



# arvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

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## *Humanae Vitae*

### A reminder of what has not been learned

Without much fanfare this year marks fifty years since the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* shocked not just the Catholic community but the world. Pope Paul VI seemingly ignored all but an ultra-conservative few and virtually put the use of all forms of artificial contraception in the category of mortal sin. Priests in Australia were given quite strict instructions along similar lines on how they were to apply this teaching in their pastoral counselling.

In the early seventies I approached two bishops and several eminent moral theologians in Australia, one of whom lectured at the major seminary in Manly. All of them said that they considered the arguments in the encyclical relating to artificial contraception to be flawed but that they were not prepared to do or say anything because the Pope had spoken. The same approach was taken by the majority of the clergy who agreed with them. They were not moved to act differently by the anguish of the many thousands of practising Catholics at that time who had great difficulty reconciling this directive with their experience of marriage.

So great was the hypocrisy of a hierarchy in believing one thing and preaching another that I proposed to one bishop that this period was the beginning of the decline in effective moral authority in the Catholic Church. He was gracious enough, several years later, to admit to me that he believed my judgment to be correct. We have seen, in the following years, how the Church's efforts to influence related "life matters" such as IVF, stem cell research, etc, are largely dismissed as just further bleating.

Traditionally the Church has reflected the moral values to which the State should adhere in the enactment of its laws. Now through the revelations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse the situation is at least partially reversed as the State attempts to drive the protection of children. Similarly, it is the State that is responding to the call of the people for equality of status and opportunity for all citizens through anti-discriminatory laws governing gender and marriage, while the Catholic Church continues to relegate all women within it to a secondary level of authority and influence.

There are those who believe that improved Church governance and a boost in clergy numbers through the

ordination of married men will set the Church on a path to renewal. But the dramatic decline in Church attendance over the past decade or so cannot be attributed just to a lack of priests or of a say in Church affairs. Young people, while espousing Christian values and choosing to be married in locations other than churches, do not believe in what the Church represents nor in much of what it states that should be believed. They also see through hypocrisy very quickly. The hierarchy in Australia are responding to the current crisis by promising that a Plenary Council will prevent the Church from returning to "business as usual", yet they stall from deciding on substantial issues until at least 2021 or 2022. Eric Hodgens (article in this issue) argues that *Humanae Vitae* had the consequence that the Church is "better informed and wiser". The faithful, yes perhaps – but the hierarchy?

*John Buggy*

## Contents

Editorial ...	1
Letters ...	2
Notice of ARC Meeting on Plenary Council ...	2
Rob Brian: <i>Vale Ted Lambert</i> ...	3
Robert Mickens: <i>The Pope's long, hot summer</i> ...	4-5
Alan Clague: <i>Divorce, Remarriage and the New Testament</i> ...	6-7
Eric Hodgens: <i>Spare a thought for the new Archbishop (of Melbourne)</i> ...	8-9
Christine Schenk CSJ: <i>Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity</i> —Review by Gideon Goosen ...	9
Paul Collins: <i>Absolute Power</i> —Review by JKK, Reading Religion ...	10-11
Peter Woodruff: <i>The Pope as a Game Changer</i> ...	11-12
Eric Hodgen: <i>Humanae Vitae—A 50 year Odyssey</i> ...	12-13
Gideon Goosen: <i>Saving Catholics</i> ...	14
John Chuchman: <i>The Art of Loving</i> ...	14
Alan Holroyd: <i>Francis, Bing Crosby and Milly</i> ...	15
Website, Secretariat and Subscriptions ...	16

## Letters to the Editor

After reading in the June edition of *ARC*Voice** Dr. Schoch's review of *Where Did All the Young Men Go?* edited by Paul Casey, I have, after much searching, finally got hold of a copy of the book from an online bookseller. I could not find any bookshop in Sydney that carried the book though it was published in 2015. Even the NSW State Library does not have a copy.

What a find! As I was born in 1943 in Sydney. I am the age of most of these men. I went to Catholic primary and secondary schools in the inner-western suburbs, did the Leaving Certificate in 1960, married in 1970, and have lived for the past 48 years in the Broken Bay Diocese.

My wife and I still hang on to our faith even after so much turbulence in the Church and love reading *ARC*Voice**. Having read just three stories in the book so far I can see that, although I never entered a seminary,

my cultural and environmental upbringing is very similar to these former seminarians of 1960/61. Their stories are immensely interesting and amusing, even bemusing, and I can thoroughly recommend this book to any Catholic in their 70s or 80s who wonders how the Church in Australia got to where it finds itself today.

*Ian Upton  
Berowra Heights NSW*

I often think to myself... why are women seen as a clear and present danger to the hierarchy of the Catholic Church? Well your insightful and meaningful editorial ticked all the right boxes, my sentiments exactly. Perhaps the upcoming NCP Conference could include this in the agenda. No doubt it would prompt spirited and robust discussion. Keep up the great work.

*Drew Porter  
Wagga Wagga NSW*



### **Plenary Council 2020-2021 We Need to Speak Up Now and help prepare ARC's submission**

**Dover Heights Parish Community Centre  
corner of Dover Road and Napier St, Dover Heights**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

**10.00 am – 4.00 pm**

**There is no attendance fee. Refreshments and a light lunch will be provided.**

**To assist catering, please advise Rob Brian if you are able to attend**

**Phone: 02 9371 8519 Mobile: 0438 718 519**

**E-mail: [rbrian@vtown.com.au](mailto:rbrian@vtown.com.au)**

If you are able to stay on, Mass will be in the church at 5.00 p.m.  
which gives us a rare opportunity as a group  
to celebrate our faith and commitment together.

**(Note on public transport:** The No.380 bus [showing Dover Heights or Watsons Bay] can be taken from Circular Quay, St James and Bondi Junction Stations. Get off the bus at the stop just before the corner of Dover Road and Military Road, turn right at Dover Road and it is a three-minute walk to the Community Centre.)

# Vale Ted Lambert

(6/1/1926 – 19/8/2018)

**T**ed Lambert was one of the founding members of *Australian Reforming Catholics*. In the first issue of *ARCVoice*, October 2001, Ted is listed as forming “ARC’s interim secretariat” together with Barbara Campbell and Jim Taverne.

Ted was born in Townsville on 6 January 1926. In 1950 at the age of 24 he entered the Sacred Heart Apostolic School at Douglas Park (about 60 km south of Sydney), the minor seminary of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. He completed his novitiate in 1951 and on 26 February 1952 he took temporary vows as an MSC. He took final or permanent vows on 26 February 1955. After studies in Philosophy and Theology in the MSC major seminary in Croydon, Victoria, Ted was ordained on 26 July 1958.

Although I joined the MSC in 1953 (and left in 1964), our paths never crossed and I cannot pretend to have known him at a personal level. We can get some impression of Ted’s character and concerns from the articles he wrote in *ARCVoice*. It seems that Ted left the MSC and the priesthood after he became more and more disillusioned with the institutional Church, which seemed to have given up on implementing the teaching of Vatican II. In no uncertain terms he fulminated against Patriarchy and championed the advancement of women within the Church (*ARCVoice*, no. 3). In a subsequent article, ‘Language and Culture’ (*ARCVoice*, no. 13), he quotes with approval a statement in *Woman and Man – One in Christ Jesus* p 203): “We restrict and limit the transcendent God as being exclusive to the male gender ... By the over-emphasis of God as male, the Church limits our concept of who/what God is and therefore of how we can relate to God”. He refers to the “infuriating Nicene Creed” and

deplores the Vatican’s steadfast refusal to use inclusive language. In a further article, ‘Jesus is not Lord’, he argues that ‘Jesus is Lord’ “now falls for me into the same category as the flat earth belief” (*ARCVoice*, no. 17). In *ARCVoice*, no. 19, he calls “for the institution in Australia of the liturgical feast of Jesus Christ our Friend”, continuing the theme of what he wants our relationship to be with God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

In two subsequent articles (*ARCVoice* nos. 22 and 23), ‘Informing/Reforming Conscience’ he states his “untested presumption” “that a minor fraction of the Catholic Church’s members are far better able to correctly form their consciences than the rest of us” and he calls for a “reality check”. In his final article, ‘No One Is in Charge – All Are in Charge’ (*ARCVoice*, no. 25) Ted aims to show how the ARC secretariat strives to exemplify “Jesus’ great Commandment ... ‘Love one another’” and he contrasts this with the way “male power” is exercised within the Church.

Ted Lambert was a passionate reformer. Unfortunately, he did not see the fruits of his labours. I don’t know whether his dementia in recent years allowed him to see some hope for genuine reform of the institutional Church during the papacy of Pope Francis.

Ted was married to Rosemary who had also been in religious life. Together they spent 16 months at Yularu (Ayers Rock) 1995-6, where Rosemary taught at the school. Ted had been the priest in charge at Santa Teresa Mission when he was still an active MSC priest.

Ted died peacefully at about 3:00pm on 19 August 2018 at Eldercare, Seaford. He had had a serious fall recently and had deteriorated rapidly. The funeral Mass was held in the Seaford Ecumenical Centre on Friday 31 August 2018. May he rest in peace!

**Rob Brian**

# The Pope's long, hot summer

Robert Mickens

Will Francis make the necessary and radical changes needed to save the Catholic Church from its ongoing meltdown?

The late American writer and intellectual, Gore Vidal, often recounted a conversation he had with John F. Kennedy sometime in 1961 during the U.S. president's first year in office. 'Jack,' he said in one version of the story, 'You're going to have to do something to break up this military-industrial complex. It's got the Pentagon out of control.'

'And who will be your candidate for the next election?' JFK responded, pointing out that he'd have to spend the entire four years of his first term doing nothing else but dealing with this one issue and, thus, wouldn't stand a snowball's chance in hell of getting re-elected.

Fortunately, Pope Francis doesn't have to worry about re-election. But with the latest rash of sex abuse scandals in Latin America and an even more pernicious one involving a U.S. cardinal, he now faces a similar choice that confronted President Kennedy. Will Francis take JFK's approach of kicking the can down the road or will he step up to the challenge to take the bull by the horns?

If the pope decides to get to the root of the clergy sex abuse crisis and the hierarchy's disastrously inadequate response to it, he will have to devote the rest of his pontificate almost exclusively to this gargantuan endeavour.

## A radical solution and stiff opposition

To be sure, the 81-year-old Francis has come to this moment reluctantly. And in light of the recent shocking events and the huge task that now stands before him, it is easier to understand why he carefully avoided even mentioning the clergy sex abuse crisis in his first years as Bishop of Rome. Had he done so, he would have risked bogging down his pontificate in efforts to heal what, until now, has been an incurable cancer.

He can no longer ignore what is clearly the biggest crisis to hit the Catholic Church at least since the Reformation. And it is one that has only just begun and will eventually spread to the Church in other parts of the world. Up to this point in time, Francis and his predecessors have applied only stopgap measures largely designed to control the fallout of sexual abuse.

They and other Catholic officials have also boasted of implementing a succession of new safeguarding protocols, screening procedures and new disciplinary instruments aimed at preventing future abuse. But they have refused (or have been unable) to put in place juridical mechanisms that hold bishops accountable for covering-up or ignoring allegations (and even proven cases) of clergy sex abuse.

Even if Francis were to achieve this last goal, holding the upper echelon of the Catholic hierarchy to account will be yet another Band-Aid solution if he does not lead his Church in taking an even more radical and carefully planned course of action. But opting for such a root-and-branch solution will be extremely painful and will be met with fierce resistance from many cardinals, bishops and priests, as well as a goodly portion of the baptized faithful. Is the pope, who will be 82 years old in December, up to the task? Does he have the stamina and, more importantly, the will to make profound changes that will sting like a potent medicine?

## An August trip to Ireland

Perhaps the first indications of how Francis may answer these questions will come next month when he goes to Ireland for the World Meeting of Families. The two-day visit, limited to the city of Dublin and a brief stop at the Marian shrine of Knock, could prove to be contentious. Ireland, once a bastion of old-time Catholicism where the clergy had a rarely challenged authority over the people and civic society, is now a largely post-Catholic nation.

The Irish, racked by their own clergy sex abuse scandal this past decade, have recently voted in favour of same-sex marriage and abortion. Huge numbers of the population now say they are no longer Catholic. It will be interesting to see their reaction to the Jesuit pope. Most of them, including those critical of the Church and its leaders, hold Francis in high esteem.

But they, like a significant number of Catholics and others around the world, have little regard for the Vatican's official policy of barring women from ordained ministry and the most important decision-making positions or of labelling gay sex as 'intrinsically evil' and the use of artificial contraception as a mortal sin. And the pope has done little to change their minds on this. The majority of people in Ireland also give Francis low marks in his handling of the sex abuse crisis. Will they use the papal visit as a platform to state their dismay more forcefully? It depends on how the pope addresses the issue. His predecessor, Benedict XVI, wrote a letter to the Catholics of Ireland in 2010 in which he put the blame for the scandals and their cover-up solely on the shoulders of the Irish priests and bishops. The former pope exonerated the papacy and the Vatican from any and all responsibility. Pope Francis needs to reverse that in forceful, penitential and convincing terms.

The Catholic faithful in Ireland, as elsewhere, are fed up with a Vatican-sponsored clerical caste of 'celibate' men, discredited by sexual scandal and hypocrisy that preaches to them about the proper nature and purpose of sex. They will no longer accept a Church that treats women as second-class members. They expect Pope Francis to address these issues during the papal visit. But will he?

### **The root-and-branch reform of ministry**

The trip to Ireland offers the pope an international forum for articulating a major overhaul of ministries in the Church. But it is probably doubtful that he will seize this opportunity. Were he to do so, however, he would have to candidly admit (as he has to some degree in the past) that the current seminary system is outdated and woefully inadequate. The issue of mandatory celibacy, and evidence that significant numbers of clerics are unable to live it chastely, can no longer be ignored. The fact that most thinking people agree that the majority of seminaries and priests are men of a homosexual orientation must be addressed openly and honestly.

Sexual activity among seminarians or priests – either with women or other men – can never be seen as permissible. But that does not mean conducting witch hunts to throw them out. Rather, we need to create environments that allow future and current priests to speak candidly about their

sexual orientation with the sole purpose of helping them become healthy psycho-sexual persons.

Cockamamie [nonsensical] ideas like reparative therapy, sublimation or the reinforcement of a macho identity by involvement in sports, the military or other macho activities have to be denounced and rejected for what they are—idiotic and offensive.

This pope has shown increasing openness to the idea of ordaining married men of proven virtue to the priesthood in parts of the world where there is an acute shortage of priests.

The idea should be pursued with new vigour. The all-male, celibate priesthood has drastically limited the pool of candidates and fails to identify the charism of leadership the Holy Spirit bestows on all members within the People of God. Women—indeed, all lay people—need to be placed in prominent decision-making roles immediately. That includes all Vatican offices, especially those that advise the pope on choosing bishops, appointing other key personnel and even the C9 privy council that is assisting him with reforming the Roman Curia and governing the Universal Church.

The necessary and final goal must be the complete elimination of the clericalist system (and mentality), which has long functioned as an old boys network of both mutual recrimination and reciprocated benefices. This is going to be a long, hot summer for Pope Francis. And the forecast for the coming autumn and winter does not promise much relief from the current overheated atmosphere in the Church. The pope has professed his conviction that the world risks destruction if its people and leaders do not take drastic steps to reverse global warming and other forms of environmental abuse. Is it possible that he cannot see the clear evidence that the Catholic Church, too, is being threatened by an ecclesiastical meltdown?

And will he, like President Kennedy did in the face of the growing military-industrial complex, simply decide to shrink from the challenge? Or will he take the bold and controversial steps needed to completely eradicate the clericalist system that continues to harm the Church?

The future of Catholicism may depend on how Francis proceeds.

Source: *La Croix Internationale*. 27 July 2018

# Divorce, Remarriage and the New Testament

Alan Clague

Any interpretation of the New Testament involves consideration of what did Jesus actually say, what did Jesus actually mean, what did the evangelist actually mean, how would it have been interpreted then, how has it been interpreted through the ages, and how should we interpret it now. It is often difficult to discern what Jesus actually meant because of his extensive use of indirect statements incorporating parables and hyperbole.

There are four passages on divorce and remarriage attributed to Jesus. In Luke 16:18, Jesus forbids men to divorce their wives and remarry or marry a divorced woman. In Mark 10:11 Jesus forbids divorce and remarriage for both men and women. Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 are similar to Mark, except the question posed to Jesus relates to divorce 'for any reason': a reference to the interpretation of Moses' law that allows a man to divorce his wife for trivial reasons. Here, Jesus allows divorce for what the evangelist describes in Greek as *'porneia'*. This word appears 26 times in the New Testament and it is translated as 'fornication' or more generally as 'unchastity'.

We can be certain that the words attributed to Jesus on divorce by Mark and Matthew are not what he actually said. He was speaking to a Jewish audience and, in the strongly patriarchal Jewish society, women were not allowed to divorce their husbands (although they could do so indirectly by asking their husbands to divorce them). Thus, he would not have spoken of wives divorcing their husbands.

The gospels were written after AD70, when there were many non-Jewish Christians whose women could divorce their husbands, so the expanded statement was the evangelist's way of covering the contemporary situation. The meaning of *porneia* here is not clear cut.

Although it has been used to justify remarriage after divorce for sexual misconduct by some Christian Churches, the Western Catholic interpretation is that here, and also in the prohibition of *porneia* in the contemporaneously written Acts 15:29 (in which the apostles and elders also prohibit Christians from eating food polluted by idols, blood and strangled animals (forbidden in Leviticus 17)), the author is most likely referring to incestuous sex forbidden in Leviticus 18. It is unlikely that Jesus would have brought in Leviticus here, and whether sexual misconduct or incest is meant it also is likely to be an insertion by the evangelist which he considered relevant for the times in which the gospel was written. Thus, the most authentic description of Jesus' actual words is probably the minimalist statement of Luke.



What did Jesus really mean by this prohibition? Matthew 5 contains the Sermon on the Mount which is replete with hyperbolic commands *never* taken literally by Christians, such as 'If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it

away' (Matt 5: 29); 'Do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you' (Matt 5:42). He also prohibits taking oaths (Matt 5: 33-37). Elsewhere Jesus says: 'If your hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away' (Matt 18:8); 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God' (Matt 19:44); 'Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother ... cannot be my disciple' (Luke 14:26);. Was Jesus also speaking hyperbolically when he prohibited divorce, and was it really a strong condemnation of the easy disposal of an unwanted wife in the patriarchal Jewish society? If this is the case, the literal interpretation of the evangelists' quoting of a hyperbolic pronouncement forbidding divorce should not be taken as normative for modern Christian society.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul also wrote on marriage, conjugal rights and celibacy, and divorce and remarriage, responding to some problems that had

emerged in the community. He believed that the return of Jesus and the end of the world was imminent, stating that ‘the appointed time has grown short’ (1 Cor 7:29) and ‘the present form of the world is passing away’ (1 Cor 7:31). He recommended celibacy to the unmarried until that time came, although he also stated that if they are not practising self-control they should marry, as ‘it is better to marry than be aflame with passion’. He did not recommend that married couples practise an ascetic long-term celibacy and repudiated denial of conjugal rights in marriage (1 Cor 7:1-6). (1 Cor 7:9). He stated that a husband and wife should remain unmarried if they divorce, but a Christian convert who is divorced by a non-Christian spouse can remarry (1 Cor 7:12-15), although a Christian should not divorce a non-Christian spouse. Interpretation of his instructions on divorce are complicated by his use of the term ‘unmarried’ to include divorced women who should remain unmarried in 1 Cor 7:11, and divorced men who do not sin if they remarry in 1 Cor 7:28: ‘Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you marry, you do not sin.’

The post-Paul Church did not hesitate to alter some of the instructions in Paul’s authentic epistles in order to realign Christian behaviour with contemporary Greek social norms. Thus, later non-Pauline epistles sought to enforce the patriarchal household structure that reduced the status of women. This situation has continued through the centuries. In the recent past, some Catholic pastors would advise wives in a violent marriage to stay with their husbands. In other areas, the Church has modified its behaviour over the centuries to be appropriate for changed circumstances.

Historically, the Western Catholic Church has refused to allow divorce, and so has not allowed remarried Catholics back into the sacramental Church community. In 1972, the then Father Ratzinger stated: ‘If for moral reasons the abandonment of the second marriage is inadmissible, and ... abstinence presents no real possibility ... the opening up of community in Communion, after a period of probation, appears to be no less than just and to be fully in line with the Church’s tradition.’ In 2014, he retracted it. However, historically, refusal to re-marry has not

been the case in either the Orthodox Churches or the Eastern Catholic Churches, who still are considered true Churches by the Western Church. Why is the Western Church different?

Paradoxically, the Church likens any marriage bond to Christ’s indissoluble love for his Church, citing Ephesians 5:25: ‘Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church.’ How can a marriage stricken by violence, unfaithfulness or desertion be compared to this ideal? When a marriage irretrievably breaks down, why not refer instead to Genesis 2:18: ‘It is not good that man should be alone’ or Paul’s statement: ‘It is better to marry than be aflame with passion’, and allow an afflicted spouse to form a true Christ-like new marriage? Why does the Western Church demand decades of celibacy in an incomplete family from such a spouse just to fulfil an interpretation of scripture not held by other Christians? Has the Western Catholic Church’s demand for celibacy in its priests (in contrast to the Orthodox and Eastern Catholic priests) had an influence here?

Jesus’ social imperatives were love of our fellow humans and justice for the weak. A marriage in which desertion, violence or adultery has been inflicted by one partner on the other is gravely deficient in both. Modern Western society does not accept that the injured party must remain in the union. Paul (and, when younger, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) recognised the injustice or impracticality of enforcing celibacy after the breakup of such a union. Other Churches recognise the injustice of refusing to accept remarriage. Rejection by the Western Church after remarriage is a cause of people leaving the Church in Australia. What did Jesus and Paul actually mean? How should we interpret their instructions to a first century Jewish and Greek society for today’s world? Is the traditional interpretation of the Western Catholic Church correct? Is this one of the items that should be discussed at the forthcoming Australian Plenary Council?

Alan Clague is a member of ARC Secretariat

# Spare a thought for the new Archbishop

Fr Eric Hodgens

What does the new Archbishop of Melbourne face?

A bishop's job is part shepherd, part leader, part ruler, part manager. Pope Francis insists that pastoral care is the primary role. The Melbourne Catholic Church is getting a new bishop. At 54 he can look forward to 21 years in that post. What is the scenario Archbishop Peter Comensoli is walking into?

It is not a good time to be a bishop. Over the last 50 years Western culture has dramatically changed. Contemporary culture is secular and pluralist. Authority, once derived from status, now must be won. Where bishops once had the last say, they are now just another voice in public debate.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) has problems. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has diminished episcopal authority in the public forum.

Meanwhile, within the Church institution, some bishops take a strong, conservative line on issues like abortion, same-sex marriage and dying with dignity, asserting that their views are 'the Church's teaching'. But a proportion of faithful Catholics either oppose or take more nuanced views on these matters. The Church itself is divided. The Bishops Conference is divided.

The new archbishop leapfrogs most bishops in seniority. As archbishop of the biggest diocese he now has a much stronger base in the Conference. Uniting the Conference is a challenge awaiting him.

Catholics are steadily walking away, while others, once fervent, are tired or disillusioned. The inevitable result is decline in voluntary contributions – both personal and financial.

There are 1.07 million Catholics in Melbourne according to the 2016 census – nearly 24% of the population. The ethnic mix is increasing.

There are about 220 parishes. There is a large Catholic School system. There are 260 primary schools and 66 secondary. Parents bring a more consumerist mentality than in the past. Declining enrolments will most likely track disaffiliation.

Melbourne has 300 diocesan priests. 100 are retired, leaving only 200 active. It is an ageing work force – half are over 55. It is becoming increasingly a foreign workforce – currently 40%. Foreign priests, with their own cultural upbringing, often find it hard to adjust to Australian church culture. In many cases their English is hard to understand, especially from the pulpit.

Older priests are tired. They are generally happy doing their local parish work but find the job's ever-growing bureaucratic demands oppressive. Though ageing, they are still the backbone of the pastoral leadership of the diocese. In the main, they are Vatican II priests who see themselves primarily as pastors in the field, rather than consecrated priests in the sanctuary. A simpatico new leader could win their support.

A significant component of the few younger priests that the seminary is producing have a heavily sacral view of priesthood which shows in greater clericalism and ideology. Priesthood for them is a *consecration* to sacred status, and not a *profession*. So, professional demands do not apply to them.

Seminary training is very long – seven years – but with little practical training for pastoral ministry. Ongoing professional development in schools, hospitals and caring institutions is now taken for granted. This is not so with priests. A 'grace of state' theology sends newly ordained into roles requiring leadership, counselling and management skills, public-speaking ability without appropriate preparation or much ongoing support and supervision.

Ironically, many effective pastors have adapted under this sink-or-swim policy. But they have been largely self-taught. It is not good policy. Grace of state is a failed theory.

Whatever about the quality of the priests, they are in short supply. There is no prospect of an increase in numbers under the presently required conditions of service – male, celibate, full-time and life-long. Between 1955 and 1975 Melbourne ordained 15 priests a year. In contrast, For the last 35 years there have been only 3 per year. Over the same time the Catholic population has grown 70%. The present organisation structure is unsustainable. Recruiting lay men and women to formal ministry is the only option.

Pastoral planning is another challenge. Melbourne led the way with its Pastoral Research Office which was set up in the eighties. Besides projecting future needs, it discerned early that ministry had to be

undertaken by laity, both women and men. Training courses were designed, and recruitment was good because, at that stage, there were still numbers of people willing to work for the Church community, both remunerated and volunteer. The ACBC set up a national Pastoral Planning Office (PPO), while Melbourne's office was weakened under Archbishop Pell and closed by Archbishop Hart. There may be better days ahead because Archbishop Comensoli has valued pastoral planning in Broken Bay.

The picture is not entirely bleak. There is a hard core of sophisticated faithful who are willing to give their time and effort to promote a faith that has sustained them.

So, spare a thought for the new archbishop. He faces the biggest episcopal task in Australia. He will have to make big changes. He will meet resistance. But he has the brains. He has post-graduate qualifications from Rome's Alphonsianum and

Scotland's prestigious universities – St Andrew's and Edinburgh. No doubt this caught George Pell's eye. George picked him as his auxiliary, got him made administrator of Sydney when George went to Rome and then guided his move to Broken Bay as he secured Anthony Fisher as his successor in Sydney.

His academic background is juridical rather than pastoral, but any new job requires adaptation. His episcopal motto is *'We proclaim the Messiah – a Crucified One'*. This is the core of St. Paul's message as N.T. Wright explains in *Paul: A Biography*. God is doing something new for us. Not a bad omen for future endeavours.

He will find that the Melbourne Church has a very different history and culture to Sydney's. Still, he will find a small, but faithful Catholic core who will respond to positive leadership.

Strength to his arm.

## Book Review

### Christine Schenk CSJ: *Crispina and Her Sisters: Women and Authority in Early Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017

The subtitle tells it all. It is the sad story of the way the role of women in the early church was gradually snuffed out. It seems to me that one of the most convincing reasons for the decline of women in the church (mentioned by Schenk), is that male Christians wanted to conform to the society in which they lived where the patriarchal model prevailed. They did not want Christianity to be seen as a sect for women, children and slaves.

It also seems clear that Jesus taught inclusivity and gender equality, so what we have today in the church needs drastic correction. Schenk has done us all a great service, by adding to the growing mass of research exposing what happened to women in ministry in early Christianity.

The author, who writes regularly for *The National Catholic Reporter*, has produced a painstaking analysis of what early texts say about women, especially widows and female deacons. She traces these roles from the first century through to the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Practices were different in various parts of the Mediterranean but the attempts to curtail the very active roles women were playing in various ministries is unmistakable.

This is a scholarly book of over four hundred pages, in which the author examines texts not so well known, such as the *Apostolic Tradition*, *Didascalia Apostolorum*, *Apostolic Constitutions* and *Testamentum Domini*, as well as pertinent passages in the New Testament. The rewards are gratifying.

*Gideon Goosen*

# Paul Collins: Absolute Power

Reviewed by JKK

Reading Religion

The American Academy of Religion

<http://readingreligion.org/books/absolute-power>

In *Absolute Power*, Australian historian-theologian Paul Collins takes his readers on an eye-opening journey through the last three hundred years of papal history. Collins shows how the papacy rose from the ashes of near-extinction at the beginning of the 1800s to the zenith of being the most influential institution in the world.

**Part 1 (p. ‘Extinction?’)** begins with the sorry tale of Pius VI, buried in unconsecrated ground in 1799. This death, symbolic of the papacy’s demise, was ‘probably the lowest point in the history of the papacy’(p.11), according to Collins. From there, we see the rise of ultramontanism, the mentality that fed straight into Vatican I (1869-1870), which was, in turn, the event that—Collins maintains—forms ‘the basis of modern papal power’(p.26). The council went on to define papal infallibility, as well as establish papal primacy, ‘the strongest support for enormously increased papal power ... [and] also the most intractable problem that Catholicism has inherited from Vatican I’(p.49).

**Part 2, ‘From ‘Supreme Power’ to Supreme Pontiff,’** begins with Leo XIII’s reign (1878-1903), a cautious opening to contemporary developments. His *Rerum Novarum* becomes the foundation on which all future Catholic social teaching (CST) would be built. Collins considers CST ‘the most important papal use of soft-power influence in the modern world’(p.77). Pius X (1903-1914) instead had a generally negative attitude about most modern developments. To purge the church of modernism, he encouraged what was tantamount to a ‘secret espionage association’(p.105). This papacy is rated by Collins therefore as ‘an absolute disaster’ because ‘it set a pattern that turned the church inward for another fifty years’(p.104).

Just before his death in 1939, Pius XI ‘was prepared to act prophetically and confront the evils of Nazism and anti-Semitism’(p.148), but his successor, Pius XII (1939-1958) was more ambiguous. As to whether the pope was anti-Semitic or even ‘Hitler’s pope’ as debated in the ‘Pius wars,’ Collins offers a ‘cautious no’(p.151). Pius XII, Collins claims, feared that dealing head-on with Nazi atrocities against the Jews would result in the institutional church being attacked. Hence,

he chose the church’s security over speaking out on this burning issue(p.157). Collins evaluates Pius XII’s first eight years as theologically open(p.163) but, after that, a backlash against the *nouvelle théologie* resulted in a mini-modernist crisis leading to *Humani Generis* (1950) which ‘tragically paralysed Catholic theology for another decade’(p.165).

**Part 3, ‘Rolling Out and Rolling Back Vatican II’**, is arguably the book’s most important section. It tells the story of how ‘Good Pope John’ convened Vatican II, what transpired during the council, how Paul VI continued and concluded Vatican II, and describes the tumultuous post-conciliar years under him.

*Absolute Power* cannot be properly understood unless one keeps in mind that Collins is both a historian *and* a ‘theologian’. Although history is fascinatingly described in every page, it is woven through with Collins’s theological perspectives. A case in point: in contrasting John XXIII and John Paul II (JPII), Collins points out that John, although traditionalist in some ways, was also a church historian familiar with ‘historical change, the mutability of human affairs and the relativity of things’. Thus, ‘he knew that the church had to adapt its pastoral methods, attitudes, structures and teaching to changed societies’, which in turn led to *aggiornamento*(p.180). Contrasting John XXIII’s historical sense with the lack of it in other key figures in modern Catholicism, Collins muses, ‘church teaching really makes sense only in its own time and place and ... it must be constantly reinterpreted in each era for it to make sense within a new cultural context. This is what Ratzinger and Balthasar ... lacking a feeling for history, simply don’t get; they live in an abstract world in which articulated belief is divorced from time and space’(p.181). There one finds perhaps Collins’s key hermeneutical principle in this book.

Chapter 9, about JPII, is probably this work’s climax. Collins argues that the papacy reached its highest point in JPII because he ‘embodied the fullness of supreme power’(p.250). The popes generally use ‘soft power’ in relationship to political and international affairs but choose ‘hard power’ in the interior life of the church. JPII’s papacy was ‘the most influential...in history,’ mainly because he knew how to exploit to the full the possibilities of the media (p.229-30). This resulted in an ‘omnipresent papacy,’ with JPII himself becoming *de facto* ‘bishop of the world’(p.235-36).

Yet Collins is also critical of JPII. He remarks that some key points of his thinking are ‘profoundly flawed’(p.221), and that he came to the papacy with a ‘dominant personality, an absence of self-doubt ... [and] a messianic conception of himself as a kind of

savior'(p.227), rooted in an 'inherent narcissism'(p.228). He writes that 'his vision ... alone was normative'(p.240), and that, in a sense, he never really embraced Vatican II(p.235).

**Part 4, 'The Smell of the Sheep' seems like 'falling action'.** Collins is critical of many features related to Benedict XVI (2005-2013): his concept of a 'remnant flock'; his generous accommodation of certain more traditionalist groups while being harsh toward other more progressive movements; his 'reform of the reform' in the liturgy; and his favouring of a 'hermeneutics of continuity' in interpreting Vatican II.

Collins ends on a hopeful note though, with a generally positive evaluation of Francis's tenure. Collins approves of Francis's belief that doctrine should be dynamic, responsive to circumstances, and open to the world. He praises Francis for 'shifting power and authority out of Rome to the peripheries' and emphasising 'the pastoral and ministerial rather than the dogmatic and ideological'(p.302). In Collins's opinion, Francis has 'restored the fortunes and reputation of the papacy in the wider world after the overbearing John Paul and the maladroit Benedict'(p.302). Collins concludes that Francis 'has pointed the church in the right direction'(p.313).

The last chapter deserves a careful reading, particularly by those interested in theology. Here Collins draws lessons from his survey of papal history, such as the importance of 'soft power' as seen concretely in CST(p.315), and the need for a less centralised system and the development of more democratic, consultative, accountable structures in the church(p.319). The most vexing question of all though is given Catholicism's 'attachment to power'(p.314), how can it reconcile the contemporary papacy of 'absolute power' with Jesus, who abandoned all power and authority on the cross (p.xv)? Since this Jesus is the ultimate test for the papacy, 'it (the papacy) will be true to itself only when it is true to him'(328).

*Absolute Power* is an enriching and thought-provoking read. For the historically interested, it is replete with fascinating details, some of them little-known. What makes this book unique for me are the theological reflections with which Collins peppers the book. I happen to agree with most of them, but there will be quite a few who may be put off by Collins's frank and unapologetic positions. Hopefully, the book's rich historical content might persuade even those who don't ideologically agree with Collins to continue reading and clarify for themselves why they do not agree with his interpretations. □

## Open letter to Pope Francis on "The Pope as a Game Changer"

Peter Woodruff

Dear Pope Francis,

Greetings from Australia. I am a priest who worked for many years in parishes in poor barrios of Lima, Peru. I am now retired in Melbourne, Australia.

As you know, Pope John XXIII, despite the few years he was in the job (1958 to 1963), was a game changer. He called the Second Vatican Council and, in the midst of the cold war, wrote a challenging letter to the world, titled **Peace on Earth**. Pope Paul VI initially continued with his game plan but stumbled with his decision not to heed the advice of the commission he had formed to help write the 1968 letter on birth control to Catholics and all people of good will. Then, Popes John Paul II (1978 to 2005) and Benedict XVI (2005 to 2013), chose to play a defensive game, which is more or less what our church leadership has been on about since the Council of Trent (1545 to 1563).

You have also been a game changer. You have addressed the world, from the perspective of our Christian faith, on what is probably the major threat to life on our planet, namely, rapid, human induced climate change. You have constantly urged us to become a church of service to life, especially that of the poor, marginalised and oppressed. You have made a point of listening even when you are being told what you might not want to hear.

But, are you now hesitating? Clearly, you recognise the evolutionary nature of our world and all that inhabits it, including us humans. You know that much in our church must change in order to remain true to the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Society, both local and global, evolves; so too must the church. However, there are aspects of the church that, at present, only you as Pope can change.

Only you as Pope can change the clerical nature of some of our basic church structures, such as the make-up of the body that elects the next Pope. At present, all electors are both bishops and cardinals so all are male celibates. The present rules about this excludes women, married men and clerics, who are not bishops. You as Pope can change the rules that exclude these three groups from belonging to the group that elects the next Pope.

continued ...

We are aware of a culture within the Catholic Church, commonly known as clericalism, which helps maintain the exclusively male make-up of the clergy. While you have been a strong critic of clericalism you have merely recommended structures that might help clerics be accountable to the broader church membership whom they profess to serve. However, you have not acted as a game changer of what maintains clericalism as a dominant aspect of the culture of the group that rules and ministers to Catholics worldwide. You can talk until you are blue in the face but that will have little impact on entrenched clericalism.

Only the Pope can initiate global change of the structures of the Church. We know that clericalism is a specific type of patriarchy that encourages priests to see themselves as spiritually superior to the rest of humanity and so allows us to become a class apart. Thankfully, many priests and bishops choose not to set ourselves apart. However, when a young man preparing to be a priest is taught that the priest is an 'alter Christus' (another Christ), he is effectively encouraged to believe that, as a priest, he will be spiritually superior to the rest of humanity. He will be in a class apart and above. Such teaching, when taken to its extreme, seems close to idolatry. Besides, we know that all Christians receive the call to holiness on becoming members of the church at Baptism, the ritual of initiation into the church.

Clericalism is also at the root of the globally coordinated practice of institutional cover-up. This devious practice is rooted in the determination to protect the reputation of the church leadership i.e. the clerics. As long as the overriding focus of church leadership remains the reputation of the institution itself, the door will be open to the cover-up option becoming the default position. In many of your episcopal appointments, you have taken steps to remedy this.

Recently, you wrote a **Letter to the People of God** in which you state in the first paragraph: "Looking ahead to the future, no effort must be spared to create a culture able to prevent such situations from happening, but also to prevent the possibility of their being covered up and perpetuated."

Many of us hope you follow through on what only you as Pope can. Only in that way will you continue to be a game changer. There are changes that only you as Pope can mandate.

May you continue to joyously walk with God's People. Respectfully, Peter Woodruff

Peter Woodruff worked as a missionary priest in Lima, Peru from 1968 to 2008. He retired to Australia ten years ago, since when he has turned his hand to writing and editing. He presently edits *The Australian Journal of Mission Studies*, an ecumenical journal. This article was published in *Pearls & Irritations* on 6/9/18.

## Humanae Vitae A 50-year Odyssey

Eric Hodgens

Paul VI had no idea what he was letting loose  
when he published *Humanae Vitae*

It was July 29 1968. The world seemed to be in turmoil. The Paris student riots had happened a month before. I was an army chaplain at Puckapunyal preparing conscripts for Vietnam and, at the same time, an undergraduate at Melbourne University where the Vietnam War was taboo. Those two worlds were a universe apart. As I drove into the university car park the car radio told me that Paul VI had reaffirmed the intrinsic immorality of contraception. I was shocked. His advisory group had advised differently. We now know he went

against most of the bishops he had chosen to consult. Little did I know that this was just the start of a journey to sexual common sense for the whole Church.

Five years later I was Parish Priest of a brand-new parish full of baby boomers with growing families. They were enthusiastic Catholics who loved parish involvement. Life was full on. As families grew, so did the parish school. Vatican II was the guiding charter. Liturgy was alive – the source and summit of the life of the parish.

Two things were of interest. Nobody ever mentioned contraception. Very few went to confession.

Fifteen years later the younger generation was courting and moving into partnerships. First, they had sleepovers, then holiday trips together, then they moved in together. Their baby-boomer parents moved gradually from concern, to acceptance and, finally, approval. The younger generation was re-

educating the older. Some saw this as an erosion of values; others saw it as the emergence of common-sense, replacing a strongly ingrained pre-judgement that sex was bad and dangerous.

Then they started thinking. Was the pill a bad thing because it allowed license, or a good thing because it allowed greater freedom? Was vasectomy a violation of nature, or a newly available option for alleviating anxiety? Were the tortuous arguments of Catholic moralists based on a prejudice that sex was somehow suspect, rather than an integral part of a fully human life?

The 80s were dominated by Pope John Paul II's fightback on the issue. He had a hand in framing the original encyclical. He seemed pre-occupied with sexual morality. Over a five-year period, he lectured on his *Theology of the Body* at Wednesday Papal Audiences. These cerebral, rationalistic talks moved the focus of discussion of sexuality from human experience to rules and regulations. He was an old-time student of scholastic philosophy which he propounded in the Wednesday talks and in the two encyclicals *Veritatis Splendor* and *Fides et Ratio*. Human sexuality, as a wholistic human experience, got lost in this arid universe. Was he fighting his own inner demons?

John Paul II's intense pre-occupation with sexual ethics emboldened the law and order wing of the Catholic Church and created a new industry. In 1981 he established the Pontifical Council for the Family. Its chief focus was sexual morality, especially opposition to contraception. Under the 18 years of the controversial Cardinal Trujillo's presidency, it was renowned for opposition to family planning, use of condoms (even as AIDS-prevention), gay marriage and embryological research.

Another spinoff was the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and the Family. It has developed a heavily ideological course program using the JP II *Theology of the Body* as its ideological bedrock. Allied to established theology schools, it grants degrees under a moral theology or bioethics rubric. George Pell promoted this institute in Australia first under the leadership of Anthony Fisher and then Peter Elliott.

Moral theologians like Charles Curran, who argued a more nuanced view of *Humanae Vitae*, were blackballed by the pope. During the 37 years of John Paul II and Benedict XVI a chasm grew between an ever more entrenched, Roman, anti-sex mentality and a Catholic faithful who had adapted to a more wholistic vision of sexuality in human life and love. The Church at large was getting freer while Church officialdom dug in and ossified.

The doubters were not just pleasure seekers. They sensed that integral humanity was at the core of their conviction. A narrow, cerebral path of study had led officialdom away from God's reality.

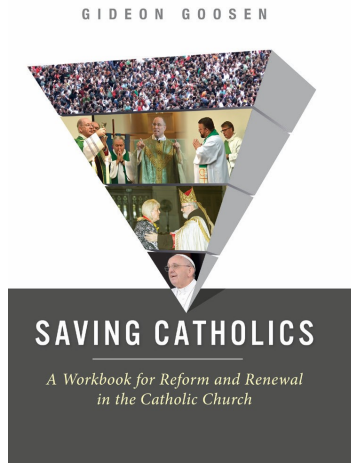
Margaret Farley, a leading American moral theologian, backed up this intuitive sense with her book *Just Love*. Justice is the top criterion for loving – including sexual love.

At the same time, something new was crystalising in this cauldron of ideas. The mind of the church is formulated by the teachers ("magisterium" in Latin), but it needed to be received by the Church at large to receive its final endorsement. Reception theology now had its day. Ask Father Ormond Rush, an Australian theologian in the forefront of this study. The commonsense of the faithful was solidly founded after all.

Paul VI was shocked by the response of the Church at large to his encyclical. It caused turmoil for many and departure from the Church for some, including priests. But it prompted others to formulate their conscience for themselves. No longer is the pope's or bishop's word law. Make the case or lose the argument.

So, *Humanae Vitae* turned out to be a watershed moment. Paul VI meant to settle the matter but, instead, began a movement that put conscience, reception and sexual taboo under the microscope. JP II laboured for 27 years to bag the cat again—but lost. What a roller coaster ride it has been! But the church is, consequently, better informed and wiser.

Eric Hodgens is a retired Parish Priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne. This article was published in *LaCroix International* on 6.8.2018.



What a creative, informative and engaging way to draw us together in our responsibility and our capacity for the essential reform and renewal in our Church. In naming our deepest institutional wounds, *Saving Catholics* reminds us of the important and authentic wisdom of standing in solidarity with one another, and in encouraging one another in taking steps, individually and communally, for the vital healing of our Church.

**Geraldine Hawkes**

*Ecumenical Facilitator at SA Council of Churches  
Past Inaugural Chair of the Commission  
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At the ARC meeting on 6 October copies of Gideon Goosen's book will be available at \$20, a saving of \$5.00 as well as the \$5.00 postage.

## The Art of Loving

Love is an art,  
perhaps the most important art in Life.

To learn how to love  
I had to proceed  
in the same way I had to proceed to learn any art.

My learning took place into two parts:  
one, the mastery of the idea;  
the other, the mastery of the practice.

For even when I had theoretical knowledge,  
I was by no means competent in the art.

I only began to truly love  
after a great deal of practice,  
until eventually the results of my theoretical  
knowledge of love  
and the results of my practice loving  
were blended into  
my intuition,  
the essence of its mastery.

But, aside from learning the theory and practising  
love,  
there is a third factor  
necessary to my becoming a truly Loving person:  
Living in love has to be for me  
a matter of ultimate concern;  
there must be nothing else in the world  
more important.

Maybe, here lies the answer to the question  
why people in today's culture seem to so rarely learn  
the Art of Loving  
in spite of our deep-seated craving and need for love.  
Almost everything else is considered to be more  
important,  
including success, prestige, control, money, security,  
and power.

Almost all our energy is used to achieve these aims,  
with almost none to learning the Art of Loving.

Those who profess to be Christian  
have an ultimate guide in Jesus.

This reflection was originally published on John Chuchman's [blog](#) and is republished on *Catholica* with John's permission.

# St Francis, Bing Crosby and Milly

Alan Holroyd

About this time last year, our beloved Milly died. Milly was our ten-year-old Labrador-cross, her mum was a pedigree while her dad was not, and so the litter was taken to the RSPCA. This was soon after my retirement, and so after some discussion Grandma and Grandpa decided to add a puppy to our family.

We took our grandsons along to the RSPCA and out of a litter of five black puppies little Milly was chosen because she could jump the highest as the boy's hands and fingers poked through the mesh enclosure. And so Milly became part of our family. As her foster parents our home became her home and over her ten years of life our daughter and family came visiting to Grandma, Grandpa and Milly.

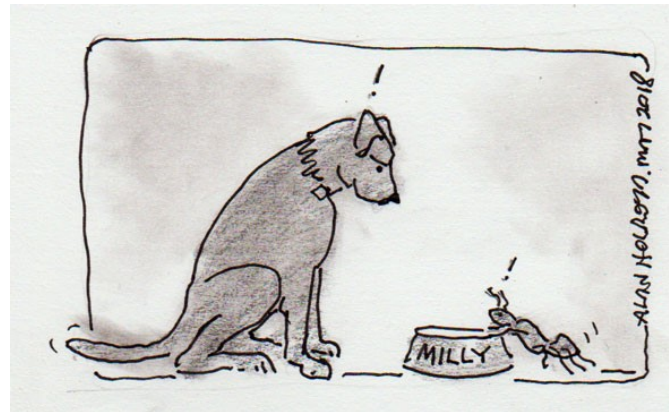
My background has strong links to animals, as in my childhood our family were dairy farmers and so not only did we have a 'home' dog but another as the working dog, along with Jersey and Guernsey cows including a bull, pigs with a boar, and of course chooks including a couple of roosters. We had two riding horses and a big friendly draft horse we called Blossom. In the low mountains alongside the creek (containing eels) there were dingoes and foxes, while cruising up above were chicken hawks, crows, pee-wees, magpies, cockatoos and flocks of lorikeets. Around the place were bull-ants nests which inflicted the most painful bites to the unwary, and yes, there were rats and mice. All of the farm animals shared our lives, needing help with conceiving, birthing, and for the male calves and piglets, castration. The dingoes and foxes needed shooting—as did on rare occasions a cow or pig which became sickly. As the cows became too old for milking, the young castrated steers and the male pigs (barrows) were trucked off to the saleyards for sale, mostly to the abattoirs.

Milly became special, perhaps because as retirees she filled the gap in our home, we had someone we cared for and someone who cared for us. We could talk to Milly, she would make eye contact as she 'interpreted' our sounds and bodily expressions. In such times I wondered about the depth of this animal's capacity to relate, its capacity to be ever-loving, and the question arose, how do such dogs fit into the after-life we call Heaven? Mark Twain is reported to have remarked: 'Heaven goes by favour, if it went on merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in.'

Back in the days of my living on the farm, listening to the radio before Christmas, a favourite was Bing Crosby telling the legendary story of 'The Small One', the little donkey that led by Joseph, bore Mary to Bethlehem where baby Jesus was born. Some years later of course, according to St John's gospel, Jesus rode an ass into Jerusalem which evolved into the liturgical celebration of Palm

Sunday. The role of the donkey and the ass in the story of Jesus can be seen as a somewhat trivialisation of the depth of the real meaning of the story, but it lends weight to considering—as sentient beings as we humans are—do animals have a place in heaven?

As a young enthusiastic Catholic, one of my hero saints was St Francis of Assisi who, legend has it, was an animal lover, to the extent that within the Catholic religion he became the patron saint of animals. Perhaps St Francis thought that the mystical place of heaven did have a place for the donkey and the ass that carried Jesus on his journeys, and latterly for our Milly. Maybe these considerations are an extension of my mortality journey, and so I live in hope, aware that a few days ago I sprinkled ant-rid around the ant nests in our courtyard pavers, and later had a ham sandwich for lunch.



Alan Holroyd is *ARCVoice's* *Illustrator*

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