

# arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

June 2017

Issue No. 65

**If people of good will, the good priests, the willing religious, the enlightened leaders, but more importantly people like you – the engaged and informed Catholics – don't continue to push for change then, as sure as night follows day, the reactionaries will overcome and nothing will change.**

**T**his prophetic statement was made by Francis Sullivan in his address to the Catalyst for Renewal Dinner in March this year. His talk, entitled *Where to from here?*, is reprinted for those ARC members who were not present. It makes riveting but disturbing reading and points to a church seriously in need of reform.

It is 17 years since Australian Reforming Catholics was founded by Barbara Campbell. Our aim has always been to promote the progressive Church envisaged by Vatican II, and push for change. But it has been an uphill struggle under the conservative leadership of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI who did their utmost to reverse all the Vatican II findings and return to a 1950's style of church. With this aim, they controlled the appointment of bishops by careful selection to ensure all candidates were all of a similar mindset to their own.

In this issue, we read of Seán Fagan, a former Superior General of the Marist order in Ireland. Fagan was a great crusader for the reforms of Vatican II and was punished accordingly. However, a Papal ban sometimes has the reverse effect and can be good for sales! Used copies of his book *Whatever Happened to Sin?* were available from \$447 and a new one for nearly \$4,000!

Pope Francis has been hailed as a great reformer – but even he is shackled by the same hard-core of conservatives (Cardinal George Pell included) who

will block any attempts to change the church. In Australia, our main hope lies with Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen who has at least used the word 'reform' – an anathema to most of the former hierarchy.

Articles in this issue of *ARCvoice* includes many bulleted suggestions of how this reform could take place – let us hope that they will not fall on deaf ears.

*Margaret Knowlden*  
*Editor*

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## Special Meeting of Australian Reforming Catholics

at Society of Friends (Quakers)  
4 Oakura Avenue, Woodford  
(Blue Mountains)  
Saturday, 11 March, 2017

This was a special meeting arranged for ARC members in the Blue Mountains to meet with other members regarding the state of the Church and priorities for reform. The agenda was to look at where ARC has come from and to outline the issues that ARC members believe should be taken up if our Church is to be true to the Gospel, especially given the scandals that have plagued it recently.

ARC began in 2000 in an attempt to make Vatican II a reality. Pope John XXIII and the Vatican Council radically changed the notion of Church as the People of God. We are the Church and clericalism was the poison within the Church that prevented this from happening. Pope John wanted to open up the windows but John Paul II; followed by Benedict XVI, rolled back the Vatican II intended reforms. Currently the scandals of sexual abuse have put a spotlight on the hierarchy's lack of empathy, truthfulness and accountability. Now the State is telling the Church how to behave!

The Church should now also look at what it says we should believe. Our understanding of the Scriptures is evolving. These days the majority of bishops do not want to question how we believe – even Pope Francis. This is vital for the future of our Church and ARC wants reform in both the structures of authority in our Church and how our faith is to be understood.

Here is a summary of the issues that the group at the meeting want to take forward:

- ◆ We need a different vision of Church – a whole different culture. The Church has developed a dysfunctional culture of unquestioned leadership instead of a culture of discipleship.
- ◆ What is Church? Many think it is a place of comfort, but that is not enough. The Church has to be more outreaching. Church is about how we react to the world. The Church concentrates on dogma, but that misses the reality of faith. In our attempts to help the hierarchy to understand the reality we are not treated as adults.
- ◆ Bishops and priests have to be accountable. It is about how we engage. The hierarchy does not seem to want to engage. Archbishop Anthony Fisher

talks about “full cream Catholics” who simply accept and obey. That is not what Jesus was about.

- ◆ We need to question what we are told to believe. Jesus did not form a Church. He formed a group of believers. There was no statement of what you had to believe. You just believed in Jesus.
- ◆ There are great contradictions in our Church. The hierarchy still does not understand the impact of sexual abuse and has done little to overcome it occurring again. Even Pope Francis has an outdated attitude towards women.
- ◆ The attitudes of many priests are against the spirit of Vatican II particularly many of those from other countries who are being brought into parishes in Australia. Many of them are filled with the clericalism that Pope Francis says he wants to be eliminated.

The group generally has been inspired by the attitude and approach of Bishop Vincent Long, the Bishop of Parramatta, and they recommended that a small delegation from ARC should meet with him to discuss the following:

- ◆ Bishop Vincent Long is stating a lot of what we in ARC has been talking about for some time. What is his vision of Church? What are the key elements?
- ◆ In his homily at Easter Bishop Long spoke about the Church needing to die and rise again. What did he mean by this?
- ◆ How does he see our Church's most pressing needs and how can we respond to that?
- ◆ Would he be willing to meet with a larger group of similar reform-minded people so that the vision of the Church of the future could be expanded?
- ◆ There are Synods planned for 2019 and 2020. How can we be involved in having an input to them in the spirit of genuine participation as the People of God?

The group endorsed four people who would seek to have an initial meeting with Bishop Vincent Long in order to open up this dialogue. They are Maureen Ryan, Margaret Coffey, Gideon Goosen and John Buggy. The meeting was set for Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2017.

*(I offer my sincere apologies for not getting this report out to those who attended the meeting much sooner. In the week after the meeting I left for six weeks in Europe and immediately on my return I have been suffering from a severe infection from which I have only just recovered.)*

**John Buggy**

# A Vision of Church for the Future

## ARC Representatives meet with Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen

Following the special meeting of ARC members in Woodford, the four nominated representatives were able to arrange a meeting with Bishop Long, Bishop of Parramatta, on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> June. He welcomed Maureen Ryan, Margaret Coffey, Gideon Goosen and me very warmly at his offices in Parramatta and his charm put us instantly at ease.

We gave him a brief history of where ARC has come from and outlined our main areas of activity. He seemed to know a bit about us and referred to *ARCvoice* which he had seen. We said that we had been very impressed with several addresses he had given that support many of the sentiments we have been expressing during the sixteen years since our formation. With regard to his Easter message that the Church must die in order to rise again, he preferred to see it as an allegory without going into specific detail. He did state that the Church has a constant need for reform because there is always failure to live up to the standards that we desire. This was good to hear since so often we have been shunned by members of the hierarchy, most likely simply because the word “reform” is in our name.

Margaret pointed out to some extent the hurt felt by Catholics through the cover-up of clerical sexual abuse and its impact. Similarly she spoke of the need for the Church to recognise the hurt of rejection felt by the LGBTIQ community. We had a good

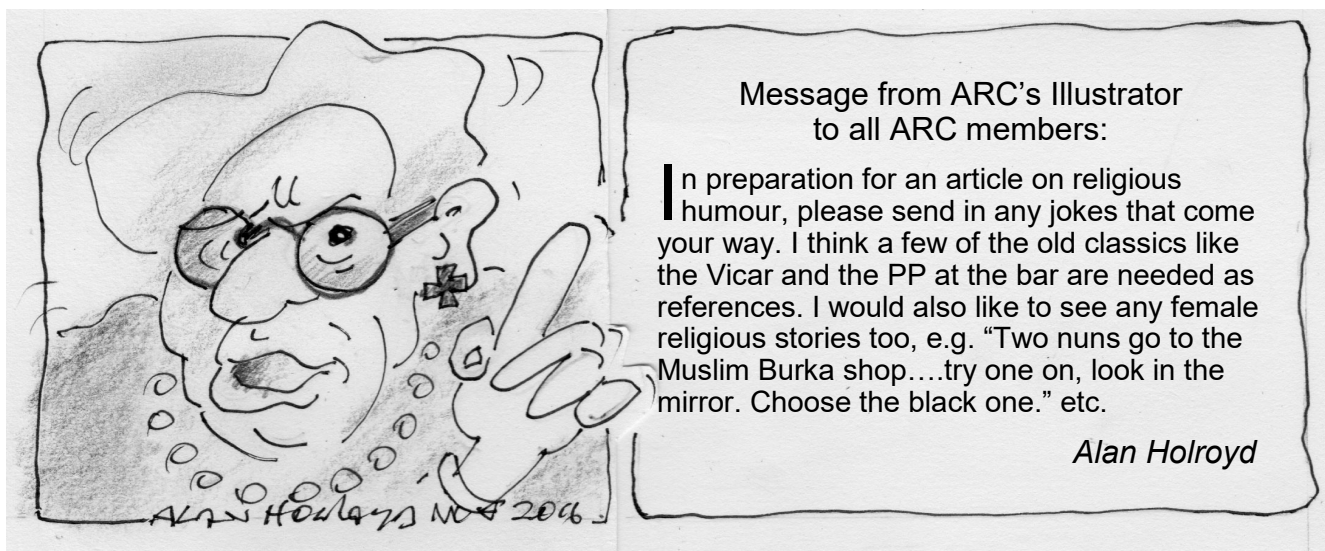
discussion with the bishop about the sensitivity needed to be shown visibly in the Church in order that all those who seek Jesus can be made aware of the inclusiveness that the Church espouses.

Maureen drew attention to the need for far better faith formation of children, especially in the preparation of Reconciliation and First Communion. We discussed the whole notion of sin and the need for greater care in how this is communicated. Bishop Vincent agreed on the need to convey the concept of God’s love more realistically.

I opened up the discussion of the Synod that Bishop Vincent has planned for the Parramatta Diocese in 2019. He said that people would have the opportunity to contribute to the Synod through the Deaneries. Given that Deans would most likely ask Parish Priests to nominate the parishioners who would have an input and that input would be filtered through people who are not in tune with the bishop’s vision, we wondered whether the structures for gaining contributions from a cross section of the faithful, including those who are not in Church every Sunday, would be effective. However, the plans for the Synod are only at a preliminary stage.

I invited Bishop Vincent to address a larger group of ARC members where he could outline his vision and answer questions. He agreed to do so at an appropriate time. He commented that, because we had such a consistent number of people identifying with what we are doing for sixteen years, then we must be doing good work and he encouraged us to keep up our efforts. His implication throughout the discussion was that the laity should help to drive the change that is needed. We will keep in contact with him and hopefully arrange for a larger meeting with members in the not too distant future.

*John Buggy*



### Message from ARC's Illustrator to all ARC members:

In preparation for an article on religious humour, please send in any jokes that come your way. I think a few of the old classics like the Vicar and the PP at the bar are needed as references. I would also like to see any female religious stories too, e.g. “Two nuns go to the Muslim Burka shop....try one on, look in the mirror. Choose the black one.” etc.

*Alan Holroyd*

## Comments on the 'Concerned Catholics' meeting in Canberra

On reflection, the opening hymn “Awake from your Slumber” had a big impact on us and set the scene for the meeting, articulating the innate feelings of hope and frustration that we took to the meeting. It seemed that the singing grew in strength as the hymn progressed until the ending was almost thunderous.

Taking a lead from the “Smell of the Sheep” article by Peter Day, it would have been good to refer to the plentiful scriptural references that eschew clericalism and the seeking of power and adornments etc. (see the wonderful Easter message of Bishop Vincent of Parramatta Diocese <http://catholicoutlook.org/bishop-vincent-longs-2017-easter-message-2/>). It seems that the church pays lip service to core teachings of Christ as ‘meek and humble of heart’, and especially his injunction to love one another.

In seeking healing and change in the church we need to heed, and take to heart, this core commandment of love, and not approach the process in a strident and aggressive way, which characterises some of the public comments by high profile Catholics. Although anger and frustration are understandable in the face of the many travesties which have occurred, we have to take all (or a great majority) of Catholics with us on this long journey of change, for any real institutional change to occur.

Bishops need to show that they are taking significant steps and taking seriously the messages of the faithful – and be conscious of the fact that the vast majority of faithful are well educated and no longer inclined to obey without question. They MUST be fully conscious of the fact that things can't remain the same and that significant real change is the only way to move ahead.

This will involve new approaches and processes including:

- ♦ Reviewing the way that new priests are formed and redefining their role, including setting criteria for suitability and a vetting process – not to mention serious discussion and consideration of married clergy (for a start);
- ♦ Contacting all communities and inviting them to significant gatherings, including all people who are

‘Church’ but not necessarily ‘church-goers’, as well as ‘conservatives’. They must be conducted in such a way that everyone feels valued and welcomed. These gatherings could be along the lines of our meeting last week in Canberra, involving senior clergy; maybe even being preceded by a questionnaire or opportunity for written statements or questions, to feed into the process;

- ♦ Identify parishes who do it right, and let them be a working illustration to others – especially those where the Parish Priest is a true ‘Pastor’ – a true servant of his flock. There are several of these parishes easily identified, where the outcomes speak for themselves. Healthy, thriving parishes draw more involvement by the faithful, generate more ‘bums on seat’ and more revenue, and enable more to be done for that community, including community building and outreach;
- ♦ Identify people who have been hurt in individual parish communities and allow an opportunity for them to air their grievances;
- ♦ Recognition that priests are NOT necessarily prime movers, but facilitators and pastors, and that the Parish can effectively be run by the faithful using their gifts, talents and energy, as with the early church – but being careful to avoid the old parish ‘blight’ where people take ‘ownership’ of certain roles and guard them jealously, to the detriment of parish harmony;
- ♦ Recognition that any change must involve regular communication on what is happening, and be at a pace that enables the vast majority to understand and move with those changes and be on board with what is required. Like the majority of parishes, in our parish there is very little if any ‘official’ communication of, or recognition of, any problems within the church. There is never any mention of a crisis within the church, even reference to the Royal Commission. It is business as usual, which in itself alienates many, as it illustrates that our concerns are being ignored and causes many to vote with their feet. Any unrest is only communicated through informal channels which only fosters further disaffection and alienation.

These are just a few thoughts recognising that the future of the church demands courage from us all and a call to mission by all of us, where we must be outspoken where necessary but also active in modelling Jesus' life. Thanks for the leadership you are showing.

**Bill Clark**  
**Frenchs Forest NSW**

# The Catholic Dilemma

Eric Hodgens

Posted on 8 March 2017 by John Menadue

Clerical privilege took a heavy blow when Catholic bishops were summoned to appear at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to child sexual abuse (RC). The church answering to the state.

The drama climaxed with the appearance of Australia's five metropolitan archbishops. They were *being questioned* rather than asking the questions – a dramatic role reversal. They were very chastened. In the words of one archbishop, they looked like rabbits in the headlights. The focus had moved from the abuse to the way bishops had responded. They were reduced to being suppliants before the RC being questioned by a female, secular counsel-assisting. How did they go?

- ◆ They described the actions of their predecessors as looking like criminal negligence;
- ◆ They decried the clericalism which gave rise to it whilst ironically epitomising clericalism in their appearance and manner;
- ◆ They disagreed amongst themselves on the seal of confession, showing confusion on their own Canon Law;
- ◆ Their instinctive opposition to transparency and accountability was reinforced when the Royal Commission published the report of Donnell Ryan QC into the Melbourne Response which the archdiocese had kept under wraps for over a year;
- ◆ Their efforts to explain the extraordinary extent of this criminal, immoral and unethical epidemic amongst the Church's most elite class, the priesthood, were not well thought out or expressed;
- ◆ They admitted that celibacy may be a contributing factor but had to defend it because it is still mandatory in today's Roman church;
- ◆ Their defence of enforced celibacy was convoluted church-speak which seemed unintelligible to their listeners;
- ◆ They asserted that seminary training had been deficient but was now on the right track, without addressing the prior question of whether seminary training, with its celebration of separate clerical status, should exist at all.

Are they now in the clear? Can we start afresh and move on? It's not so simple.

Three recent events suggest that clerical exceptionalism is alive and well in Rome.

- ◆ The Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors CPM, set up by Pope Francis, has been constantly obstructed by Vatican agencies and personnel – especially the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). This has been highlighted by the recent resignation from the CPM of the Irish abuse victim Marie Collins. She cited Vatican obstruction as her reason.
- ◆ On the advice of the CPM the pope agreed to establish a special tribunal to adjudicate on bishops who have failed in their management of offending priests. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) has obstructed its implementation, remaining true to a clerical defensiveness which has been systemic in the Roman curia for centuries.
- ◆ The pope's intervention to lighten the penalty of some convicted priest offenders has backfired on him. The CDF recommended that they be laicised. The pope overruled them and substituted a penalty lifetime of penance and prayer and removal from public ministry. Since then one has offended again. Even the pope, whose first instinct is mercy, must learn that it can lead to the wrong decision in cases of compulsive offending.

In other words the clericalism of the Catholic Church system is undiminished. And Australia's bishops are born, bred, ordained and consecrated within that system. Are they the ones to turn the system round in Australia? Do they even want to? Are they even capable of doing it?

Most current bishops owe their position to clerical patronage. Four of the seven archbishops are protégés of Cardinal Pell and are aligned with his ideology. One of Sydney's two new bishops has a background in CDF and the other is a member of the reactionary Opus Dei.

Australia's bishops will need to change their preoccupation from Rome to the local flock if they want to be successful in turning round an entrenched clerical culture. The most recent episcopal appointee, Timothy Harris, appointed to Townsville, has a pastoral background. Does this show a change of policy?

In any case it may be too little too late. Half a dozen dioceses are still being run by bishops who have put in their resignation due to age. This includes Melbourne – the biggest of them all. The pool of possible replacements has shrunk to a puddle and it seems that many priests are knocking back offers. Irreversibly it is getting harder and harder to get any replacements let alone the right sort. A real dilemma.

**Eric Hodgens is a retired Catholic priest in Melbourne**

# Where to from here?

Francis Sullivan

Talk given at Catalyst for Renewal dinner – Villa Maria Parish,  
Hunter's Hill, Sydney – 10 March 2017

It was only last month that we were confronted with the devastating statistics of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. I don't think anyone was prepared for the extent of the abuse and the appalling rate across male religious orders and within the priesthood. Frankly, even though there had already been 15 case studies conducted by the Royal Commission into various instances of abuse in either religious orders or dioceses, the release of the allegations data really put a stake through the heart of our Church. And that is the point.

The fact that a Church actually has to acknowledge that abuse occurred within its ranks and that it exercised a systemic cover up – even to the point of never releasing its own data voluntarily to the community – speaks volumes for the way it has lost touch with its very purpose, its very heart.

When I started this role I had no real sense of the scope and extent of child abuse within the Church. I thought that maybe the Church had up to 100 paedophiles in its history. So far, our records indicate that more than 1,200 priests and brothers have had an allegation of abuse made against them.

To put this in context, in the USA, around 5 percent of diocesan priests were the subject of allegations. In Australia that figure is around 8 percent. In some of the male religious orders the percentages were gob-smacking. In the St John of God brothers, well over a third of the order in early times had abuse allegations made against them. 22 per cent of Christian Brothers had allegations made against them and the Marists were not far behind.

These figures speak of a moral disease that profoundly infects not only the communities of religious orders and dioceses, but the wider Catholic community. It is a disease that is ingrained, almost cemented, within the culture of the Church. This fact has not been lost on the Royal Commission.

In its final hearing into the Church the Commission spent three intense weeks examining some of the cultural issues that have contributed to the abuse scandal. At one point the five senior archbishops sat together in the witness box,

attempting to explain the way in which clericalism, celibacy, power, institutional might and other issues played a part in the entire scandalous affair. My sense is that they toiled in vain.

There is now a deep malaise compounded by a simmering anger within the community about the Church and child sexual abuse. The unprecedented level of inquiry brought on by the Royal Commission has laid bare a history that the Church authorities have purposefully sought to keep from public witness for decades. The posturing and spin of years past has been seen for what it was – an avoidance of the truth and a failed attempt to divert the public from the scale of the abuse and the depths to which Church officials had sunk as they tried to keep it hidden.

Moreover it was also a deliberate effort to keep senior Church figures who were implicated in the mismanagement or worse of this scandal out of the public gaze. And what is most confounding is that none of this was constructed out of any agreed plan on the part of the Church leadership as a whole. There was no secret meeting of leaders in which the strategy of concealment and cover-up was formulated. The way in which leaders responded to abuse allegations, to move priests, to ignore evidence, to dismiss claims, was consistent. It was as if it had been built into their DNA. In most western countries the leaders of Catholic Church authorities have acted in the same way – almost as if there was a roadmap to follow. Yet there has been no roadmap, rather an institutional culture hell-bent on self-protection and self-preservation.

Ironically, at the very same time that the Australian Church is being rotisserie'd by the Royal Commission, we have the phenomenon of Pope Francis. Like a godsend, Francis appeared on the scene in 2013 – just before our first case study. So, as the Royal Commission began to unwind the Church edifice on this scandal, the Holy Father likewise began to dismantle the institutional cultural bulwark that has strangled the life out of the modern Church. And as with any reform process there have been bumps along the road.

In today's media there are many reports from senior US cardinals extolling the efforts and outcomes of the Pope in changing the culture of the Church. The cardinals from Washington, Chicago and Boston to a man speak of the Pope's shrewdness in placing a new vision and attitude for the Church at the forefront of reforms. They very clearly say that Pope Francis is reigniting the spirit, intent and teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

The Church is no more in restoration mode, but now is to be unashamedly engaged in the modern world.

There are many quotes I could point to, to back this up. Here is but one from Washington Cardinal Donald Wuerl:

This is a very different culture than even 25 years ago...we know now we have to move from what was a much more comfortable maintenance posture into a much more challenging, Gospel-driven, evangelizing discipleship, to use Francis' words.

However, as I said, there have been bumps along the way and the child sexual abuse scandal must surely be one of the biggest flaws. It was recently reported that the Pope is starting to go light on some priests who have been found to have abused children. Nicole Winfield, a highly regarded religious reporter for The Associated Press, recently wrote about the case of the notorious Italian abuser Fr. Mauro Inzoli:

The Inzoli case is one of several in which Francis overruled the advice of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and reduced a sentence that called for the priest to be defrocked. Instead, the priests were sentenced to penalties including a lifetime of penance and prayer and removal from public ministry.

You have to seriously wonder whether this isn't the Pope backsliding on what has been a strong and determined crack-down on offending priests and the circumstances that allow abuse to take place.

The second very concerning development in Rome over the past couple of weeks has been the resignation of the last remaining, publicly identified, abuse survivor from the Pope's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, Marie Collins. As most of you know the Commission was set up by Pope Francis to advise him on how best to deal with the many issues associated with child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. In an interview with the Jesuit outlet, *America*, she denounces 'the resistance' and 'lack of cooperation' with the commission by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and 'some' Vatican officials. She also denounces the 'clericalism' she has found in some parts of the Roman Curia, and the 'reluctance' of the CDF to implement the Commission's recommendations – even after Pope Francis had approved them. Ultimately she reflected on whether the resistance to the commission is in fact resistance to the Pope himself. Together these two developments paint a picture of the Vatican establishment, its bureaucrats and courtiers, doing

all they can to either undermine the Pope or drive an agenda that is about maintaining the status quo and protecting the institution. Business as usual.

What can we draw from these two very disturbing developments?

For my mind the clearest message is this. If people of good will, the good priests, the willing religious, the enlightened leaders, but more importantly people like you – the engaged and informed Catholics – don't continue to push for change then, as sure as night follows day, the reactionaries will overcome and nothing will change.

If we do not continue to push – and push hard – the impetus for change will fade, inertia will set in, reformists will be shunned, and the victims of what has been the greatest betrayal in the Catholic Church in Australia will remain mired in hopelessness, despair and anger. This is a very dangerous time for the Catholic Church in Australia.

If the Church in Australia doesn't see continuous, concerted change from our leaders driven and backed by an active and demanding Catholic community, then our Church as a religion will become a marginalised rump, stripped of credibility and relevance, left to preach to an ever aging congregation with eyes on an ever dimming hereafter.

The Royal Commission's final hearing into the Catholic Church finished two weeks ago today. The three-week case study heard evidence from theologians, academics, religious leaders, bishops, archbishops, priests, lawyers, canon lawyers, psychologists, management consultants, Catholic education, welfare service providers, professional standards executives, international church representatives and others. They spoke about how and why the abuse occurred for so long, what's working and what isn't and how the church needs to change.

Evidence ranged across issues such as:

- ◆ canon law and its interaction with civil law and the secrecy provisions within it;
- ◆ clericalism and the abuse of power;
- ◆ celibacy and what part it might have had in the extent of abuse in the Church;
- ◆ the confessional;
- ◆ psycho-sexual development, or lack of it, for priests and seminarians;
- ◆ formation and training of seminarians;
- ◆ professional training and basic administrative failings of bishops;

- ◆ the Vatican and its failure to come to terms with and acknowledge its failures in dealing with abuse;
- ◆ Church history and significant milestones including the Second Vatican Council and what has or hasn't been implemented; and
- ◆ lay leadership, including the need for women in decision-making positions.

More than anything else the Commission returned to the Church's culture, and the need for change. This was a theme that was endorsed by all senior leaders who gave evidence. The commissioners are now using the testimony and evidence from this last and many other hearings to understand:

- ◆ why clergy abuse occurred on such a massive scale within the church;
- ◆ why the response to complaints was so flawed; and
- ◆ what has been done internally to address the cultural, structural, and governance factors that contributed.

Here's the rub. For the 250 or so people sitting here tonight listening to me speak, none of what I've just said is new. None of what I've said comes as a surprise. It doesn't come as a surprise to you that within our Church there are major problems and at the heart of them is a culture which must change. And for me, key to this are two questions:

1. What is it about us as a people that we were so permissive and docile that we didn't demand more transparency, accountability and integrity from our administrator?; and
2. Why have we been prepared as a Catholic community to not address issues as matters of urgency and profound importance, preferring instead for the most part to sit on our hands and grumble from outside the boundary line?

This passivity in the Catholic community, in large part, comes from the encultured way in which even highly intelligent people acquiesce to authority figures in the Church. It becomes what I like to describe as the 'altar boy' syndrome. In truth it is adults not acting with responsibility, not taking part with a mature yet demanding sense of agency within the Church.

When this doesn't happen, as was certainly the case up till more recent times, we are left with blind loyalty instead of mature conversation. We are left with blinkered defensiveness and knee-jerk reactions rather than open-mindedness, willingness and engagement.

This all leads to a heavy sense of inertia where energies turn in on themselves, people become demoralised, and ultimately are defeated by the system – or they simply leave. So there are a number of ways we can go from here. Build a church on those who remain, the regular participants; or we can have the courage to go out to those who have left, understand their disillusionment and make the changes that are so dangerously needed. On many occasions I'm asked who should be responsible for the abuse that took place in our Church.

One view is that the current leadership should take the fall and resign, en masse, given they now represent organisational and leadership failures that have brought the Church in Australia to its lowest ebb.

Others say the magnitude of the abuse within the Catholic Church disqualifies it from receiving any public benefits – taxation relief and an automatic voice in national debates that determine public policy – not just on the moral and philosophical direction of our country, but also on so much of the nation's health, education and welfare agendas.

While both of these considerations are extreme they are not surprising. As I've said before, within the Church there is a heavy underlying malaise, and externally there is a profound degree of mistrust and scepticism. What will it take for this to change?

For what it's worth I'd like to suggest just a few things:

**One:** Any church leader who has ever pronounced apologies or actions or sentiments or commitments to putting victims and survivors first must be held to account by the Catholic community, because my observation is that the Royal Commission has viewed many of these statements with scepticism.

**Two:** We need a stringent policy of putting the right people, with the right skills, in the right places all the time. In other words, we cannot afford the blunders of incompetent administration, advisors and minders and we certainly can't afford the fumbled attempts to use spin and PR to protect and cotton-wool church leaders from facing the consequences of their actions, or in many cases, inactions.

**Three:** Diocesan and church organisations need to open the doors and the windows to genuine participation of the Catholic community in how their money is spent, and in the proper planning to make the church relevant in the daily lives of the people in our community.

**Four:** Church leaders should publicly commit to employment ratios for women in senior positions and encourage diversity in their workplaces.

**Five:** Church leaders must demonstrate a move away from a church of privilege, of comfortable lifestyles far removed from many of the faithful.

As the Pope says we need to become a:

Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.

**Six:** Church leaders should publicly commit now to a public consultation and deliberative process on all issues within the Catholic community that are the source of respectful dissent and even disengagement. I'm sure many of you have your own ideas that could be added to this list.

And while the leadership of our church and the changes that need to take place must be prominent in all our hearts and minds, there are also other considerations. Most of us in one way or another are all seeking a pathway to meaning. We are all seeking a sense of being on a genuine spiritual path and I worry that we will become so caught up in seeking structural changes, almost for change in itself, we will lose or shift attention from the deeper more profound journey. What has shocked and confronted me the most about this sex abuse scandal is that it took place in a church. The very fact that the church was on trial, rips at the heart of what the church is meant to be. And that speaks to me of a profound loss of direction, integrity, purpose and meaning at the heart of the church. A spiritual wasteland. It is my sense that so many Catholics share that shock. People say the Church now needs to get its house back in order but I say we have to re-build the house. Let's not put the same foundations in place that delivered us this scandalous history – this profound moral and criminal upheaval. Why was it that moral leadership failed so consistently, so pervasively? Where was the wisdom and counsel we have been led to believe comes from those on the spiritual journey? We must address this spiritual bankruptcy as much as anything else. Over the past four years I have spoken to many different groups and organisations about the abuse crisis and the future of the church in Australia. Their overarching concern points towards the willingness, or otherwise, of the church leadership to instigate change.

The questions asked are always very similar.

- ◆ Will senior church leaders have the courage to foster a discussion about human sexuality in all its different guises?
- ◆ Will there be a genuine attempt to reform power and decision making processes?
- ◆ Will there be serious and sustained innovation in ministry shared by women and married lay folk?
- ◆ Will the church redirect resources to educate adults as well as children in how to live a contemporary Christian life?
- ◆ Will our church become a movement for justice rather than a pillar of the establishment?
- ◆ What tangible signs will be offered that demonstrate our church is a place for all regardless of gender, sexual orientation, past histories or family circumstances?
- ◆ Will our leaders, both overtly and otherwise, reflect the communities they serve rather than expect the deference that divides?

Again, I'm sure you have many questions that could be added to this list. But at the very least, answers to some of these questions could be the KPIs of a church that is changing.

Sadly, too often, they are millstones for one that won't.

As I said in the Truth, Justice and Healing Council's statement to the Royal Commission at the start of this last hearing, it is vital that the culture of the Church that enabled the abuse of privilege and power which led to the crimes and cover-up be confronted head on, not only by those in positions of authority but also by the Catholic community as a whole. Changes must be made, and if they are not made willingly they will most certainly be forced upon us. While words are important, the measure of commitment can only ever be gauged by actions.

To the abuse survivors who are here tonight and to the many thousands spread out across our communities I say the wrongs of the past must be repaired, survivors must be shown the compassion and justice they have been calling for, and change must be embedded in the culture of the Church.

Thank you.

**Francis Sullivan** is CEO of the  
Truth, Justice and Healing Council

# A Response to Francis Sullivan

Kieran Tapsell

Posted on 17 March 2017 by John Menadue  
*Pearls and Irritations*

I agree with what Francis Sullivan has said in the edited version of his speech to Catalyst for Renewal. But there is a recitation of history in the full version that cannot go unchallenged.

‘The posturing and spin of years past has been seen for what it was – an avoidance of the truth and a failed attempt to divert the public from the scale of the abuse and the depths to which Church officials had sunk as they tried to keep it hidden. Moreover it was also a deliberate effort to keep senior Church figures who were implicated in the mismanagement or worse of this scandal out of the public gaze.

‘And what is most confounding is that none of this was constructed out of any agreed plan on the part of the Church leadership as a whole. There was no secret meeting of leaders in which the strategy of concealment and cover-up was formulated. The way in which leaders responded to abuse allegations, to move priests, to ignore evidence, to dismiss claims, was consistent. It was as if it had been built into their DNA. In most western countries the leaders of Catholic Church authorities have acted in the same way. Almost as if there was a roadmap to follow. Yet there has been no roadmap, rather an institutional culture hell-bent on self-protection and self-preservation.’

The assertion that there was no ‘secret meeting’ and no ‘road map’ is simply not true. The secret meeting took place on 9 June 1922 between Pope Pius XI and Cardinal Merry del Val and presumably other members of the then Roman Curia. The document produced at the meeting, *Crimen Sollicitationis*, was a secret law that was to be kept in the secret archives, was not to be published, was not to be commented on by canon lawyers, and was to be used by bishops as required. It imposed the secret of the Holy Office on all information obtained by the Church’s internal inquiries about child sexual abuse by clerics. Breach of the secret incurred automatic excommunication, which could only be lifted by the pope personally. There was no exception for reporting to the civil authorities.

In 1946, the Spanish canon lawyer, Aurelio

Yanguas SJ said that the purpose of this roadmap was to take ‘swift, decisive and secret action’ before these crimes reached the civil courts so that the Church could be spared the humiliation of having priests in the public dock as sex offenders. The requirement in *Crimen Sollicitationis* to try and cure the priest before dismissal made the ‘swift’ and ‘decisive’ action impossible, but keeping these crimes hidden from the civil authorities to avoid the feared ‘humiliation’ was very successful.

The road map actually started five years earlier with the abrogation by the *1917 Code of Canon Law* of seven papal and Church Council decrees requiring child sex abusing priests to be handed over (not just reported) to the civil authorities. The strictest secrecy on allegations and information about child sexual abuse by clergy was continued by Pope Paul VI’s Instruction *Secreta Continere*, by Pope John Paul II’s *motu proprio Sacramentorum Sanctitatis Tutela* of 2001, and its revision by Pope Benedict XVI in 2010. There were no exceptions for reporting these crimes to the police until 2010, and then it was limited to where the civil laws required it.

I agree with Francis Sullivan’s statement that the cover up response by bishops ‘had been built into their DNA’. Canon law created by Popes Benedict XV in 1917 and Pope Pius XI in 1922 was a reflection of the culture in the Church leadership at the time, that the Church was a ‘perfect society’ fully capable of protecting the Catholic Community from child sexual abuse, and the Church did not need any assistance from the State in achieving that. The State had no need to know about clergy crimes against children and, for the avoidance of loss of faith through scandal, it ought not to know about it.

Once that culture of secrecy and clericalism had found its way into canon law, and was repeatedly reaffirmed by subsequent canonical decrees, it became entrenched in the DNA of the whole Church leadership. The practice of secrecy became internalised and reflexive.

The intimate connection between law and culture has been the subject of much academic writing over the last 40 years. In 2003, Cardinal Francis George, regarded as one of the American Church’s most important intellectuals, accepted the principle in an article in the 2003 *Ave Maria Law Review* that the passing of a law entrenched and internalised the culture behind it. He was writing about civil law, but the principle is equally applicable to canon law.

In 1988 Cardinal Ratzinger wrote to the Vatican’s chief canon lawyer, Cardinal Castillo Lara,

complaining about the obstacles that canon law put in the way of bishops in dismissing clerics for child sexual abuse. His request for a simpler procedure was rejected because it would interfere with the rights of priests. After the Murphy Commission found in 2009 that the ‘structures and rules of the Catholic Church facilitated the cover up’ in the Archdiocese of Dublin, Ratzinger, then Pope Benedict XVI, wrote a Pastoral Letter to the people of Ireland in March 2010. Instead of acknowledging his own and his predecessors’ responsibility for the cover up, he blamed it on the Irish bishops for not following these same ‘long established norms of canon law’ about which he complained in 1988.

This avoidance of the truth is just another example of an ‘institutional culture hell-bent on self-protection and self-preservation’, and in this case to protect the reputation of every pope since 1917.

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson told the Royal Commission: ‘However great the faults of the Australian bishops have been over the last thirty years, it still remains true that the major obstacle to a better response from the Church has been the Vatican.’ That is the true version of history.

KIERAN TAPSELL is the author of *Potiphar’s Wife: The Vatican’s Secret and Child Sexual Abuse* (ATF Press 2014). He was guest speaker at the ARC meeting on May 30<sup>th</sup> 2015.

## Do you read the Gospels literally?

A reflection of how the Gospels were written

John Chuchman

Some people seem to believe *the Gospels* are some kind of literal history and inerrant truth. They have probably never appreciated how any novelist or script-writer writes.

Most modern writers base their stories on real individuals they have met in their lives, apart from historians and biographers, but even they do it to some extent themselves. The authors also ‘fill in a lot of details’ from their own imagination, trying to make their characters ‘come alive’ or trying to give depth to the nature of the people they are writing about.

The largely anonymous people, whom we know as Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were probably little different to any modern novelist or script-writer. Even Paul, whom we do know much more about, was not the author of all the material that is attributed to him.

John Chuchman’s reflection raises some valuable questions that all people who read the Gospels ought to be asking themselves if they want to get the most out of what they are reading.

*Brian Coyne*  
Editor  
*Catholica*

## Bible Stories...

Why did it take  
one, two, three or more generations  
to write down all the things  
Jesus said and did?

Kind of strange  
given all that Jesus was said  
to have done.

Why did Paul,  
whose letters preceded the gospels,  
not even mention,  
virgin birth, miracles,  
and bodily resurrection?

Two of the four evangelists  
had the third evangelist's writings in hand  
as they wrote,  
hence similar testimonies.

But John, the last,  
about 100 years after Jesus,  
made up a load of stuff on his own,  
seeing Jesus as the way, truth, and life,  
the light of the world  
and the bread of life.

Parts of John's Gospel  
were not even written by John,  
new bits added up to 300 years later,  
including the bit about casting the first stone.

If someone wrote today  
about how things actually happened  
during the French Revolution,  
who said and did what,  
how many of the world's historians  
would simply nod and agree?

*John Chuchman*

New booklet – extracts

## Times are a-Changing

Eugene Stockton

**T**hese reflections come out of a cyber conversation conducted by Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust, Lawson, in collaboration with *Catholica* ([www.catholica.com.au](http://www.catholica.com.au)) and are presented here to stimulate further discussion on what the future of the parish may hold.

Culture shock is being experienced by many Catholics resulting from recent events such as the Royal Commission of Sexual Abuse of Children, the papacy of Pope Francis, his advocacy of synodality and collegiality, and the successive synods in Rome on the family. Christendom used to be the dominant culture in Europe and the Christian world in general. But, beginning with the Enlightenment, and progressively with the advance of science, the Industrial Revolution, republican revolutions (America, France and this flow on in Europe), two World Wars and now the Information Technology – an increasingly secular culture has emerged. Christendom as a church-based culture still persisted alongside, but increasingly separate and hostile to the culture of modern society. Now I believe the ‘signs of the time’ is calling us to let go of the culture which used to support our faith and practice. This does not mean repudiating that which we once loved, but to cease clinging on to it for its own sake and, as childhood merges into adulthood, to embrace the maturing of the Church in a new age.

Its mission can be seen to be the heart and soul of culture in modern society, affirming its positive values (e.g. democracy, equality, freedom, inclusiveness, respect for law and the rights of all, civic responsibility) and supplying for its inadequacy (with the love and compassion of God, the option for the poor, care of the environment etc.). We are to show forth a Father ‘who so loved the world that he gave his own Son’. In this context it is timely to reconsider the role of the parish in the pastoral care of the faithful, in Gospel outreach to others and in the care of the poor and of the environment.

## Critique of Present Parish

**I**t must be one of the last vestiges of Christendom culture, along with quaint titles and attire. The parish displays a feudal structure reminiscent of the Middle Ages: a defined part of the diocesan territory, ruled monarchically by a parish priest (‘lord of the manor’) mandated by the bishop (‘sovereign’), to whom he is accountable rather than to the ‘peasants’. This naturally encourages the scourge of clericalism. Increasingly he is seen as a functionary burdened by matters which are not purely religious. Parishioners are asked to volunteer services to the parish, without taking responsibility for their outcome, thus being denied the means of personal development by learning from their mistakes. Often priest and people display an impoverished view of the parish community, whether it be a service station mentality (‘you drive up, fill up, pay up, then you drive home’) or one of an administrative unit (‘branch office of the cathedral’). Such an understanding of the parish sees clustering of parishes the obvious solution to the crisis of fewer, ageing priests. The larger the parish becomes, the more its members are rendered anonymous clients, strangers to each other and to the pastor.

### Some Principles of Reform

- \* Democracy and inclusiveness in the governance of the parish
- \* Full participation and collaboration of parishioners in running the parish
- \* Lay (and female) involvement in non-sacramental ministry
- \* Full use of the diverse talents and skills of parishioners
- \* The priest as missionary to the People of God, rather than leader
- \* Fostering the sense of the unique identity of each community
- \* Discernment and consultation of all, through the Pastoral Council, for parish functions
- \* Readiness to connect with other faiths and civic entities of the neighbourhood
- \* Alternative terminology: Catholic Community of X, (local) Church of Y

While the Pope and his associates in Rome are concerned with the reform of the Church at the top, the parish has the opportunity of working for reform from the bottom up. □

Extracts from  
**Eugene Stockton *Reflections on Parish Reform***  
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# Seán Fagan SM

## An Outstanding Moral Theologian

Rob Butler

**T**he moral theologian and Irish Marist priest, Seán Fagan, died in July last year after a long illness. His Requiem Mass in Dublin was attended by his many fellow priests but, sadly and significantly, not a single Irish bishop deigned to attend. As former Irish President Mary McAleese said: ‘His long and illustrious priestly career was blighted in latter years by being silenced by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith’.

A former Superior General of the Marist order, Fagan was a great crusader for the reforms of Vatican II. Over his long ministry, he was a critic of the Church’s position on a number of issues including its attitude to women and, well in advance for those times, he had sought an inquiry into child sexual abuse in the Church in Ireland. In 2008, his *Whatever Happened to Sin?* was published, a re-write of an earlier book. Its inspiration came from hearing confessions over 40 years and, in particular, dealing with many cases of devout married women grappling with the Church’s position on contraception. This led to him undertaking further research into the subject of sex and sin. He concludes this tome by stating that, despite the many unattractive elements in the Church, his passion for his faith remained. The Irish bishops reacted to this publication by issuing him with a censure the following year. In 2010, he was warned by the CDF, led at the time by Cardinal Ratzinger, that he would be laicised if he published anything which they considered to be contrary to Church teaching and he was bound not to disclose this censure to the media. Furthermore, the Marist Order was commanded to purchase all copies of the book and have them destroyed. Then, in his mid-eighties, Fagan was a broken man, faithful to his Church, obedient to its decrees restricting his freedom and battling ill health. Mary McAleese wrote personally to Pope Francis in December 2013, asking him to intervene. As a consequence, Francis lifted sanctions against Fr Fagan in April 2014 – ‘too little, too late’, according to McAleese.

Despite the CDF requiring destruction of all copies, I’m fortunate to have tracked one down. So, in putting forward his views on moral theology, what dreadful opinions had Fagan voiced which merited such censure? Perhaps, it was the dedication at the front of the book that raised more than a few conservative eyebrows:

Dedicated to all the married People of God who have suffered down the ages from the flawed teaching of Augustine which usurped the teaching of Christ.

As if this wasn’t enough to give palpitations to the Inquisitorial hierarchy, his well-written and compassionate book questions the concept of a moral theology based on Church law and the minutiae of prescribed definitions of sin, many of which are simply ludicrous. He gives many examples of how this moral law has changed. Few would be aware that, until the sixteenth century, a menstruating woman was not permitted to enter a church or receive communion. On the other hand, many of us would remember how, not so long ago, the enforcement of total abstinence prior to receiving the Eucharist required strict observance under pain of mortal sin. The minutiae of this law dictated that the fast was broken by accidentally swallowing drops of water while cleaning teeth or consuming blood from bleeding gums but ingestion of bitten fingernails (deemed inedible and, therefore, not food) was permissible. He notes that the Church does not usually issue amendments but rather relies on what he terms “reform by amnesia” as it simply moves on.

He contests what he considers to be an obsession and, indeed, a distorted view of sex by the celibate hierarchy – a view which is hardly unique. The opinions of Augustine, Jerome and other early theologians are shown to be alive and well in John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*. Yet, Vatican II had clearly determined that marriage had the primary purpose of the consecration of a loving union of the couple and recognised that their sexual relationship was only occasionally procreative. Fagan criticised *Humanae Vitae*, claiming that it disregarded the informed advice of the Papal Commission that was unable to find a single argument proving that artificial contraception was ‘intrinsically evil’.

The book proposes that it is superficial to reduce sin to the breaking of a law which then requires punishment according to some prescribed grid of severity. He says there is a need to recognise real guilt and for the confessor to assist people to accept

Continued.....

the consequences of their actions and work towards improvement in a therapeutic approach. The question of the primacy of conscience is given much exposure in this book and he examines the nature of guilt and forgiveness. In considering the need for the emphasis to be on values rather than rules, the principles of Vatican II demand more effective teaching of morality. Fagan believes that this would be better achieved by dropping attempts to make sharp definitions in distinguishing venial from mortal sin, which he considers to lead only to scrupulosity and fear. He says that the focus should be on fundamental principles of moral reasoning, fewer detailed rules, a deeper insight into human

and Christian values and a heightened sense of personal responsibility. In answer to those conservative elements who insist on adherence to the traditional 'teaching of the church', he points out that the authority of the Second Vatican Council calls for change and the documents from this Council are more 'official' than any catechism produced before or after Vatican II. His book gives numerous examples where the decisions of the Magisterium have been demonstrably wrong in the past, indicating that such human reasoning can be fallible and should be open to change, development and refinement as we grow in understanding.

Rob Butler is a member of the ARC Secretariat

## Let's make the Creed more Credible (and relevant)

Alan Clague

The Nicene Creed contains an abstruse reminder of internecine theological battles in the early years of Christianity, but lacks a statement of some important contemporary Christian beliefs. There were many different ideas on the nature of the trinity, and the creed emerging from the First Council of Nicea in 325AD was quite contentious. Part of the problem was the difficulty in translating theological entities from the sophisticated Greek into the simpler Latin. To help certainty of meaning, the well-known and partially redundant descriptions were adopted: '...God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father ...'. However, the battles, involving senior clergy and theologians, continued afterwards and were vicious and often personal in nature.

Another problem gradually emerged. The Western Church, after some vacillation, eventually decided to add to the text, which had been finalised after the First Council of Constantinople in 381AD, the statement that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father **and the Son** (*'filioque'*). This was rejected by the Eastern Churches, and ultimately became a major justification for their secession. Modern theologians believe that the problem arose, once again, in part from the problem that Greek has a greater subtlety of meaning than Latin, and that a compromise statement acceptable to both may be 'proceeds from the Father through the Son'.

These are not the fundamental faith issues relevant for contemporary Christianity, and most of us do not even know of these old controversies. How many understand the nicety of meaning in 'begotten, not made'? Why should we mindlessly recite these relics from the past? Let us create a prayer that speaks to today's Christians, and includes some of Christ's important commands for our behaviour as Christians, as well as our theology.

Pope Francis has decided to revisit *Liturgiam Authenticam*, which set the stage for the current English version of the creed, reviled by almost all English-speakers. However, I suggest that the creed itself is no longer an adequate statement of the important beliefs of Christianity. A relevant creed for today should certainly contain an affirmation of God as creator, existing as a Trinity of Persons, with the second Person being born as a human, Jesus Christ. It should include our belief in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and our belief in life after death, with a reward for the good and punishment for the wicked, and in the presence of a Church to guide and sustain humanity.

However, Christ proclaimed new commandments of universal love, justice and forgiveness. Our belief in these is the real basis of how we lead a Christian life, and not our belief in relationships within the Trinity. Consequently, a relevant creed should also declare our belief in these new commandments. It is a tragic waste in the Church's formal statement of our beliefs during the Mass to give prominence to past abstruse theological controversies, but neglect an affirmation of Christ's actual commandments.

Alan Clague is a member of the ARC Secretariat

## Reviews

### How accountable is your Parish Finance Committee?

Charles Zech, et. al.

### *Best Practices of Catholic Pastoral and Finance Councils*

(Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2010)

This book makes interesting, if not surprising reading. From our daily experience we know that pastoral and finance committees are not perfect. Some might say that, in certain cases, they are dysfunctional and a waste of time. This book by Charles Zech et al. is based on empirical research and covers many aspects of pastoral and finance committees. Let me make some comments about the finance committees.

The US Catholic Bishops take the threat of embezzlements very seriously. So in 1992 they directed their Accounting Practices Committee to study and propose diocesan internal financial controls. They produced a document in 1995 making recommendations entitled *Diocesan Internal Controls: A Framework*.

One of the things they recommend is that parishes be required to follow a prescribed Budget Process. Ideally this consists of eight steps. We can ask ourselves how many of these steps are covered in our parish.

- Ask parish ministries about financial needs
- Presentation of draft budget for PPC feedback
- Explanation of draft budget in bulletin
- Explanation of draft budget presented at Mass
- Open parish hearings to establish budget priorities
- Presentation of draft budget for parishioner feedback
- Explanation of draft budget in parish newsletter
- Explanation of draft budget mailed to parishioners. (p.77)

The study found that there was a failure to make any attempt to extend the budget process parish-wide or to achieve parishioner involvement. Any surprise that revenue is going down?

*Gideon Goosen*

### *A Gateway to Renewal in the Church*

*Reclaiming Ministries for Women and Men*

John N. Collins

Extract from Review by Dr Claire Renkin

John has made it his life's work to investigate the institution of *diakonia* in the earliest church. More recently he has spelled out the implications for ancient *diakonia* in the church today.

This new book compiles nine articles published across the past twenty years. The four-page index lists more than one hundred fifty names of theologians and scholarly authorities. These articles concern issues in the contemporary church such as 'Women in Ministry,' 'Deacons and Diaconate,' and 'Function of Ministry.' His scholarship builds on a mastery of ancient languages, profound knowledge of classical Greek and Latin, acquaintanceship with the Patristic tradition, and fluency concerning theological debates around the meaning of ministry. Happily this book makes all of this expertise available to us, the people of God.

John's fundamental insight is that *diakonia* in the early church did not mean the performance of humble or merely slave-like service. Until John's ground-breaking study historically, the ministry of the diaconate had been largely interpreted as one where the deacons of the Christian community performed acts of charity among the poor and the marginalized within the Christian community, ministering beyond the confines of church buildings. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German Lutherans developed this scripturally authorised role into faith-infused social work financed by the State church. This continues to be the template for the diaconate in both the German Lutheran and Catholic churches.

The nine essays, together with John's Introduction and two appendices, take the reader on a journey which introduces us to the big questions challenging our churches: As John puts it: 'Who does what in the church and how and why?'

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Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or of ARC

Please send material to:

The Editor

ARC*Voice*

Unit 68/28 Curagul Road

NORTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074

OR (preferably) email:  
mknowlden@bigpond.com

Tel: 02 9488 7927

## ARC Secretariat

Barbara Brannan 02 9451 7130

barbarabrannan@mac.com

Rob Brian 02 9371 8519 rbrian@vtown.com.au

John Buggy (Spokesperson)

0419217543 jbuggy@ozemail.com.au

Rob Butler 03 5989 8496 butlershore2@bigpond.com

Alan Clague 07 3376 3879 clague@aapt.net.au

Margaret Knowlden (Editor) 02 9488 7927

mknowlden@bigpond.com

Peter Meury 0243 884 809 petermeury@bigpond.com

Ron Watts 0415 389 910 claudew1@bigpond.com

### Standby Committee

(for special events)

Maureen Brian

Maureen Couch

Norma Piper

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