little complaint in my life.’

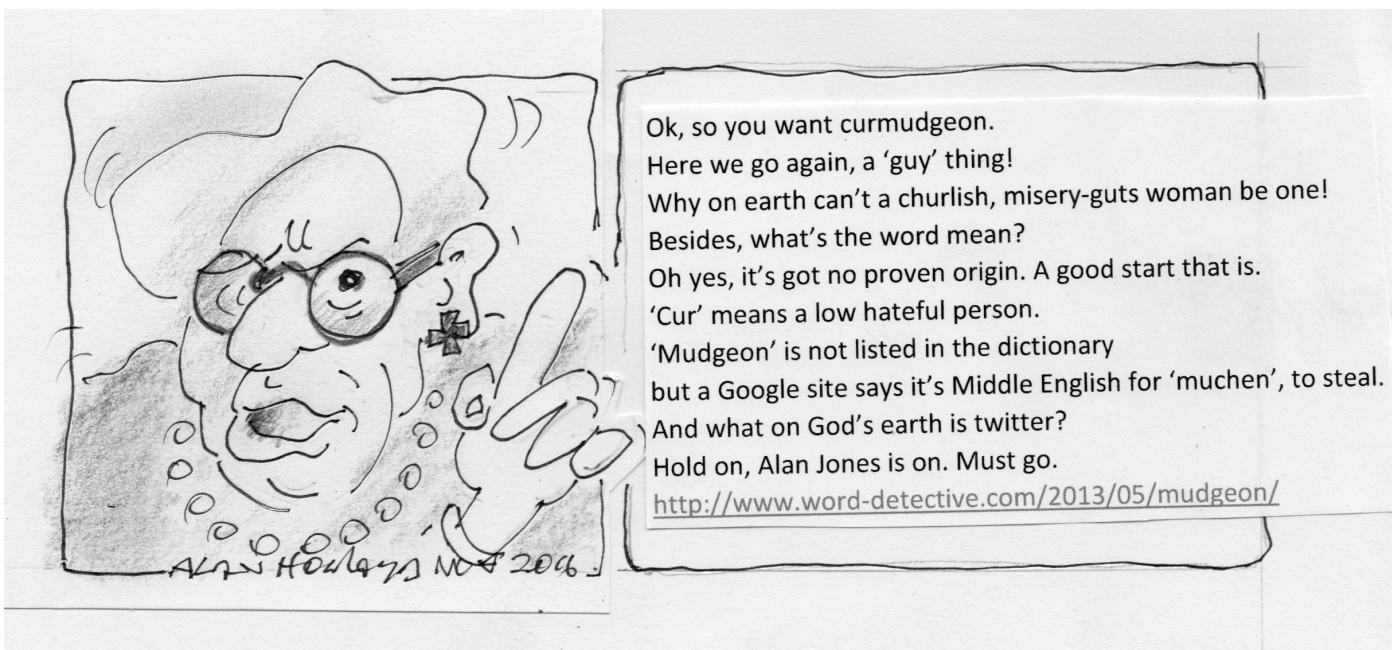
‘I know that sometimes among worship leaders there is a tendency not to listen to people and to think that they’re there for their own artistic expression, they think that they’re there to be a rock star, and that’s not it. Their goal is to assist people in the worship of God.’

Is there a Church Curmudgeon complaint that you most identify with? Perhaps amongst ARC members, there is an Australian Church Curmudgeon ready to take up the challenge. Humour is often the best tool for reform!

Editor

Mary Rezac is a staff writer for Catholic News Agency

Source: *Cathnews*



A good shepherd sheds light on Catholic guilt

Thomas Keneally

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 30/31 October 2016

In the early 1970s I knew a splendid priest whose authority to say Mass and operate within the Archdiocese of Sydney was terminated by the then prelate, Cardinal James Freeman. The priest's name was **Father Pat Connor** and he was a dear friend. As a young missionary in India, he was influenced by Gandhi, and I never knew a person who practised non-violent dissent with less pathology and more dignity and human love than Pat. As a peaceable man, he was involved in anti-Vietnam and anti-apartheid protest, including the famous and unwise Springbok tour of 1971.

For many of us, in those years following the death of Pope John XXIII, who had tried to embrace the world rather than fearing it, Pat's was the human face and the wise voice we met just as we were on our disgruntled way out of the Catholic Church. His sermons were visionary, and concerned real issues. For that very reason, the content of his sermons were frequently complained of to the Cardinal.

Suddenly, he was being expelled from Sydney for no moral flaw other than seeing a connection between fraternal love and politics. He went to New Jersey, where he lived and worked from his order's 'house' or monastery, as a fully empowered priest, for the rest of his career. This ended with his death in 2015. In his late years, he had published a well-known book of advice to young women on marriage, *Whom Not to Marry*. In contrast to St Paul's 'Wives, obey your husbands', Pat wrote, 'Never marry a man who tries to control you'. (See book review p.12) He became a visitor to American TV morning shows where his rare authenticity guaranteed he was a hit.

In 2002, he had given me advice on a piece I wrote for *The New Yorker* on the church abuse issue. Pat told me how pleased he was to live fraternally in a monastery, instead of on his own in a 'sterile presbytery' where 'laughter is rarely heard'. But he said something far more radical to me:

He declared that if the church did not address this issue of abuse with frankness and openness, and with the compassion it declared itself to be the chief promoter of, then the state would come to intervene, and the civil arm would force the Church to do the right thing. By then, he predicted, ordinary priests like him would be suspect because the reputation of their profession would have become identified in the public mind with child sexual abuse, or the enabling or hiding of abuse.

I decided to write a book about the crisis in the Church some years ago after an overseas publisher raised the idea with me, saying that her brother was a victim. But I wanted, as well as telling the story of outrage, to tell the story from within the humanity of a figure like Pat Connor. As in all fiction, the character in my book is not Pat, is probably more confused than Pat, but his best features are modelled on Pat's. He too is an honest and well-educated fellow of the kind who is trying to make the Church face its culpability. He too foresees the opprobrium that has come to be, unjustly in a majority of cases, attached to priests.

My character, Docherty, is not the stereotype of a priest and his theology, like Pat's, might seem a little suspect to the purists. And through him I try to address with some honesty the companion issue of celibacy. Celibacy means abstention from marriage and all sexual connections. Whether this is practicable for most humans can be left to ordinary observation, though I can say some liberal-minded Catholics I know refer without shock to a particular priest's relationship with a woman on the grounds that 'He's a much better man for it!'

With the authority of his research behind him, the American expert and former Benedictine monk Richard Sipe describes total celibacy in the priesthood as a glorious mythical beast, much praised and rarely encountered. But many honest priests try to live by its demands. As questionable as the proposition of celibacy may be though, it is not a cause of paedophilia or abuse in itself. Many married men have been guilty also of the same crimes. What I would argue, following Connor and Sipe, is that in enforcing celibacy, the Church too easily creates an

atmosphere for heterosexual seminarians in which 51 per cent of the human race represent a sea of danger, and in which one of the mechanisms for dealing with this threat is for the seminarian simply not to grow up emotionally. (I believe seminaries in modern times have addressed this issue of emotional immaturity in candidates, and others can comment on that.) But as Sipe puts it, the abiding problem of many priests, even for the hero of the novel I have written, is psycho-sexual immaturity. It is that immaturity that conditions some men, priests or brothers, to fixate on the young. It is this fostered immaturity of the seminaries in which the abusers failed to grow up that I believe, again following private conversations with my friend Pat and from reading Sipe, has created a catastrophic minority of abusers and a larger accompanying inexcusable corps of ignoring that fact, of excusing it, of sheltering it.

Naturally people will think whatever they choose of a book like this, with its ‘goodie’ priest and its abusing monsignor, but I must say that the text was finished 18 months ago, before the extraordinary evidence of Cardinal George Pell to the Royal Commission into child sex abuse, or the dignity of the abused who went to witness it in Rome, took the issue to a new level of outrage.

A woman character in my book is held to the Church by the memory of a Mass stone in Donegal where her Irish forebears gathered, land-starved and oppressed, to hear Mass said by a priest on the run. I remember myself a time when to be an Irish Catholic in this country was to be subject to the level of suspicion these days, with the same injustice, reserved for Muslims. In writing this book, have I sinned against these old loyalties? I'm willing to say, Christ, I don't know.

Australian Reforming Catholics have been privileged to have Fr Pat Connor as a member. Some years ago he attended one of our Secretariat meetings at Jim Taverne's home. His death leaves a sad gap in our rapidly diminishing mailing list. What a loss to Australia that he had to leave and make his home in the United States. And shame on the Australian hierarchy for making his presence here untenable. Heaven knows how much Australia needs priests of his vision and wisdom.

Editor

Crimes of the Father, by Tom Keneally (Knopf, \$32.99), was published on 31.10.16



The Right Words

Extract from a homily by Fr Pat Connor

Father Frank McNulty, one of the finest priests in New Jersey, tells a story about how one Christmas Eve he had just finished midnight Mass for his parishioners and was standing in the vestibule of the church farewelling the members of his flock and wishing each one a “Merry Christmas.” For no particular reason, he found himself saying to one woman, who was alone, not “Merry Christmas,” but “Hang in there.” He didn’t know the woman, but two weeks later he got a letter from her. She said that she had gone home that night to her apartment, where she lived alone. She was a recovering alcoholic. As she looked through the windows of her apartment she saw the winking lights of the bar across the street. Here she was – alone on Christmas Eve, and every bone in her body crying out for a drink. But, she wrote in her letter, Father McNulty’s words “Hang in there” kept reverberating in her mind – and she did not succumb.

It’s a classic example of someone saying the right words at the right time. I have had similar experiences. In a sermon I preached in a parish church, I mentioned that the sentence “Don’t be afraid” occurs 365 times in the Bible – once for each day of the year. I mentioned that ever since I had found that out, I made the sentence part of my private morning prayer. When I stagger out of bed in the morning, after a night of practicing celibacy, I murmur that mantra: “Don’t be afraid” – whatever comes down the pike today, with God’s help I can handle. A few days later I was in the post office and a gentleman flagged me down to tell me that his wife was dying of cancer and that they were both afraid for the future. “But,” he said, “after hearing what you said about ‘Don’t be afraid’, my wife and I have prayed those words together and they have restored our courage”. A few weeks later his wife died. I attended the funeral. As the mourners came away from the grave I went to the husband to console with him. Before I could say anything, he said, his eyes glistening with tears, “Don’t be afraid, Father ...” The right words at the right time.

If only all our homilies could be as meaningful – instead of a rehash of the gospel we have just read! Editor

We Need To End Australia's Refugee Shame. Now!

PHIL GLENDENNING

Source: *Pearls & Irritations* 02/11/2016

Human beings are never a means to an end. They are an end in themselves'. Emmanuel Kant's words in the seventeenth century echo down the centuries in stark contrast to Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and refugees on Nauru and Manus Island. The recent Four Corners program, *The Forgotten Children* gave Australians an all too rare opportunity to hear from the refugee children of Nauru themselves, and to see for ourselves what is being done in our name.

Two days ago a young asylum seeker rose early, turned on his computer and read that the Government was preparing to ban all post-July 2013 boat arrivals from ever entering Australia under any circumstances. He went to his bathroom and swallowed a bottle of sleeping pills. He is one of the 30,000 asylum seekers in the community without rights or resolution to his case.

Today he lies in a Sydney hospital. The hope that sustained him for so long from his escape from the Taliban to the dangerous journey to Australia has been extinguished – as it has been with the forgotten children.

The devastating impact of these policies of incarceration and punishment on innocent people has to stop.

Since 1946, Australia has resettled more than 850,000 refugees. They have made a remarkable contribution to our country. Despite this, the current Government's proposal to ban boat arrivals from ever entering Australia would mean great Australians like Anh Do, Bishop Vincent Long of Parramatta and South Australian Governor, Hieu Van Le, would never be permitted into the country if they arrived today.

We treat asylum seekers and refugees who arrive by boat as if we were at war with them.

Amnesty International reports that Australia's system discriminates and punishes and, in some cases, 'tortures' people who came to us seeking safety and protection. There are around 1200 people on Nauru (including 128 children), a further 920 on Manus, and the 30,000 in the Australian community denied access to legal assistance, medical care and education. They are all trapped in an interminable limbo.

The *Nauru Files*, released by *The Guardian*, reported over 2000 cases of physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, rape, and 59 incidents of child abuse, including child sexual abuse. For many refugees on Nauru, this sorry story means that life is characterised by fear and uncertainty.

This is certainly the case for Mahomood (name changed), and her 8-year-old daughter (who has now spent almost half her life on Nauru). Although recognised as a refugee, Mahomood lives on a 3-year visa, a Nauruan passport lists her identity as 'refugee'.

Mahomood and her daughter live in a remote camp. She is too scared to go out for food following an attack by two men on motorbikes as she walked to town to collect groceries. Her life is a two by four metre, plywood walled, tin roofed shack. She spends most of the day crying – she says she has lost all hope.

The tragic irony of this is that Mahomood came on the same boat as her brother. Today he lives in Sydney's south, married to an Australian woman and they are expecting their first baby.

These centres are established by the Australian Government. They are funded by the taxes we pay. They operate under extreme secrecy. There is no transparency, no accountability, no independent monitoring. But the cruelty is plain to see. It is writ large on the faces of the forgotten children.

This whole sorry episode in our history has to be brought to an end.

The Immediate Priority

The priority right now must be to get people off Nauru and Manus.

The policy of turning around boats at sea is deeply problematic, most likely illegal, and dangerous, especially with its potential risk to life and the very real possibility of *refoulement* [the forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they are liable to be subjected to persecution].

However, the current political reality is that, despite the dangers of the turn-back policy and the need to one day replace it with something ethical and consistent with our international obligations, both major parties currently support the policy. It is not something that will change in the short-term.

But what *can* be done in the short-term, and what *is* achievable, is for the suffering and cruelty on Nauru and Manus to end, and for the 30,000 asylum seekers in limbo Australia to be given a permanent solution. Boats are not arriving in Australia. There is absolutely no need to prolong the suffering of those on Nauru and Manus for one day longer. They should be brought to Australia.

However, the Government and Opposition talk of third country options. If this is to happen then, firstly, these need to be credible options: nations that are experienced at resettling refugees and with a long-established capacity to do so – countries like the United States, Canada, Sweden and of course, New Zealand. Secondly, there needs to be a time limit – if the Government is unable to settle people in nations like these by the end of 2016, then they must be brought to Australia.

A Regional Solution

With Nauru and Manus empty, the next step will be to pivot to a realistic regional processing framework in cooperation with Indonesia, Malaysia, UNHCR and other relevant organisations. With the offshore processing camps empty, Australia would have ample resources available to re-allocate to the region and help people seeking asylum *before* they are forced into a boat.

Such measures would include: assistance for access to work, education and health rights whilst claims are processed in the region; increase the annual refugee intake to at least 30,000 and moving to 40,000; increase support for the UNHCR for

assessing claims in the region in a timely manner; and, for more resources and diplomatic efforts to be put into the two other ‘durable solutions’ the UNHCR speaks of: a peaceful return to country of origin when it is safe to do so, and integration into the countries closer to the conflict zone.

Also, when the cruelty has ended and with a comprehensive regional processing framework in place, Australia’s military could be used for the positive purpose of *search and rescue*, rather than forcing boats back out to sea.

The current policy of punishment and deterrence has moved Australia further away from engaging in the real global challenge of assisting the 65 million people who are displaced. Last year there were 24 million people recognised as refugees – just 107,000 of these people were resettled: that is less than one percent of the global population of refugees.

Our fixation with securing our borders renders us unable to engage meaningfully in working with the international community to tackle the root causes of displacement and ensure the people that do flee their country can live with dignity in the places they flee to, and that the parents can work legally, the children can access school and health care is freely available.

Also, all research indicates that, when refugees receive permanent protection, they make a sustained positive contribution to the life of their new nation. Any notion of banning former refugees from Australia for all time, even if they are Canadian, New Zealand or US citizens, is a ludicrous proposition and indicative of the sorry state Australia has been reduced to.

These 24 million refugees, the population of Australia – are not just numbers. They are human beings. They are brothers, fathers, sisters, mothers, friends, they are children. More than half are children. They include Mahomood and her daughter. They include a young asylum seeker in a Sydney hospital.

Emmanuel Kant was right. None of these people were, or are, a means to an end. All of them are an end in themselves. The wrong done to them must be righted, the cruelty must stop and this sorry chapter in Australian history must be closed. We have seen the children. They, and we, can no longer allow them and their families to continue to be forgotten.

Phil Glendenning is Director of the Edmund Rice Centre and President of the Refugee Council of Australia

BOOK REVIEW

Whom Not to Marry: *Time Tested Advice From a Higher Authority* by Father Pat Connor Reviewed by David Gibson former, now-retired editor of Origins, CNS Documentary Service

Never marry a man who tries to control you’, Father Pat Connor advises women in *Whom Not to Marry*. It is his considered judgment that a man’s ‘suitability as a marriage partner is nil if he tries to control everything his fiancée does and everyone she sees’.

Furthermore, ‘don’t marry a selfish person’ and ‘make sure your partner is willing to make the sacrifices he is asking of you’, Father Connor writes. He believes a red flag is raised when an engaged woman feels called upon repeatedly ‘to make excuses for someone or rationalise his behavior.’

Father Connor, a New Jersey Catholic priest born in Australia, has counselled married couples and helped prepare engaged couples for marriage over the course of more than 40 years. He directs his book primarily to women, but invites men to pick up any gleanings from it ‘that may be helpful to them as they mull over whether to choose a particular woman to be their wife’.

Is this a book parents will purchase for their young adult children? Possibly so, since a common parental hope is that a daughter will learn to distinguish Mr. Right from Mr. Wrong. I suspect more than a few parents will applaud when Father Connor states emphatically:

‘Never marry a man who is cruel to you – physically or emotionally. (On this one there is no exception.)’

There are many things a woman can do to assure that the man she marries is the right one, according to Father Connor. But ‘it all starts with being honest with yourself,’ he says.

A woman’s perspective makes a big difference when it comes to considering whether to marry the man she is dating, the author insists. He explains:

‘Chances are, when you look at your boyfriend, you probably think about how he measures up as a boyfriend. But have you given any thought as to how he’ll measure up as a husband?’

An engagement a year in length is strongly recommended by Father Connor. He urges readers to be careful about the things they shrug off during this time before they marry, since ‘it might not be so easy to shrug them off in your marriage’. He also counsels engaged couples ‘to distinguish between pre-wedding jitters and a real solid fear about your partner’.

Whom Not to Marry contains many cautionary considerations when it comes to marriage, but I did not find it a negative book. Father Connor points not only to characteristics that may harm marriage, but to qualities that enrich it – like respect, patience, commitment, compromise and kindness.

Kindness ‘recognises another person’s humanity’, Father Connor observes. A kind person listens ‘to another with an open heart and mind’, he says. Kindness ‘understands what another person needs and is able to respond with generosity, compassion and tenderness’.

The author describes marriage as ‘an open-ended commitment to an unpredictable person.’ In this adventure, ‘compassion and patience are related’ – they are ‘twin keys to unlocking the complexities of commitment’, he states.

Clearly, though, Father Connor hopes couples will enter marriage with their eyes wide open. So he urges a woman and man to ask each other, ‘Why are we getting married?’ But he says, ‘You’d be surprised at how many people don’t ask this all-important question’.

What a perfect Christmas gift this book would make for a daughter or granddaughter – and even sons or grandsons!
Editor

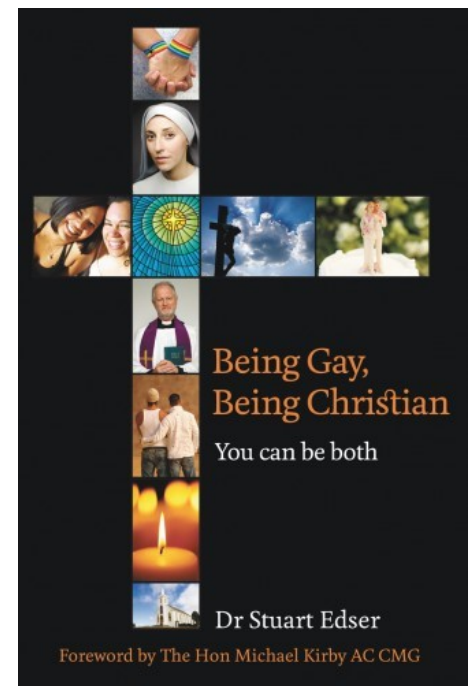
BOOK REVIEW

Being Gay, Being Christian

You can be both

Dr Stuart Edser

Reviewed by Sam Grebert



Dr Stuart Edser, author of *Being Gay, Being Christian*, presents us with a clear AND concise approach to dealing with the themes of Faith AND Human Sexuality from a Christian perspective. This book will both challenge, provoke AND resource you with the knowledge AND the ‘know-how’ for engaging in thoughtful, respectful AND informed discussions with friends, family and pastors. This book will also provide you with the tools for personal growth in your life and possibly challenge some personal held beliefs as well.

Stuart Edser provides a good foundational approach with this resource as it is written to engage the reader through factual information, psychological perspectives and biblical examples which support same-sex relationships from a Christian, Historical and Medical approach. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is looking for a fresh approach, and also written to be an Australian resource on the topic of Faith and Sexuality.

I would like to recommend this book to you all: *Being gay, being Christian: you can be both* by Stuart Edser, published by Exisle Publishing <http://www.exislepublishing.com>

Dr Stuart Edser is a psychologist in private practice in Newcastle, Australia. He has experienced both Catholic and Evangelical/Pentecostal churches. According to the bio, ‘after years of struggle and self-acceptance, he now lives with his partner Chris and is very comfortable being both gay and Christian’.

I found this an excellent book for its easy-to-read approach to both the psychological/physiological bases for homosexuality and the biblical/religious approaches to dealing with homosexual people. Here we have a book by an Australian author, with wide experience across the church, and an in-depth understanding from academic study and professional practice.

There are sections on

- being gay
- coming out
- ex-gay therapy
- biblical passages thought to relate to homosexuality
- evangelical responses to homosexuality
- Catholic responses to homosexuality

This is a 230 page book which is an easy read, a comprehensive treatment of the subject, and a great resource (with useful end-notes with references for those wanting to go further).

I will make extensive use of this book in discussing the subject of homosexuality with both Christians and non-Christians.

If you are serious about understanding this subject and having a simple, though comprehensive resource for others, then please buy this book!

Sam Grebert undertook ministry training in Perth before founding a church in regional NSW. He moved to Sydney when he acknowledged his sexuality and reconciled that with his faith. He remains active in Christian ministry.

Dr Stuart Edser was guest speaker at the Catalyst for Renewal dinner at Hunter’s Hill in October this year.

How 13 cardinals changed the course of history

Fr Raymond de Souza

Catholic Herald 13 October 2016

NOTE: We have included the following article to give you an example of the resistance that Pope Francis faces in his attempt to create a path towards the way that Jesus would act, as shown in the Gospel. This writer thinks that the Holy Spirit works through just thirteen ultra conservative cardinals! At least he has done us a service by naming them all.

John Buggy

This time last year the second instalment of the synod on the family was unfolding in Rome, the conclusion of which was as yet unknown. Now that we are in the implementation phase of *Amoris Laetitia*, we can look back on the entire process with greater clarity.

It is now clear that Pope Francis does not believe that the pastoral discipline regarding the inadmissibility of the divorced and civilly remarried to the sacraments is correct and wishes to overturn it. Yet, while he has gone to great lengths to make his mind clear on the subject, he has gone to equally great lengths not to formally teach it.

There are two reasons for that. The first is that the tradition is clear, rooted in teaching of Jesus in the Gospel, and it is not possible for even the Pope to change it. Hence Pope Francis has had recourse to ambiguities, hints, private phone calls and leaked letters to let the Church know that he thinks what he cannot teach.

The second reason is that Pope Francis encountered surprising resistance to the *Amoris Laetitia* agenda, first outlined by Cardinal Walter Kasper in February 2014. The key moment in that resistance took place a year ago, on the opening day of the second family synod in 2015. It was then that Cardinal George Pell handed Pope Francis a private letter signed by 13 cardinal participants in the synod. The letter objected to the Kasper proposal in substance, and to the attempts to engineer the synod to approve it. The next day, with the existence of the letter still unknown, the Holy Father addressed the synod to reaffirm the procedures in place and to warn participants against conspiracy theories.

The news of the letter, of which there were only two copies – one for the Holy Father and one for Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, secretary general of the synod of bishops – was then leaked to favoured papal reporter

Andrea Tornielli. One supposes that a papal insider – or, implausibly, the Holy Father himself – thought leaking the news of the discreet resistance would work to the advantage of the synod managers, putting the traditional party on the back foot, apparently at odds with the Pope. That was a key miscalculation, and the crucial moment in frustrating the Kasper proposal. The letter of the 13 cardinals, once revealed, illustrated that some of the most senior cardinals in the Church were prepared, for the sake of fidelity to the Gospel, to resist a popular pope. The dynamic of the synod changed then, with the resistance emboldened, not cowed, and in the event the synod fathers refused to endorse the Kasper proposal.

The signatories had all seen what had happened the previous year, when Pope Francis dismissed the leading opponent of the Kasper proposal, Cardinal Raymond Burke, from his post as the Church's 'chief justice' to a largely ceremonial role. Yet they signed. And their collective credibility determined the course of the synod.

The 13, in alphabetical order, included Carlo Caffarra, then archbishop of Bologna, formerly the first president of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family; Thomas Collins, archbishop of Toronto; Daniel DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston, vice-president of the US Bishops Conference; Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York; Willem Eijk, archbishop of Utrecht; Gerhard Müller, prefect of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith; Wilfrid Fox Napier, archbishop of Durban; John Njue, archbishop of Nairobi; George Pell, prefect of the secretariat for the economy; Norberto Rivera Carrera, archbishop of Mexico City; Robert Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments; Elio Sgreccia, president emeritus of the Pontifical Academy for Life; and Jorge Urosa Savino, archbishop of Caracas.

The cabinet's front bench had written to the King. And the sovereign had to take note. When Pope Francis continued his push for the Kasper proposal in *Amoris Laetitia*, he had to do so within the limited room the synod had given to him. So the apostolic exhortation hid its intent in footnotes and ambiguities. Even now, the guidelines produced by those bishops most keen on the Kasper vision advise that any such admission to Holy Communion be done in secret. Administering the sacraments in secret is a clear sign that something is awry; any pastoral practice so conceived will not endure.

The letter of the 13 cardinals proved to be the turning point. The Holy Spirit was at work indeed, in a most unexpected way. The announcement this week of a consistory of cardinals occasioned commentary upon the role of the cardinals as the special advisers of the pope. In October 2015 the cardinals – 13 of them – gave perhaps the most important advice of recent times. □

International Catholic Priest Movements and Reform Groups Urge Church Progress on Key Issues during October meeting

From October 17 – 20, 2016, forty priests and lay persons from ten countries gathered in Chicago to develop strategies supporting reform in the Catholic Church. The group called for progress on:

- full equality for women in the Church;
- rights for LGBT Catholics;
- fundamental rights for all Catholics;
- developing emerging models of parish ministry such as the Bishop Fritz Lobinger model.

The conference was hosted by *FutureChurch*, the *Association of U.S. Catholic Priests* and *Voice of the Faithful*.

Deborah Rose-Milavec, executive director of *FutureChurch*, reported: ‘Members of priest movements and lay reform organizations from Argentina, Austria, Australia, England, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Slovakia, Switzerland and the United States tackled, head on, the tensions inherent in reform of any kind with honesty and frankness.’

A press conference was held at the end of the conference. It was livestreamed and can be viewed at [facebook.com/FutureChurch](https://www.facebook.com/FutureChurch).

‘We are pleased that the entire group felt it could support LGBT peoples with the following statement’, Jeannine Gramick, SL, of *New Ways Ministry* said.

We, the representative of an international network of priest groups and reform organizations assembled in Chicago 2016, affirm that the dignity of the human person is clearly expressed in the Gospels and the social justice teachings of our Church. It is this dignity that should be the foundation of a truly Catholic response to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their families.

We, therefore, commit ourselves to stand against violence in all its forms – physical, emotional, spiritual and temporal – toward LGBT people. We encourage the Church’s leaders and individual members to make the same commitment.

The lack of women’s equality that causes many in the Church much pain was also addressed.

‘Women in the gathering asked their male counterparts to prayerfully reflect on male and clerical privilege and to take action,’ said Kate McElwee, co-director of *Women’s Ordination Conference*. ‘They asked them to deeply listen to women in the circle and in their communities and to act courageously for women’s full equality in the Church.’

Helmut Schueller, founder of the Austrian Pfarrer-Initiative, initiated work addressing the fundamental rights and responsibilities of Catholics and the development of strategies to ensure that Catholics know their rights and employ them in their work within the institutional Church. Margaret Roylance, a representative of *Voice of the Faithful*, said ‘We have to work together to break the dominating and dehumanizing power of the Church’s clerical culture that is so damaging to all who are trapped within it.’

Bob Bonnot, chair of the *Association of U.S. Catholic Priests*, agreed. He summed up the sentiments expressed in the group, saying, ‘Our common base is our baptism in Christ as priest, prophet and servant-leaders – that is how we must gather, shedding other identities such as male-female, priest-lay, this group or that group.’

Throughout the conference, action plans were developed for implementation at the grass roots level. The next international meeting is being planned.

Organising Steering Committee

Pfarrerinitiative Österreich
 Association of Catholic Priests Ireland
 Pfarrei-Initiative Schweiz
 National Council of Priests of Australia
 Pfarrer-Initiative Deutschland
 AUSCP Association of US Catholic Priests
 FutureChurch

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Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome

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