



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

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We have our say and wonder in hope

By now most Catholics in Australia who regularly attend Mass would at least know about the opportunity for them to provide input in preparation for the Plenary Council of 2020-2021. Having attended the formal process for this through a couple of parish gatherings, I found it to be a somewhat forced procedure owing to the restriction of time and the desire of the facilitators (“animators”) to get a consensual result quickly from disparate groups. As an individual you can take time to express whatever you like through the Plenary Council website, and we strongly advise that you do so.

(www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

But so much more could be gained if interested people had a better structured chance to understand the effects of the many issues the Church faces. Then the advice being given to the hierarchy might be more substantial than individual stories that can be easily dismissed. It should also be noted that little has been done to include the vast majority of Catholics who do not identify with any particular parish.

This is why we set out to formulate a submission that could represent all of ARC’s hundreds of members. On the 6th of October, 22 ARC members spent a full day drawing out the main issues facing the Church especially in the light of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Following informed discussion, these representatives actually wrote up the content of the submission on the day. They then reviewed the first draft for continuity. It does not contain everything that could be said, but it has been endorsed by all those present on that day. It is now submitted as a supplement with this issue to all ARC members seeking your approval for it as ARC’s submission to the Plenary Council preparation.

Although the members of the Council’s Facilitation Team emphasise that all submissions will contribute to a

comprehensive picture through quantitative and qualitative analysis, there is no guarantee that all major concerns will even be included in the agenda of the Council. Many of the issues are not new and the hierarchy continue to be slow in recognising and dealing with matters that are within their power to address now.

It is important that we speak out even though we are doubtful about how much we are likely to be heard. Significant reform in the Church is critical. The Plenary Council cannot be allowed to be a stalling tactic so that the hierarchy can progressively get back to “business as usual”.

John Buggy

Contents

Editorial ...	1
Letter to the Editor ...	2
Donella Johnston: <i>Why women should run the Catholic Church</i> ...	2-3
Review by Paul Inglis: John Queripel: <i>Myth, Magic and Legend: Making sense of the Christmas stories</i> ...	4
Elizabeth Lonergan: <i>Church Renewal: A Lament and a Plea</i> ...	5-6
James Keenan SJ: <i>If we want to reform the church, let's make women cardinals</i> ...	7-8
Review by Carmel Maguire: <i>Graham English Climbing out of Yesterday</i> ...	9
Kevin Liston: <i>Opportunities for Catholicism</i> ...	10-11
Noelene Ure: <i>The Marriage Act</i> ...	11
Joan Chittister: <i>For real change, we must get at four roots deeper than church structures</i> ...	12-13
Gail Grossman Freyne <i>Towards credibility and a clean conclave</i> ...	14-15
Illustrator: Alan Holroyd	
Subscription Form, Secretariat, Have your say, ARC website ...	16

Letter to the Editor

Thanks as usual for *ARC*Voice** from an ancient, agnostic Anglican priest who shares the hopes expressed by Robert Mickens.

At Bankstown Hospital most patients still identify with a Church and welcome the visit of a chaplain, ordained or lay. The majority are R.C., followed by C.of E. At present we have a fine R.C. chaplain who visits when his parish and other duties permit (with lay-people bringing the Sacrament for some on Sundays). However, for most of the last 20 years R.C. patients have had little priestly ministry except for emergencies. Allowing married clergy (already permitted in the Uniate churches and in the case of converts) is *very* urgently needed, not only in such chaplaincies but even more so in parishes. This is surely the easiest first step toward wider reform.

If practising Anglicans can fund the cost of having married clergy and appropriate housing, the Roman Catholic Church with its much larger numbers certainly can do the same, and allowing married priests should see a considerable increase in numbers ordained. In my Church in England, the last few years have seen a continuing increase in the numbers beginning training for ordination, for example, 476 last year, this year 546 (of course including women as well as men), a 14% increase though even more are needed. And those under 32

have increased by almost a third in the last two years.

In Ireland, this month only six men have begun training at St Patrick's, Maynooth, the lowest number since its foundation in 1795, and half the number beginning training in Dublin for priesthood in the small Church of Ireland (10 men and two women). I read that in Dublin, where there are happy friendships between the Churches, 10% of the Church of Ireland clergy are former Roman Catholics, including the Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, I guess not because of deep differences in doctrine but because of the present differences regarding who can be ordained – differences that I believe in time will disappear.

I do, however, disagree with Robert's assertion that 'the majority of seminarians and priests are men of a homosexual orientation'. No doubt some are (so what ?) but certainly some are not, and my Church welcomes single priests (and religious) – men and women – except in Sydney Diocese. Not surprisingly, my Diocese regards single men with great suspicion, just as it still will not ordain women as priests, and women deacons are often not allowed to preach if men are present.

(The Revd Dr) John Bunyan

Hon. C.of E. Chaplain, Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital
Hon.Chaplain, Australian Intelligence Corps Association
Hon.Chaplain, Macarthur/Ingleburn National Servicemen

Why women should run the Catholic Church

Donella Johnston

With thanks to John Menadue's website – *Pearls and Irritations*—4
December 2017

<http://johnmenadue.com/donella-johnston-why-women-should-run-the-catholic-church/>

You know an idea is starting to become mainstream when you read about it in the *Australian Women's Weekly*.

"Why women should run the Catholic Church" is an article that appeared in the September edition of the *Weekly*. Penned by journalist Susan Chenery, the article begins "Men have formed the power elite

since the Church's foundation. Yet the furore over child sexual abuse and the Church's handling of the issue is giving rise to a radical thought – the Catholic Church should be run by women."

In his book, *Trapped in a Closed World: Catholic Culture and Sexual Abuse*, Kevin Peoples identifies misogyny as one of at least six factors that contribute to the current culture of the Catholic Church. This is a culture that has produced a horrific litany of sexual crimes against children, prompting a Royal Commission. It's telling that, despite the fact that we have been reading about these crimes since at least the early 1990's, it took our first female Prime Minister Julia Gillard to finally act. We should acknowledge that it was a series of allegations that emerged from the Catholic Church that triggered this response.

Along with the culture of misogyny, Kevin Peoples identifies other cultural causes for the

Catholic Church's child sexual abuse scandal. These are clericalism, authoritarianism and triumphalism, discipline and obedience and celibacy (See p. 2 Introduction).

Our Church doesn't need to be like this. We don't need to have an exclusively male leadership. Like Kevin, many have now pointed out that the lack of women in positions of leadership was a contributing factor to the culture that led to these crimes.

The *Women's Weekly* article stated: "Many people believe that the scale of abuse would have been much, much less if women held positions of power in the Church. Women are far less likely to be drawn into a secretive society and far more likely to break ranks where the welfare of children is concerned." Others too have pointed this out, such as Counsel Assisting the Commission Gail Furness SC and Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council.

A report^[1] commissioned by the Australian Catholic bishops almost 20 years ago noted that women comprised almost 74% of persons undertaking undergraduate theological courses and almost 64% in postgraduate courses in Catholic institutions. Most of these women undertook studies at their own expense and in their own time. The report noted some of the ways in which women's participation could be increased. These included a re-examination of the portrayal of men and women in moral theology; encouraging theologically qualified women to become professors in the seminary; and training for the priesthood should involve personal development and counselling, women's issues and women's theology (p. 448).

In his chapter on misogyny Kevin notes the absence of women in his seminary experience. They certainly weren't teaching him theology. He knew they were there behind the scenes, the nuns who washed, cleaned and cooked for them. Kevin paints a picture of how misogyny has been embedded in the theologies, dogma, doctrine, practices and philosophies of those in power in the Church.

The book is also a public account of the shared horror that we all feel as Catholic Christians trying

to grapple with the unravelling of our Church in the wake of the sexual abuse crisis. Each of us have had to review everything we knew or thought we knew about our Church. How could this have possibly happened in a faith whose central tenet is love? It has been a shock to our personal faith lives. It has also been a shock to our collective sense of who we are as Catholics. We have all had to try to explain ourselves to others. Why on earth would we want to be part of an institution whose leaders allow such abominations to occur unchecked in so many cases?

But it's not all doom and gloom. Kevin's enthusiastic involvement in Catholic social justice movements in the 60's influenced his decision to train as a priest. Social justice is one of the things Catholics do well. It is inherent to our understanding of the Gospel call to treat others as we'd like to be treated.

And this brings us back to women. Pope Francis has noted that there needs to be a new and deeper theology of woman (July 2013).^[2] Many Catholic feminist theologians would argue that we already have that theology. It's just that the men who run the show have not yet chosen to accept it. Theologians like Elizabeth Johnson argue that we could start by reviewing our images of God. An underlying theme in "Trapped in a closed world" is the old image of God as a patriarchal, all-knowing, disciplinarian father figure. Sound familiar? Maybe a little too familiar. Starting with challenging the old male image of God may well be a good starting place for reviewing and rewriting some of our out-of-date theologies around women and their role in the family, society and the Church.

Donella Johnston is a former Director of the National Office for the Participation of Women of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. She is a former member of ARC Secretariat.

This is an edited version of Donella Johnston's speech at the Canberra launch of *Trapped in a Closed World: Catholic Culture and Sexual Abuse*, by Kevin Peoples

[1] *Woman and Man One in Christ Jesus: Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia* (April 1999) Harper Collins <http://www.opw.catholic.org.au/woman-and-man/woman-and-man-resources.html>

[2] US Catholic Jan 2015 <http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201501/constructing-new-theology-women-29662>

Christmas, Myth, Magic and Legend: Making sense of the Christmas stories

John Queripel

Review by Paul Inglis

A myth is not a lie. With that introduction, John Queripel captured my interest and held it to his last words. And his last words are good to read: ‘We are not to pretend that the stories are history but rather to enter the experience and be transformed by them.’ I can think of no better way to be transformed than to use this book as a guide. John’s forensic skills have produced a classic critical analysis of the Christmas narratives, unpacking the true meaning of Christmas, and bringing into focus the powerful symbolic and metaphorical teaching. At the same time he has dismantled a huge amount of overly simplistic thinking by sourcing the forces that have shaped and politicised the gospel writers. John helps us to see past our Western scientific mindset, profoundly shaped by Aristotelian logic of factual, objective and verifiable truth.

Most affected by the populist scientific framework is the literalist reader of Scripture. Richard Dawkins is also influenced by the same logic!

But truth lies in myth....

The Christmas Story is simply not factual but possesses deep truth in another way. Not to realise this means missing out on greater understanding of the purpose of biblical stories such as that of Adam and Eve.

Literal reading produces an ideological outcome serving self-interest, e.g. of woman being born of man! Many biblical myths have had the power of ensuring men’s dominance over women and human dominance over the rest of creation. John carries out some of the best theological research to illustrate the development of the birth and crucifixion legends and myths. He makes it easy to see why it is foolish to take the stories literally and the consequent dumbing down of Jesus human role and purpose.

He has much to say about the way in which we have blended in the two different biblical stories of

Matthew and Luke. In his wonderfully attention-grabbing writing style, he opens up to analysis many of the taken-for-granted assumptions about the world of Jesus. He shows how important is an understanding of the radical changes taking place in Judea at the time of the gospel writings. This includes challenging traditional views about pharisees, the Jesus Jews and the rabbinic Jews and their differences from the sacred traditions. It is important to understand the ‘anti-Jewish agenda of Matthew’.

I found his exposé of the different infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke and finding their common ground and emphases fascinating as well as informative. Each gospel writer has a different agenda. Knowing about these agendas is part of the exploration of honest theology.

Having dismantled the notion of Jesus being born of a virgin, the doctrine of perpetual virginity of Mary, and the Christian aversion to sex, the doctrine of immaculate conception is left with nothing to support it. Since the latter was only established in 1854 it is not hard to realise that the Church has played a major role in distracting us from the valuable mythological values.

After reading his comments about the journey to Bethlehem on foot over ten days while heavily pregnant, and only so that Joseph could be included in the census of males it is not hard to accept that the narrative has another purpose of fulfilling ancient prophecies about where the Messiah will emerge.

Highly recommended. Very transformative and loaded with brain stimulation and fabulous thinking.

JOHN QUERIPPEL is a UCA minister with a diverse set of experiences in city, rural, university and prison ministries. John is committed to scholarship and authenticity in faith.

John Queripel has done it again. As concerned as he is about our unthinking absorption of a shopping-mall Christmas mentality, in this timely book he calls us to go back to the original stories about the birth of Jesus and consider them more maturely. While for him the two Gospel narratives about the first Christmas present historical problems, they still get us thinking about absolutely crucial human questions and carry an uncanny power of Myth - in the positive sense, and not as false. I recommend John Queripel’s work because it is provocative, gets us on our toes and sharpens our critical acumen, but more to disturb our shallow comfortableness than to dishonour the magic and marvel of the Biblical message.

Garry Trompf, Emeritus Professor
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University of Sydney

Church Renewal: A Lament and a Plea

Elizabeth Lonergan

I find the documents of Vatican II truly inspiring and if these had been carefully and prayerfully introduced our Church could have been a more vibrant and truly holy organisation, with the gifts of both clergy and laity bringing the blessings that would come with the contribution of both.

Instead we are facing a time of trial and disgrace with the findings of the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse. The Bishops call on the laity to help in the healing and renewal of the church. I would ask how? There are no real avenues for respectful dialogue or co-operation between the laity and hierarchy. The wisdom of the Vatican II documents were ignored or poorly explained, indeed many of the Bishops and clergy worked against change, ignoring the grace of ongoing revelation, thus creating fear and uncertainty in some lay people and alienating those who saw the wisdom of *'reading the signs of the times'*. This has resulted in a fractured organisation open to poor teachings and a lack of faith in the Holy Spirit as our guide through difficult times.

If lay women and men had gradually been given a greater role in church affairs following this Council, with more balance between the male and female, perhaps some of the dreadful abuse may have been avoided by allowing greater transparency and accountability. Celibate men with little social contact with children appear to have little appreciation of the damage sexual abuse does to the lives of such abused children and their families. The attitudes of the hierarchy to the abuse has been disappointing to say the least; the cold legality of the response; the refusal of Bishop Wilson to stand down after his conviction; the appeal against his very lenient sentence; the delay to make public the Report commissioned by the Truth, Healing Council. All of these add to the distress of the victims and the dismay of the laity.

Today the Pope has announced a meeting regarding abuse in the Church with his senior bishops in Rome next year. For this meeting to be

fruitful there needs to be some input by qualified lay representatives, both men and women, in order that any discussion is as informed and open as possible. To limit this meeting to the hierarchy only shows a closed male-dominated culture with little aptitude for change. This does very little to restore faith in Church leaders.

Following Vatican II some ministries have been opened to lay men, but the lack of meaningful roles for women is still sending the wrong message to our young women both in the church and in the wider community. Just on twenty years ago an important survey on the role of women in the Catholic Church was carried out. At the time I wrote a submission and took time off work to present it at one of the hearings. A report was published *Woman and Man One in Christ Jesus* but as far as I can see no real change came about. Now I see that the Council of Australian Women (an advisory body to Australian Bishops Conferences) is holding a consultative session in the Parramatta Diocese in 2019 and once again women are invited to make submissions. What is going on? Is this the way the hierarchy think they will keep women as happy contributors to Church life? So women will be content every 20 years or so with being 'consulted' but with no real change in attitudes or structures?

The attitude towards the women of our Church could be seen as a form of abuse, and in this age is just not acceptable. With control of their fertility women are developing strengths and skills which are gaining recognition and appreciation in the wider community, but this has not carried over into Church life, which for many women is destructive and stifling. Women are walking away from the Church for spiritual survival and work to develop their spirituality in other ways. Women have always been exploited by the Church: they have been the teachers, the nurses, the fund raisers, the Church cleaners, the organisers of rosters, the catechists in State schools, the meal-givers. I would also argue they have been the ones to pass on the faith in many families. But these contributions gave them no say in this male-dominated organisation which has now brought the Church into disgrace and ridicule. We need to change this male culture, to bring a healthy balance to our Church, for men and women to complement each other in order to develop a healthy open organisation (if it is not already too late). The Document on the *Church in the Modern World* from the Vatican II Council (Flannery p.965

(60)) states:

At present women are involved in nearly all spheres of life; they ought to be permitted to play their part fully according to their own particular nature. It is up to everyone to see to it that woman's specific and necessary participation in cultural life be acknowledged and fostered.

Surely this also applies to the culture of our church, so that all the gifts of the faithful are used to build the body of Christ? In the Document Decree on the *Apostolate of Lay People* (Flannery p.768 (2) we read: *'In the Church there is diversity of ministry, but unity of mission.'* Section 3 of the same document expands:

From the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate'.(p768) (I find it hard to use the exclusive language found in these documents, but the insights are enriching.)

We have lost two generations of young people, possibly three, since the Second Vatican Council was called. There can be no doubt that this Council was inspired by the Holy Spirit, as there was no heresy to counteract, only a real need to be open to the looming challenges of the coming centuries. In the introduction to *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the aim of the council is stated thus:

The sacred Council has set out to impart an ever-increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful, to adapt more closely to the needs of our age those institutions which are subject to change, to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ, to strengthen whatever can help call all mankind into the Church's fold. (Flannery 1 p.1)

Another quote:

Following then in the steps of the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, this Synod wishes to set forth the true doctrine on Divine Revelation and its transmission. For it wants the whole world to hear the summons to salvation, so that through hearing it may believe, through belief it may hope thorough hope it may come to love. (*Prologue Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation 1965*)

I have made use of the quotes above to stress the awareness of this Council of the importance to build on the revelations of previous Councils in order to prepare and strengthen Church life for future challenges. There is no denying that the

church is at a crisis. Time has been lost and yet any reform movements are viewed with suspicion and rejected by the Bishops. The entrenched practices of the pre-Vatican II church will not serve us well in the 21st century. These were based on the power of the hierarchy to provide Catholics with black and white teachings and rules which encouraged a childlike, ill-informed laity. Power is evil and we are paying the price today.

This is not the time for our Bishops to hide behind their crosiers and I would plead with them to listen, to converse with respect those who urge the reforms based on the Vatican II Council. I know there are reform movements looking to pre-Vatican II days. All views should be heard with respect, with a view to the formation of an informed and mature laity. This is not the time for the clergy to enforce the male-dominated culture. This is not the time for the clergy to play the power game. This is not the time for the clergy to withdraw from reform movements but to use any connections with those who still care enough for the Church to argue for renewal and new life based on the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is the time for a soul-searching humility, an acceptance of the presence of evil in the present culture and a willingness to work for change keeping in mind the words of the prophet Micah 6:8:

*He has showed you, o man, what is good:
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, and to love kindness
And to walk humbly with your God*

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Elizabeth Lonergan has been a Catechist for almost thirty years and sees the value of adult education in the Church which is still not taken seriously. She has a BA and had great hopes in the views displayed in Vatican II, following by great disappointment at the failure of the hierarchy to implement them. She no longer attends Sunday Mass and will not support clergy of all ranks until serious reform is undertaken. But she feels her spiritual life is still rich and thriving! She lives in the Blue Mountains. Her article "Who Owns Church Property?" was published in *ARCVoice* No. 69.

If we want to reform the church, let's make women cardinals

James Keenan SJ

In the reforms being mentioned in light of the contemporary crisis in the Catholic Church, I see lots of punitive proposals but I don't see enough constructive models of empowerment. I believe that until women have power in the church, we will not be reformed.

By power, I don't think making women deacons is much of a step; I think making them cardinals is. During the June 2017 consistory, the new Swedish Cardinal Anders Arborelius suggested the pope consider creating a special advisory body of women akin to the College of Cardinals to offer more opportunity for women's leadership in the church.

Acknowledging in an NCR interview that 'the role of women is very, very important in society, in economics,' Arborelius added: 'In the church sometimes we are a bit behind.' He said the advisory body 'could be made more official': 'We have a College of Cardinals, but we could have a college of women who could give advice to the pope.'

When I heard that, I thought of the conversation a few years ago about making women cardinals. I prefer that earlier proposal. Having a women's advisory council, as the Swedish cardinal suggests, reminds me of the claims of 'separate but equal'—a claim that never becomes true. A women's advisory council would inevitably be secondary if women were excluded from the College of Cardinals.

It was only a hundred years ago that canon law decreed that cardinals had to be ordained. Before that, the College of Cardinals was made up of both ordained and lay men. As I understand it, the then-new 1917 Code of Canon Law was looking for a way of curbing abuses in the making of cardinals. Some men had little knowledge of theology and others were, well, very young.

For instance, when Pope Clement XII made Luis Antonio de Borbón, son of King Felipe V of Spain, a cardinal, the cardinal was only eight years old. Requiring priestly ordination curbed those abuses. In 1983, another code was developed (Canon 351) that required episcopal ordination to be made a cardinal. The pope can easily remove the requirements for priestly and episcopal ordination.

I find it attractive to think of laywomen as cardinals. If the pope wants to make a group of eight or nine cardinals to be his most trusted

advisers, why should they all be ordained? And why should they all be men?

The idea has been around. In 2012, another cardinal, Timothy Dolan, told Franciscan Fr. Benedict Groeschel in an interview on EWTN: 'You know, in fact, get this, and I've heard it from more than one person that one time somebody said to Blessed John Paul II, 'You should make Mother Teresa of Calcutta a cardinal.' And the pope said, "I asked her, she doesn't want to be one."' In fact, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (the future Pope Benedict XVI) himself reported the offer as well.

In a 2013 interview with *The Irish Times* just before Pope Francis' first consistory, Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, then the director of the Holy See's Press Office, weighed in on the question of women cardinals. 'Theologically and theoretically, it is possible,' Lombardi said. 'Being a cardinal is one of those roles in the church for which, theoretically, you do not have to be ordained.' But on the eve of the first consistory, he added, 'to move from there to suggesting the pope will name women cardinals for the next consistory is not remotely realistic.'

My proposal, like the Swedish cardinal's, remains theologically and theoretically possible.

Another cardinal, Germany's Reinhard Marx, a member of the Council of Cardinals, recently said, 'We need a new image of what the church is supposed to be—namely a world church led by men and women from all cultures working together.' The cardinal was commenting on how many women have executive positions in dioceses and noted significant growth across Germany and Austria. He sees, as most of us do, that we need to see women with authority in the church.

You don't have to listen to me or Cardinal Marx. Go to Lucetta Scaraffia, professor at Rome's Sapienza University, contributor to *L'Osservatore Romano* and editor of its monthly supplement *Donne Chiesa Mondo* ('Women Church World'). Hear her call for women to be given real, existing positions of authority that match their competency.

When I think of real women leaders, I think of women theologians. If you want to see church leadership, take a look at them. There's sustained, authoritative leadership. Think of M. Shawn

Copeland, Lisa Sowle Cahill, St. Joseph Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, Mercy Sr. Margaret Farley, Cathleen Kaveny, María Pilar Aquino, Dominican Sr. Mary Catherine Hilkert, Susan Wood, Phyllis Zagano, C. Vanessa White, and Immaculate Heart of Mary Sr. Mary Ann Hinsdale. From around the world, think of Linda Hogan, Agnes Brazal, Philomena Maura, Maria Clara Bingemer, Marianne Heimbach Steins, Virginia Saldanha, Ivone Gebara, Benedictine Sr. Teresa Forcades, Holy Child Jesus Sr. Teresa Okure, and hundreds of others.

There is a lesson to be learned about these women theologians. Before 1975, you could count the number of women theologians worldwide on one hand. In those 40 years since, women have not only entered the field, they have become senior theologians, leading the field today. As we work to see women emerge within ecclesial offices—whether as lay cardinals, privileged advisers,

ordained deacons, diocesan administrators or any other position—it does us well to recognise that, once they get into these other ecclesial positions, they will become leaders there as well. And that is the singular most necessary reform for the church: women empowered and equal to men in authority. If they get the authority, they will lead.

First step, then: Make eight women cardinals. They don't need to be ordained (that could take years)! Let women have a place at the table now, the table where the pope meets with his most trusted advisers. Making women cardinals and giving them that place would launch some evident reform. I think it would also give renewed hope and life to the church.

Jesuit Fr. JAMES KEENAN is a moral theologian, founder of Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church, and Canisius Professor and director of the Jesuit Institute at Boston College. This article was published in *National Catholic Reporter* on 8 September 2017.

Book Review

The Clergy Club by John Crothers

(ATF Theology, 2018)

Review by Rob Brian

John Crothers is a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney. This book arises out of his experience as a parish priest, particularly as the parish priest of the two thriving twinned parishes of Penshurst and Peakhurst in NSW from 2000 to 2016. This required close cooperation with the lay parishioners. While he is very critical of clericalism which he describes as the 'club' mentality, he is at pains to argue that this is not the fault of individual priests and bishops, and he freely admits that he is 'also part of the problem'. It is this refreshing honesty that is a hallmark of the book.

Anxious to do his bit to make ours the best Church it can possibly be, he makes eight practical proposals:

1. That an annual conference be organised in the diocese, where both clergy and laity come together in equal numbers to discuss relevant issues relating to the Church;
2. That all priests and bishops in the diocese undergo a professional appraisal process at least once every three years;
3. That the relevant section in *Redemptionis Sacramentum* be changed to allow priests and bishops celebrating Mass to leave the Sanctuary, and that they be encouraged to offer the sign of peace to a few of the parishioners in the front

pew;

4. That there be an expectation in the diocese that all parishes have a pastoral council that meets regularly, as well as an expectation that the bishop set up a pastoral council at the diocesan level;
5. That there be an expectation in the diocese that all priests, unless too old or too frail, do some basic housekeeping. At the minimum, this should involve washing their own clothes and cleaning their own private living area;
6. That the bishops ask Pope Francis to establish a working committee, including both clergy and laity, to look at the possibility of producing a new English translation of the Mass;
7. That the bishops put a proposal to Pope Francis to issue a new instruction on the ministries of acolyte and reader, allowing women to be formally instituted into the two ministries, along with men.
8. That the parish priest be allowed to authorise a member of the parish to operate on parish accounts for parish business.

The book has a useful eight-page Glossary that should be very useful for those of the baptised who are not familiar with 'clericalese'!

The book is available from John Crothers for \$35, including postage. Or it can be ordered from Amazon for \$39.76. Please send your order to: John.Crothers@sydneycatholic.org or give him a call on (02) 4233 1822 or post your order to:
PO Box 751, Kiama, NSW, 2533

Climbing out of yesterday

Graham English

A Review by

Carmel Maguire

“Entertaining Glimpses of Our Recent Shared History”

Graham English’s *Climbing out of yesterday* is the testimony of an honest and perceptive soul who has navigated the reefs and shoals of life as an Australian Catholic from the end of World War II.

None of the 69 contributions to *Catholica* reprinted in his book lack interest and relevance to contemporary life. After a working lifetime devoted to Catholic education, all his pieces are not only well-informed historically but also enlightened with flashes of wit. Some, like ‘The second-hand stores’, are hilarious. ‘Uncle Henry Woodbridge’ is a story worthy of Henry Lawson. Hard truths are not side-stepped, whether of family or church, such as the observation in ‘Religion and meaning’, that ‘Clean water and the hygienic disposal of human waste have answered more religious questions than any other human endeavour’.

In writing of his life as a Christian Brother, Graham does not prevaricate in revealing that some of his religious colleagues and superiors were, if not bad, at least mad and dangerous to know. On the other hand, he writes with great affection and respect for many of them. As he writes in ‘Edmund Ignatius Rice’, ‘All the ones I remember with affection or gratitude talked about or witnessed to an encouraging, trusting, broad, exciting, poetry-reading God’.

Among the most substantial essays is ‘Climbing out of yesterday’, which shares the book’s title. Here as elsewhere, there is no pretence of pious conformity. ‘The official Church has lost credibility because it does not listen’. Earlier, Graham gives more of his cheerful impiety with ‘I do not believe there ever was a Pope Joan but God will cope when one day there is’. I recommend this book for insights into all our yesterdays and as an antidote to pessimism about our own and the Church’s future.

CARMEL MAGUIRE taught Librarianship at the University of New South Wales and has a doctorate in History from the same institution.

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Opportunities for Catholicism

Kevin Liston

The problems facing Catholicism at this time are well documented, but we should not overlook the opportunities. Michael Kelly S.J. noted recently in a *La Croix International* article that we are in a change of era rather than an era of change. In this, the Catholic Church is part of a broader cultural evolution, one that extends far beyond its own boundaries. If we Catholics would lift our eyes to horizons wider than we have been accustomed to heretofore, who knows what we might find? ‘Ask not what our Church can do for us; ask rather what we can do for our Church’.

The agenda promoted for the Plenary Council 2020 is limited and restrictive. It is asking for suggestions and proposals that might revitalise Church life but within current structures. This is inevitable as it being organised by the hierarchy. The Australian Conference of Catholic Bishops had to request permission from Rome to hold the Plenary and we can expect it will have to get further permission to implement any resolutions unless they fall within the very limited current jurisdiction of the bishops.

This highlights a major problem for the institutional Church. However, there is another way of looking at the future of Catholicism. Catholicism is deeply embedded in the hearts and souls of people, in our lives, attitudes, sense of who we are and in our relationships with God and with others. The Church is constituted in both the community of believers and the structured institution. Both aspects are essential as they are two sides of the same coin, serving complementary purposes. Nevertheless, they can be distinguished in various ways, one of which is in how so many Catholics have found their own positions on numerous life issues. For example, think about mass attendance, the status and role of women, married clergy, birth control, living together outside marriage, gay and lesbian lifestyles, legalising same sex marriage and abortion and the sacrament

of reconciliation. Most Catholics have their reservations about the official position of the church on at least some of these matters. It is often difficult to fully reconcile the teaching of the church with our personal spirituality.

Many, myself included, have come to some conclusions that conflict with official teaching but still regard themselves as faithful practicing Catholics. And so they should.

The essence of being a committed practising Catholic is in how we live, our personal standards of integrity and morality, how we care for and relate to others, being responsible members of society, inspired by the vision and message of Jesus as expressed and lived in the catholic tradition. When we come together to celebrate mass or a sacrament, we are celebrating and ritualising something that is already taking place in our own lives and bringing it to another level, externally and with a community of like-minded people, consciously in the presence of God. Our spirituality, the set of beliefs, ideals, values, meanings, priorities and relationships that we live by, forms the foundation for everything else. Our daily living, our efforts to be the best selves we can be, is at the core of who we are as Catholics.

So, we are the Church, and the Church is alive in us, the believers, or not at all, in people trying to live with integrity, caring for others, committed to making the world a better place for everyone, conscious of living in the love of God. Oversight of this in the face of the tendency to think in institutional terms is reductive and distorting.

As Bernard Lonergan famously put it, ‘The Church (institutional) always arrives on the scene a little breathless and a little late.’ In a sense the institutional Church is always in a process of catching up with the spirituality of its people. That is the nature of institutions. But we cannot suspend our living while waiting for the organisation to catch up, to get its breath back. While the official Church is working out its position, it is crucial that we acknowledge the personal spirituality aspect of Catholicism. It provides additional grounds for us to be Church authentically.

The Church of personal spirituality and conviction is where we find a secure footing. In many ways, this is not an easy time to be a Catholic,

but it has the potential to be an exciting experience. We are in a period of change, a critical moment in the life of the Church. And we can have a role in shaping the future.

With our strong traditions and mature developed theology, we can have confidence in ourselves as the Church, the community of committed Catholics.

The spirituality of the people, as Pope Francis refers to it - what makes us whole, integrated people, what binds us together with feelings and empathy as well as commitment to shared vision and values - is foundational. It offers a basis for

Catholic living while we encourage the hierarchy to update their policies, processes and structures. It is also the source of our capacity to explore alternative lay-inspired and lay-led responses to the issues of our times. We just need to look beyond limiting horizons.

KEVIN LISTON has had a long career working with refugees and migrants. He completed a Master of Theological Studies at ACU to follow up on a life-long interest in Catholicism.

The Marriage Act

Noelene Uren

(with thanks to Rev James Clarke)

In the summer edition of *The Snag*, Rev James Clarke, Chairman of the National Council of Priests, wrote on the issue of marriage equality. Bishops, upholding the traditional view of marriage, used biblical texts and sacramental theology to support their position, arguments of little interest in the secular world. Bishops Vincent Long of Parramatta and William Wright of Maitland/Newcastle argued that changing the definition of marriage is a secular/civil matter, as it was when the marriage act was altered in the 1970's to make divorce easier. This change did not impact upon the sacramental understanding of marriage.

Priests and deacons are licensed by the Commonwealth government to officiate at marriages if they are conducted according to our Church's rites. In Australia, couples do not have to go to the Registry Office to have their marriage legally recognised. The churches, in Fr Clarke's words, are 'one stop shops'. The Commonwealth Marriage Act has now been amended, putting many priests in a quandary. Fr Clarke's suggestion is that, to avoid any clash of conscience, the bishops should take the initiative and inform the Federal authorities that all Catholic priests and deacons no longer be required to be licensed marriage celebrants. They will only conduct sacramental weddings.

My own experience of a civil and sacramental marriage was that this presents no inconvenience at all. As a young Australian living in London in the 1950's I met my English husband there and married him in Buckfast Abbey in his home county of Devon. The village where his parents lived had no Catholic church, the lovely little 12th century church of St Petroc's having been appropriated by the Church of England during the reformation. The nearest church we could use was the Benedictine abbey, built in the 11th century, destroyed, but rebuilt by the monks in the 18th century. The monks served as parish priests in the surrounding villages and it was one of these monks who performed our sacramental marriage in front of the high altar, be-decked with spring flowers by the monks who felt sorry for me because I was so far from home.

According to the law of the land we then had to have a civil ceremony. The civil registrar had set himself up at a table in a side chapel. We walked across to the chapel, briefly repeated our vows, signed the necessary documents witnessed by the priest and registrar, and that was that. My suggestion is, that as this was the case in England and in many parts of Europe in the 1950's, would it really be too difficult to implement in Australia in 2018? Fr Clarke writes that in discussion with fellow priests the evidence suggests that this change would be well received. It would seem that it is a topic certainly worth discussing and being pursued by our bishops.

NOELENE UREN is a member of ARC and a regular contributor to *ARCVoice*.

For real change, we must get at four roots deeper than church structures

Joan Chittister

In the midst of the angst that has accompanied the revelation of unparalleled amounts of sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church, the cry for reform gets louder by the day.

For some, it's a call for the elimination of celibacy as an unnatural and therefore impossible way of life. For others, it's about barring homosexuals from the priesthood, as if homosexuality was in essence a model of immorality rather than simply another state of nature—just like heterosexuality with its own immoral aberrations. For many, it's about a lack of psychosocial development in seminaries; for others, it's about the liberalisation of the church since the Second Vatican Council, no matter that the bulk of assaults happened, apparently, before the end of the council.

Indeed, there are as many explanations for this crisis in morals, spirituality, church and trust as there are people, dioceses, parents, priests, lawyers, whomever. But there is one element on which everyone seems to agree: There must be repentance. There must be accountability. There must be reform.

Good. And that looks like what?

Most of the cries for reform also call for reform of structures. The great consensus seems to cluster around issues of how and to whom victims may register complaints. The questions are endless: Who will create the sex abuse committees? Who will appoint the commissions? Who will be on these boards, in these official offices, as official officers? Lay people as well as clerical? And how much of the work of these committees will be shared with the public? Most of all, who will hold the final authority to judge these cases: the chairperson of the group, the bishop of the diocese, a Curia in Rome, a papal tribunal, the pope—as Pope Benedict XVI declared that he himself would do—or a jury of peers?



Well, whatever the answer to those legal technicalities, I agree that some reform of structure is essential. The damage done by the pontifical secret and its notion that ecclesiastical scandals should be kept hidden rather than exposed is now embarrassingly clear. A change of structures is obviously imperative.

At the same time, I do not agree that a change of structures alone will really change anything much at all. Not in a church whose theology of exclusive papal authority comes from Pope Gelasius in the fifth century. On the contrary: We are going to need a great deal more than structures. As Pope Francis himself said to the Chilean bishops' conference in May: "It would be a serious omission on our part, not to delve into the roots ... the dynamics that made it possible for such attitudes and evils to occur."

The fact is that structures validate process. But process guarantees nothing but adherence to the values, the ideals and—in a church—whatever theology underpins them. It's the theology that counts.

Structures have been used to validate evil forever. As in the present. Nothing that canonical courts dealt with would deal adequately with the evil of child abuse while it was bishops themselves, in concert with Rome, who provided the secrecy that would maintain the problem. In the name of holy secrecy, bishops and their lawyers could intimidate the complainers with confidentiality agreements, label the children themselves liars and

so embed the guilt in the wrong place, and keep the church free from scandal for, of course, “the good of the faithful.”

Indeed, we must “delve into the roots” of it. Of which, I think, there are at least four.

Francis is painfully clear about one such root of it—the scourge of clericalism that creates a caste system in Catholic Christianity.

Clerics make up less than 1 percent of the church. But clericalism makes its clerics superior to the rest of the church in power, the presumption of holiness, absolute parochial authority and as the keepers of accountability. It moves clerics light years away from the Jesus who “did not see being equal to God a thing to be clung to”. It moves the rest of us to talk about being “the people of God”—as if we knew we were—but then fail to call the clerical church to public discussion of great theological “truths.”

What Francis’ statement fails to unmask, however, is the second issue that must be addressed: The fact is that clericalism touched more than the clergy. It was Catholic police, lawyers, staff, even parents who shielded pedophiles by refusing to make complaints, listen to children, or rip away the secrecy that shielded them. It says that the theology of the church itself must be re-taught. It says that the rest of the church itself must grow up to be equal to the Christianisation of the church itself.

A third dimension of the problem is certainly the theology of obedience that derives, of course, from our definition of church and the role of the clergy but affects the personal lives of Catholics in a particularly insidious way. It turns obedience in the church—a commitment to “listening to the Spirit”—into blind obedience, a kind of military code attached to a series of clerical commanding officers.

As a result, 100 percent of the decisions, the discernment and the moral perspectives of the laity are simply ignored. National conferences of bishops, dioceses and parish priests—the clerical 1% of the church—all stumble along laying down laws developed by few but heralded by the clergy alone.

Pope Paul VI toyed with the notion of clergy/lay consultation on the birth control question—certainly a question for the sacrament of marriage if ever I saw one. But then, at the end, under pressure from Cardinal Karol Wojtyła, who would later himself become Pope John Paul II, Paul VI rejected the advice of some of the strongest Catholic lay couples on the globe and declared birth control legislation binding. And we know where that got them.

And finally, under it all, the fourth necessary element of reform lies in the theology of priesthood that insists that the ontology of the human being is changed by priestly ordination. Translation: a priest is not like other human beings. Ordination gives them a special mark, an eternal one. Then, out of that reasoning, they connect their special character, their special place in the church, their special authority, their special holiness.

To be honest with you, I have never met anybody who wasn’t special in a special way. To reserve that for priesthood obviously distorts the character of the rest of the church. As it has.

From where I stand, it seems to me that what we wind up with is a sin against adult conscience and the infantilisation of the laity. What we finally wind up with are questions of church, clericalism, obedience and human ontology unanswered and unaddressed.

What we wind up with is a church still living in the last century while pretending to have answers to the questions of this one. But that’s just what they did in the 16th century when Martin Luther wanted to talk about celibacy, the sale of relics, and publishing the Bible in the vernacular so that everybody, not just the clergy, could read it.

The truth is that real reform depends on the teachings of the church. Not simply on a change of structures.

As the song says, “When will they ever learn?”

Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister of Erie, Pennsylvania.

Towards credibility and a clean conclave

Gail Grossman Freyne

Instead of engaging with the pain of profound change, the institutional Catholic church is still mired in a program of damage control. We are witnessing a double deflection. Globally, the topic of choice is Archbishop Vigano, Cardinal McCarrick and Pope Francis, the biggest bombshell to explode into the Catholic news media since the death of John Paul I.

Locally, we retreat to a commitment around the seal of confession, the one definitive response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission made by the church. Both events evidence a willingness to talk about political cliques and red-herrings rather than what really matters: the re-establishment of the Catholic Church as an inclusive and trustworthy leader in the modern world.

Admittedly a hard topic to address, because it will require nothing less than a return to the Christian scriptures to undo centuries of bad theology which produced the sinful social structures defined by clericalism. As one small step towards this great ambition the fascinating question is, how can we find a cardinal to elect as pope who has not been involved in the cover-up of sexual abuse?

The structure of the Church is crumbling from the top down. Cardinal Bernard Law (RIP) of Boston and Cardinal Sean Brady of Armagh failed to protect children. Cardinal Keith O'Brien (RIP) was forced to resign in Scotland. Cardinal Phillippe Barbarin is on trial in France for cover-up and Cardinal Pell (who, while Episcopal Vicar for Education, failed to report a Christian Brother, Edward Dowlan, who would later be convicted of abusing at least 20 boys at six schools) is facing charges of abuse.

There are repeated calls for the resignation of Cardinal Wuerl in Washington, and questions about Cardinal Oscar Maradiaga of Honduras covering up the criminal behaviour of his assistant, Bishop Fasquille. Two Chilean Cardinals, Francisco Errazuriz and Ricardo Ezzati, are the subjects of

credible, criminal accusations of cover-up. Africa and Asia are yet to have their accounting.

The numbers show this is not a witch hunt, merely the tip of a conclave. What we need to recognise is that any man who becomes a seminarian, who becomes a deacon, who becomes a priest, who becomes a bishop, who becomes a cardinal, will almost certainly have bumped into, bounced off or blindfolded himself to the endemic, pandemic problem within the Church of the sexual abuse of children and other vulnerable persons. Archbishop Wilson of Adelaide is not alone.

Are the Chilean bishops 'a weird mob'? Americans are asking their bishops to resign *en masse* and Australians might follow suit. If you were first a diocesan bishop, the files of offending clerics will surely, at some point, have been laid on your desk. How then do we get a clean conclave?



The apologies we have received since the Royal Commission are incomplete. The Australian bishops have told us, in the naming of their own commission, that they want Truth, Justice and Healing. If Archbishop Fisher really wants to 'speak the truth in love' then it is not enough to merely say that there were 'many failings on the part of some members and leaders of the Church'. It is not enough for Archbishop Coleridge to say 'many bishops failed to listen, failed to believe and failed to act'.

To use the passive voice, individually or collectively, to say you are sorry that 'it' happened is not enough. We are all sorry that 'it' happened. Any

psychotherapist will tell you that a true apology entails each cleric who abused or covered up to step forward to tell their victims what they did, how they hurt them and why.

There can be no justice without truth and both are essential for healing. But it seems that our bishops are hoping to rush towards healing, bypassing the elements of truth and justice. Bodies like Catholic Professional Standards Ltd and the Implementation Advisory Group cannot demand transparency because they are not independent.

The Plenary Council aims to change the structures and culture of the church. This presupposes two things: any invitation to participation must come with franchise, and the full inclusion of women. A lay woman should be appointed as co-chair by Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) who have been considering women's participation in the church for nearly half a century. Lacking these two elements, 'humble listening' will be no more than a sleight of hand to cover clericalism in action.

What the Church really needs *is* a return to the theology of the Christian scriptures that call each of us to live as one of a priestly people, continuing that work of Jesus of Nazareth to mediate God's love in the world. This is the purpose of baptism. In this understanding every one of us is called to act *in persona Christi*.

Whatever Conclave gathers next it must not be tainted by what Pope Francis has named the sin of clericalism. At its root, clericalism is not simply marked by grades of red or purple or being titled Lord or Eminence. Fundamentally, clericalism is based on the false theology that the priest is

ontologically changed by ordination, acquiring a 'special nature' enabling only him to act *in persona Christi* and 'confect' the Eucharist. This is the error which has produced a relationship of superiority between the priest and the rest of the community.

It is another way of saying that the ministerial priesthood is, of its essence, ordained to govern the laity in the life of the church. Certainly, we need ministers and leaders, but the essence of the eucharistic president is not changed, merely his relationship to other members of the church—as would be the case with the ordination of a woman. The Christian Eucharist can only take place in communion.

The Church is made poorer by the assertion—for it is not more than an assertion—that either sex has a special nature to the exclusion of the other sex. Being equal, one with the other, suffices to enable each one to claim their baptismal responsibility to revision the church.

We need to be taught again this original theology of our church to lead us away from a later, self-serving and erroneous tradition of a dominating priesthood and towards the vital structural changes that will eliminate clericalist bias. It will take this kind of theological transformation before we will ever find a clean conclave and renewed credibility in the world.

GAIL GROSSMAN FREYNE is a family therapist, mediator and author. Her most recent book is *The Curious Case of Inequality: A Journey for Justice with Dorothy L. Sayers*.

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Book review by Gideon Goosen

To be published in March Issue 72 *ARCVoice*

John E. Ryan, *a Priesthood Imprisoned: A Crisis for the Church, Bayswater*: Coventry Press, 2017

This book is worth reading. It is full of pearls of wisdom. Sometimes one reads a book that seems to go on forever from one topic to another. Not this one which is quite the opposite: it is focused on spiritual maturity for pastors and laity. It is very brief, succinct and extremely relevant to the current crisis in the Catholic Church.

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