



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

June 2020

Issue No. 77

Do our bishops need a strong message from the Pope?

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified an urgent need for revision of governance in the Catholic Church. The culture of clericalism, with its inherent power, was identified as a significant factor in this abuse and deficiencies in governance were criticised for allowing the cover-up of such abuse. The subsequent report by an expert committee into Church governance has now been received by the Australian bishops. But their decision to defer its release before consideration by them at their November Plenary has been greeted with some dismay. These are matters requiring urgent action. The 'in due course' approach of the Bishops Conference would seem to indicate a lukewarm desire for progress.

In general, Pope Francis has chosen to lead by example, as illustrated by his humility and his pastoral care in his dealings with the poor and marginalised. However, sometimes more than just inspiration is needed. He gave strong leadership with the publication of *Amoris Laetitia*, exhorting bishops to act locally in adopting a less rigorous approach to the question of 'irregular' marriages and the reception of the Eucharist, the Sacrament being described by him as 'not a prize for the perfect but powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak'.

The findings of the Royal Commission require strong leadership from the Church hierarchy. The Pope has not been reticent in condemning clericalism, describing it as a sin for both clerics and the laity—the former for adopting a position of superiority and the latter for accepting it! He has scorned clerical pomposity, denouncing 'peacock-priests' as 'devotees of the god Narcissus'. In endorsing reform of Church governance, he has expressed a desire for a 'synodal' Church and an inverted pyramid structure rather than a top-down approach. He sees the Pope 'accompanying' the Church, 'letting her grow' and listening to the voices of the baptised. While the presence of the Holy Spirit is more evident now through the teachings of Pope Francis, there are many instances where necessary reform demands more than just listening and guiding.

The progress of reform through the Plenary Council is already delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Immediate

release of the report on governance and its 86 recommendations would allow not just wider debate and input to the bishops for their consideration at their November Plenary but timely implementation of pressing reforms identified in the report. There is already a degree of concern about the desire of the Australian Bishops Conference for reform, not helped by the lack of transparency shown last year in the decision not to publish submissions made to the Plenary Council. The denial of an earlier release of the expert report does little to allay this pessimism. Perhaps it is now time for the Pope to provide more pro-active and direct 'encouragement' to our hierarchy in this structural reform process.

Rob Butler

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial ... 1

Letters to the Editor ... 2

John Buggy; *How ARCVoice comes to you* ... 2

Bill Grimm: *The pandemic may speed up change in the Church* ... 3-4

Chris Geraghty: *The Pell Decision* ... 4-5

WITNESS J in the Pell case: *I am content. Do not be discouraged* ... 5-6

Kerry Gonzales: *An Easter Reflection* ... 6-7

Joshua J. McElwee: *An Australian bishop speaks about a national church 'fraught with division'* ... 8-9

Alan Holroyd: *The Plagues* (cartoon) ... 9

Alan Clague: *Original Sin, Infant Baptism, Myth and Sex* ... 10-11

NEW BOOK Chris Geraghty: *Virgins & Jezebels: The Origins of Christian Misogyny* ... 11

Phyllis Zagano: *The end of Clericalism* ... 12-13

Noelene Uren: *A Bible for Women?* ... 13

Margaret Knowlden: *The Lord's Prayer, a critique* ... 14

Alan Holroyd: *ARC's Early Days Remembered* ... 15

Illustrator: Alan Holroyd

Subscription Form, Secretariat, Have your Say,

Letters to the Editor

John Buggy's Editorial (No.76) is good and his one about the Bishop's Conference (p2-3) is very informative for right now. I am a member of our parish 'Man Cave' which is a men's discussion group held each month, and when the subject of the Plenary Council arose, no one had an explanation. Next meeting, post-COVID 19, I'll hand out copies of John's article.

Alan Holroyd

I always look forward to reading the inspiring stories in *ARC*Voice**, and the March edition was no exception. The thought-provoking articles by John Buggy, Paul Collins and Robert Mickens were especially relevant. And add to that list the insightful commentary of Nick Brodie and John Warhurst. It all gives me hope and heart that a call-to-action is urgently required. But by who and when? To everyone there, keep up the great work.

Drew Porter

Just a wee email to thank you for your timely words in the latest *ARC*Voice** (76).

I am a lapsed catholic—for want of a better term—and I have found the arguments of Christopher Hitchens and Stephen Fry, just to name a couple, most compelling and very much up for mature and reasonable debate. I have found some of these 'humanists' (Fry and Hitchens *et al.*) to be outwardly generous, open to doubt, keen for cogent argument and incredibly funny as well.

There seems a paucity of so-called Christians that even get close to their level of enquiry, and their evidence base is often empirical and hard won!

I'm not championing the secular 'gurus' necessarily. However, I think and feel that their unabashed claims make for interesting contemplation.

I am bitterly disappointed in the church I was brought up in, and not unlike the current Corona virus, I am witness to a plethora of ignorance, poorly researched thesis statements and defensiveness.

I thank you once again for your insightful offerings—quite a salve in these days of dread and despair.

Damien Dignam

How *ARC*Voice** Comes to You

We are reminded by Alan Holroyd, our long-standing cartoonist, that *ARC*Voice** has been sent out to members since October 2001 (see p.15). While Margaret Knowlden selects material and prepares the layout, the overall content is reviewed by the Secretariat and there have been a number of willing proofreaders who have assisted over the years.

What is not so evident is the very important, and somewhat laborious, task of collating, packaging and posting the hundreds of copies every three months. ARC owes a huge debt of gratitude to **Barbara and Martin Brannan** who have taken on this task since 2004, along with help from their family members gathered around the family table. Both of them are now unable to drive and, coupled with the need to streamline the printing part of the process, we have needed to move to a new manner of preparation and distribution. We thank Barbara, Martin and their family very sincerely and wish them good health into the future.

Through our Printer, Fine Impressions, we have engaged Unisson to undertake the distribution. This business service employs people with mild disability who are carefully supervised to handle the packaging. The printer and the management of Unisson undertake the coordination, we just supply the copy file and address lists, and in doing so we support an organisation providing supported employment to people with disabilities.

Why do we post out copies rather than just have each edition on line like other reform groups do? It is because we want other people to pick it up out of curiosity and take an interest in Church reform, perhaps even becoming members **as they sometimes do. That is why we sometimes send you a second copy to distribute to other interested people.**

In addition, a copy goes out to every Australian bishop each time. It is not as easy to flick as an e-mail.

John Buggy

The pandemic may speed up change in the Church

Bill Grimm

Unplanned for, unexpected and, perhaps, even undesired, the approaching end of the cultic priesthood has been accelerated by our present situation

The pandemic is changing just about everything. That is clearest in the people who sicken, those who die, those whose lives are upended, those whose livelihood has disappeared. These are some of the direct effects of the disease.

There are many other effects not directly related to the illness that are manifesting themselves in the context of the pandemic. A major one is the proliferation of anti-scientific ‘theories’ of the ‘truth’ behind the scourge. So some people—convinced that spread of the virus is aided, if not caused by telecommunications equipment—have burned internet transmission towers in the United Kingdom. An archbishop in Sri Lanka, without presenting any evidence, has advanced the ‘theory’ that the virus was created by researchers. Conspiracy theorists are working overtime to find any unreason at all that, in their minds, refutes what research and expertise have repeatedly demonstrated.

Other trends that had already been moving through societies at various speeds have accelerated, while those societies are preoccupied. Racist and anti-democratic movements in societies and governments have advanced their objectives in Europe, the United States and elsewhere.

The Catholic Church, too, is undergoing a great change under pressure from the present situation. Some of that change was already underway, but may now accelerate. It is not clear where that will lead. For decades, the decline in the number of priests has been obvious to us all. The answer until now has been for leaders in the Vatican—where there is a surplus of priests, but a shortage of laity—to call for more prayer and sacrifice. Clearly, God’s answer to those prayers and sacrifices has been, ‘No’.

In the meantime, in much of the world, Catholics do not have access to the Eucharist. Is that God’s fault, or is it ours for not heeding God’s answer? Now, because the pandemic has required the cancellation of liturgical gatherings in much of the

world, we are experiencing what many Catholics, such as those in Amazonia, have experienced for years and which is the obvious future for the whole world. We are no longer able to gather in presbyter-led liturgies as we have known them for centuries.

Ordaining married men, allowing ordained men to marry, ordaining ‘second-career’ persons, importing clerics from other countries, ordaining women—none of these steps, whether possible or not, will stop the inevitable future of a Church without priests as we have known them.

We are beginning to find ways to celebrate our faith without being together in a building, forced to that creativity by the pandemic. The least creative response has been to either live-stream or videotape Masses, turning them into spectator events like football matches or the unrestored pre-Vatican II liturgy. Even if it might satisfy some, months (as seems likely) of tuning into the ‘Father So-and-so Show’ will eventually produce a drop in the ratings. Liturgy is not a spectator sport. The word itself means ‘activity of the people’. People will find other programs and tune out.

Unplanned for, unexpected and, perhaps, even undesired, the approaching end of the cultic priesthood has been accelerated by our present situation. Catholics are beginning to find new ways to share faith with each other. We must believe this is a search inspired by the Holy Spirit, who will not leave us bereft of the opportunity to gather in the name and real presence of the Lord. We don’t know what forms that will take. The longer the present situation lasts, the more likely it is that the Spirit will provoke various responses.

Our new digital age of communications offers ways for communities to gather across vast distances. Someone in East Africa can worship with others in Scandinavia, South America and Oceania. Obviously, sharing the Eucharist will mean something different from what has been the norm. Breaking bread and sharing the cup may take place simultaneously, though not in the same location. In that case, the declaration that the bread and wine are the Body and Blood of the Lord will take place in the ‘gathered’ community, not relying upon a cleric who may not be ‘there’.

The vocation we have known as priesthood will, whether we like it or not, fade. That is one thing we must learn, however reluctantly, from God’s refusal to give us the sort of cultic figures we either beg for or demand. COVID-19 may be accelerating a

process that has already begun in various ways in various places. That process is unlikely to be completed before this pandemic becomes history and things return more or less to *status quo ante*. But it has been accelerated. Attitudes, expectations and experiences will have changed. So, what would have taken two or three generations may do so in one or two. I am not advocating this, nor bemoaning it. I

know that my opinions and wishes, one way or the other, have no effect upon the inevitable. So, my wishes and your wishes, one way or the other, are irrelevant. The future will happen whether we like it or not. That is one more thing the new coronavirus is reminding us.

BILL GRIMM is a Catholic priest and Maryknoll missionary who lives in Japan.

The Pell Decision

Chris Geraghty

A unanimous team of Justices have at last decided that the members of the jury who had unanimously found the Cardinal guilty of all charges were not thinking straight, or reasonably.

The jury team had been thoroughly and properly instructed by the chief judge of the County Court in Victoria that having heard and carefully considered all the evidence, if they were to entertain a reasonable doubt as to the prelate's guilt, they were duty-bound to enter verdicts of NOT GUILTY.

They had been summoned off the Melbourne streets, sat for weeks in secret listening to the evidence, presumably paid attention as the judge delivered his solemn instructions to them, spent a few days going through the evidence they had heard in court and discussed it among themselves in the jury room, back and forth, over and over again, only to conclude in the end that not one of them had a reasonable doubt that Pell was guilty as charged.

All twelve of those chosen out of the barrel to become George's judges of the facts agreed that the evidence demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the accused was GUILTY as charged.

Well, these were the lay contingent of judges, the ordinary street-wise men and women of Melbourne, about whom an elite team of lawyers were later to reveal that they had been thinking unreasonably when they found George guilty, and that they had not done their job properly—even though the law would tell them that what constituted 'reasonable doubt' was so obvious to everyone, to the man and woman on the tram and in the factory, that the meaning of the term did not need, and should not be given, any further explanation or amplification. It was not a term of art. No mystery to it. Plain and

obvious. No judge worth his salt should ever try to explain the concept to a jury, even if he was asked by a member of the jury.

Then a team of seven elite lawyers gathered to scrutinise the evidence which the 12-member jury had heard and seen, and after two long days of discussion in public (and who knows how many hours of private sifting), and without knowing anything of the discussions and disagreements which had occurred in the jury room or anything about the individual members of the jury (only that all 12 had agreed on the findings of GUILTY), all seven agreed as one that the jury finding had been wrong, that all the jury members, if they had been doing their job properly, should have had a reasonable doubt about the guilt of the accused, and that when they had all agreed on their verdicts, they had all been thinking 'unreasonably'.

Though in the end, they did not have a reasonable doubt, they should have had one. According to the Justices of the High Court, the evidence they had heard and discussed should have led these 12 people off the street to entertain a reasonable doubt. They had condemned a man whom the law presumed to be innocent until proven beyond reasonable doubt—and at least to them, the doyens of the Law, the proof had not reached the proper high standard. The system of trial by jury had failed. Sometimes the wisdom of the professional elite trumps the nous and good judgment of the *hoi polloi*.

Now, where does this whole painful and expensive process leave Pell—and the complainant whose evidence the jury and the Victorian Court of Appeal had found to be credible and reliable, perhaps even compelling. Where does it leave Pell's friends and supporters, and the complainant's family, and the public at large?

Some want it said that justice has been done, or that the Cardinal has been proven innocent, that Truth has prevailed in the end.

Certainly, a form of justice has been done. The

charges have progressed through the system of justice in Australia, and Pell has come out the other end with a finding that the evidence did not support, beyond reasonable doubt, the verdicts of guilt and therefore, on the law as it stands in this country at least, Pell can enjoy the presumption of innocence until his guilt is proven.

But it is still only a presumption. It is not a declaration that the prelate did not do to the altar-boys what was alleged by the complainant. Witness J's reliable, credible, eye-witness evidence still stands – the allegations are still out there, denied by Cardinal George (but not under oath at the hearing), and counterbalanced in the scales of our justice by the 'opportunity' evidence.

We're back where we started so many years ago. Nothing has been proven beyond reasonable doubt. The Cardinal has not been proven to be innocent—or guilty. We still don't know where the Truth lies. It has not been proven that he did not do what is alleged by the complainant. He goes free because the Crown could not prove to the satisfaction of the members of the High Court (only to the members of the jury and the majority of the three justices of the Victorian Court of Appeal) that the members of the jury were thinking straight when they decided on the evidence that they entertained no reasonable doubt and that George was guilty.

There has been no finding of Truth—in fact, no finding at all. No finding of innocence—or any satisfactory, reasonable finding of guilt. No finding that the Cardinal did not commit the crimes alleged. All we can now say is that there is a reasonable

doubt as to his guilt. Maybe he's not guilty. He has said he's not.

Circumstances show that there is a real probability that he's not guilty. But nothing is certain. The doubt as to his guilt, and therefore as to his innocence, remains. The complainant has said that the Cardinal assaulted him and his mate, but (though his evidence was credible and reliable), he may be wrong. After all this time, all we're left with is a serious allegation, reasonable doubt and the presumption of innocence.

If I were George, I would not be happy. And now, in addition, he faces the redacted findings of the Royal Commission and a series of civil claims against him by alleged victims claiming piles of damages.

The civil proceedings may prove even more painful and damaging since in the civil jurisdiction there is no presumption of innocence, no right to silence and the onus of proof for the allegations is less burdensome—not beyond reasonable doubt, but on the balance of probabilities.

The civil contest is more even. Party against party. The Cardinal will presumably be a party to the proceedings and will need to give his version of the facts and submit himself to cross-examination. That might prove to be compelling theatre. If I am any judge, the road ahead for this senior cleric may be full of hazards and pitfalls.

CHRIS GERAGHTY is a former priest and District Court judge now living in retirement – and author of a recent publication, *Virgins and Jezebels – the Origins of Christian Mysogyny*. This article was published in *Pearls & Irritations* on 9.4..20

I am content. Do not be discouraged

WITNESS J in the Pell case

I respect the decision of the High Court. I accept the outcome. I understand their view that there was not enough evidence to satisfy the court beyond all reasonable doubt that the offending occurred. I understand that the High Court is saying that the prosecution did not make out the case to the required standards of proof.

There are a lot of checks and balances in the criminal justice system and the appeal process is

one of them. I respect that. It is difficult in child sexual abuse matters to satisfy a criminal court that the offending has occurred beyond the shadow of a doubt. It is a very high standard to meet—a heavy burden.

I understand why criminal cases must be proven beyond all reasonable doubt. No-one wants to live in a society where people can be imprisoned without due and proper process. This is a basic civil liberty. But the price we pay for weighting the system in favour of the accused is that many sexual offences against children go unpunished. That's why it remains important that everyone who can report to the police does so. I would hate to think that one outcome of this case is that people are discouraged from reporting to the police. I would like to reassure child sexual abuse survivors that most people

recognise the truth when they hear it. They know the truth when they look it in the face. I am content with that.

I would like to thank the police and the Office of Public Prosecutions for their work. I have felt well supported through this journey. My journey has been long and I am relieved it is over. I have my ups and downs. The darkness is never far away. Despite the stress of the legal process and public controversy I have tried hard to keep myself together. I am OK. I hope that everyone who has followed this case is OK.

I thank the media for respecting my privacy and for continuing to protect my identity. This has allowed me to stay on track with my recovery and wellbeing.

This case does not define me. I am a man who came forward for my friend who, sadly, is no longer with us. I am a man doing my best to be a loving dad, partner, son, brother and friend. I am doing my best to find and hold joy in my life and to provide a safe and loving home for my family.

* * *

I make no comment about today's High Court decision.
But I have a message for every single victim and survivor of child sex abuse:

I see you.
I hear you.
I believe you.

Daniel Andrews MP
Premier of Victoria

An Easter Reflection

Kerry Gonzales

With the acquittal of George Pell and the ABC's series 'Revelation', the Catholic church has been almost a relief from the endless dire COVID19 news cycle. So I thought I would continue this feed.

First up I will put my bias front and centre. I'm 64 and grew up in a strongly Catholic family, went to Catholic schools, married one and brought my children up in the Catholic faith. However, long before the sexual abuse scandals surfaced, I had lost faith in the structures and leaders that controlled the church and I decided that walking away was a more peaceful and spiritual way to lead my life than to continue trying to effect change from within. The sky did not fall in and I have not regretted that decision, although I could sometimes do with a bit of communal singing, where my lack of skill could go unnoticed!

The continuing problem I have with the Catholic church is that it does not seem to have learned from the last couple of years. Oh, it says lots of things but actions seem to be few and far between. So the question I long to have answered is:

How is the Catholic church going to convince the world that it is different from what it was before the scandal broke, and continues to plague it?

I don't intend to dwell on George Pell here. I accepted the guilty verdict and I also accept the High Court's decision. Whether I agree or not is neither here nor there. I support the legal structures we have in place and would prefer that the odd guilty people got off to protect the innocent in the system. The one thing I will address is George Pell's statement after his release that said:

The only basis for long-term healing is truth and the only basis for justice is truth, because justice means truth for all.

I am still grappling with the statement as, from where I sit, the Catholic church has never really subscribed to that message and has consistently and deliberately covered up many truths that could have led to real healing amongst the many victims of paedophile priests. Even today the church holds the sanctity of confession over the sanctity of children. While this is in place, all funding should be withdrawn from the church and measures ensuring greater public accountability should be enacted before it ever resumes.

Perhaps as a society we need to take a long, hard look at all churches and especially how they operate in relation to corporate law. In my mind,

any diocese lead by a bishop is a (probably very large) corporation and as such should be held accountable. No CEO can hide behind such weasel words as ‘I didn’t know’ or ‘I don’t recall’. Any leader of any organisation has a responsibility to know what is happening in their organisation, in their name. Even more so if you proclaim yourself as a moral leader. The Catholic church believers do not even have the luxury of voting out their CEO! So perhaps now is the time to make churches legitimate corporations that must abide by corporate law, ensuring that there really is justice and truth for all.

In a church that is taking the sexual abuse scandal seriously, how is it that Vincent Ryan, a man convicted several times for shocking crimes, is still a priest. Apparently our local bishops have asked Rome to remove him and it may be that they do not have the local power to do so. Yet a very public statement from the local leaders telling us they will no longer acknowledge Ryan as a priest might go a long way to restoring a bit of credibility in the local church.

Pope Francis initially appeared to be a new broom for the Vatican, but although he says a lot it seems that action is not quite as speedy. To be fair he does not work alone and it seems that vested interests in Rome mean that change is still very far away. Yet it appears that the Pope welcomed the leaders of the Brothers of St John of God to Rome. How is it possible to support anyone from that group when the atrocities they committed are well known?

It seems that if you need moral leadership in this day and age the Catholic church is hardly the best model. While the Catholic church throughout the world continues to agonise over issues that the majority of people have moved on from, then nothing can or will change. The Australian bishops are meeting later this year in a Plenary Council to figure out how to restore confidence and really engage the people of God. Yet I suspect that many issues will be just too hard. Things such as:

- ◆ Support for divorced and remarried Catholics and a more compassionate approach to annulments in the light of increasing domestic violence;
- ◆ The role of women in positions of authority;
- ◆ Compulsory celibacy;
- ◆ Support for the LGBTIQ+ community;
- ◆ Returning to 3rd rite confession.

If the Catholic church wants to claw back some of its prestige, not power, but a real and meaningful dialogue with the modern world, then it needs to seriously and bravely address issues that concern the faithful, and these extend far beyond the bedroom!

My children and grandchildren are not part of any church; yet they have a great sense of social justice and care for the world around them. In fact, my oldest daughter assures me that she learned her social justice from Jesus, but I feel her atheism also stems from Jesus as he would certainly not recognise the current church that proclaims his teaching.

Is it too little too late for the Catholic church? I don’t know and, to be honest I don’t really care any more. What I do care about, however, are the many victims of the church’s practices and dogma that have suffered over the centuries and continue to do so today. I also do care about those faithful who continue to suffer due to the actions of their leaders. Unfortunately they get vilified along with the guilty. The only way I can see for the Catholic church to claw its way out of this mess of its own making is to really take the words of George Pell to heart, because ‘justice means truth for all’.

I am also tired of being told that change within the church takes time. I am in my declining years and, apart from the heady days post-Vatican II, there is little scope for celebrating a church embracing the modern world. In fact, the opposite seems more the norm. Well time is not on the church’s side. Real people need to see real change. A step in the right direction, coupled with true remorse and compassion, would go a long way to paving the way for managed change. However, the longer the church goes without change the less relevant it will become and the way forward much more difficult.

I am reminded of a powerful, but fictional scene in *I, Claudius* by Robert Graves where, on his death bed, Claudius proclaims:

Let all the poison that lurks in the mud, hatch out.

When what the church has so carefully hidden comes to light in its entirety, perhaps then true healing can begin for victims and for the church itself.

KERRY GONZALES is an unchurched wife, mother, grandmother, ARC supporter, sometime writer, teacher, student who still takes an active interest in the world at large.

An Australian bishop speaks about a national church ‘fraught with division’

Q & A with Bishop Vincent Long of the Parramatta Diocese

Joshua J. McElwee

Like many Catholics in Australia, Bishop Vincent Long speaks about the upcoming plenary council as something of a final chance for the national church to show it has both reformed on clergy sexual abuse and can still be culturally relevant in the 21st century.

In an e-mailed NCR interview focused on how the quashing of Cardinal George Pell’s convictions might affect the gathering, which has been in preparation for two years, Long called the assembly ‘the last throw of the dice’.

‘We cannot go on the way we have,’ said the bishop, who leads the diocese of Parramatta, a suburb about 15 miles west of Sydney on Australia’s eastern coast. ‘We must humbly and boldly address the biggest challenge of our time and build a healthier church for future generations.’

Following is NCR’s full interview with Long, a conventual Franciscan who fled Vietnam with his family in 1979 and is Australia’s first Asian-born bishop.

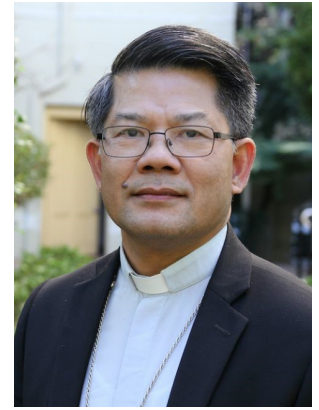
NCR: How have you been experiencing the atmosphere around the quashing of Cardinal Pell’s convictions? How do you see it affecting Australian Catholics’ views of the church?

Like many Catholics in Australia, I was relieved that the legal process has run its course and Cardinal George Pell has had his conviction overturned by the High Court of Australia. It has been a long and painful saga for him.

For over a year, he was imprisoned and had his appeal rejected by a Court of Appeal in Victoria where he had been convicted of crimes he had steadfastly denied. Now, he is free at last and is entitled to live his life in peace and dignity.

I acknowledge, however, that it has been an intense and painful time for many others, especially

those involved in this case. They feel hurt, distressed and even betrayed by the verdict of the court as well as the judgements of others. Having known many survivors, their families and supporters, I can only imagine how intensely they feel their pain as wounds are reopened and memories revisited.



Thus, the atmosphere around the quashing of Cardinal Pell’s conviction is fraught with division both in the Catholic community and the society at large. While some rejoice at his acquittal, others are less enthused. It’s certainly not a time to do victory laps for anybody. Instead, the Catholic Church in Australia faces the monumental task of rebuilding from the ground up after the devastation of the clerical sexual abuse crisis.

The Royal Commission, coupled with the dramatic incarceration of Cardinal George Pell, created something like ‘ground zero’ for us. Even now his acquittal has not acquitted the Catholic Church in this country from its moral responsibility of confronting its shameful history. It has made sure that we cannot go on the way we have. We must humbly and boldly address the biggest challenge of our time and build a healthier church for future generations.

How do you imagine this kind of atmosphere might affect people’s opinions about the plenary council process?

Despite a degree of cynicism, Australian Catholics have responded favourably to the Plenary Council process. With near 18,000 individual and group submissions in a country of approximately five million nominal Catholics, it is a remarkable sign of hope and trust they have invested in this synodal exercise.

We cannot underestimate the desire for positive and fundamental reforms in the church in Australia post-Royal Commission period. In many ways, perhaps, it is the last throw of the dice and we cannot afford to betray the hopes and dreams for a better church that they aspire to.

Like it or not, the release and public rehabilitation of Cardinal Pell will affect the Plenary Council process. Many will be emboldened to promote his

vision for the church in Australia, while others believe that his vision falls short of much-needed deep and fundamental reforms for the way ahead.

Are there any particular steps you think church leaders should take now (post the quashing of the convictions) in order to foster a more productive atmosphere for the plenary council?

We are almost on the home stretch now as far as the Plenary Council process is concerned. There are those who advocate for radical reforms but equally there is a vocal movement which seeks to resist change and maintain the status quo.

I believe we cannot afford to let the momentum for cultural and structural change in the church to fizzle out. It is for the sake of a healthier church that all the baptised participate in its functioning and bring their gifts to bear on its transformation.

For my part, I am seeking to keep the fire burning by way of encouraging and facilitating the voices of the *sensus fidelium* via various channels such as listening circles, pastoral councils and other forums.

Knowing that everything is in suspense now (with the first assembly of the council postponed), what are your biggest hopes for what the council might achieve when the assembly is eventually able to meet?

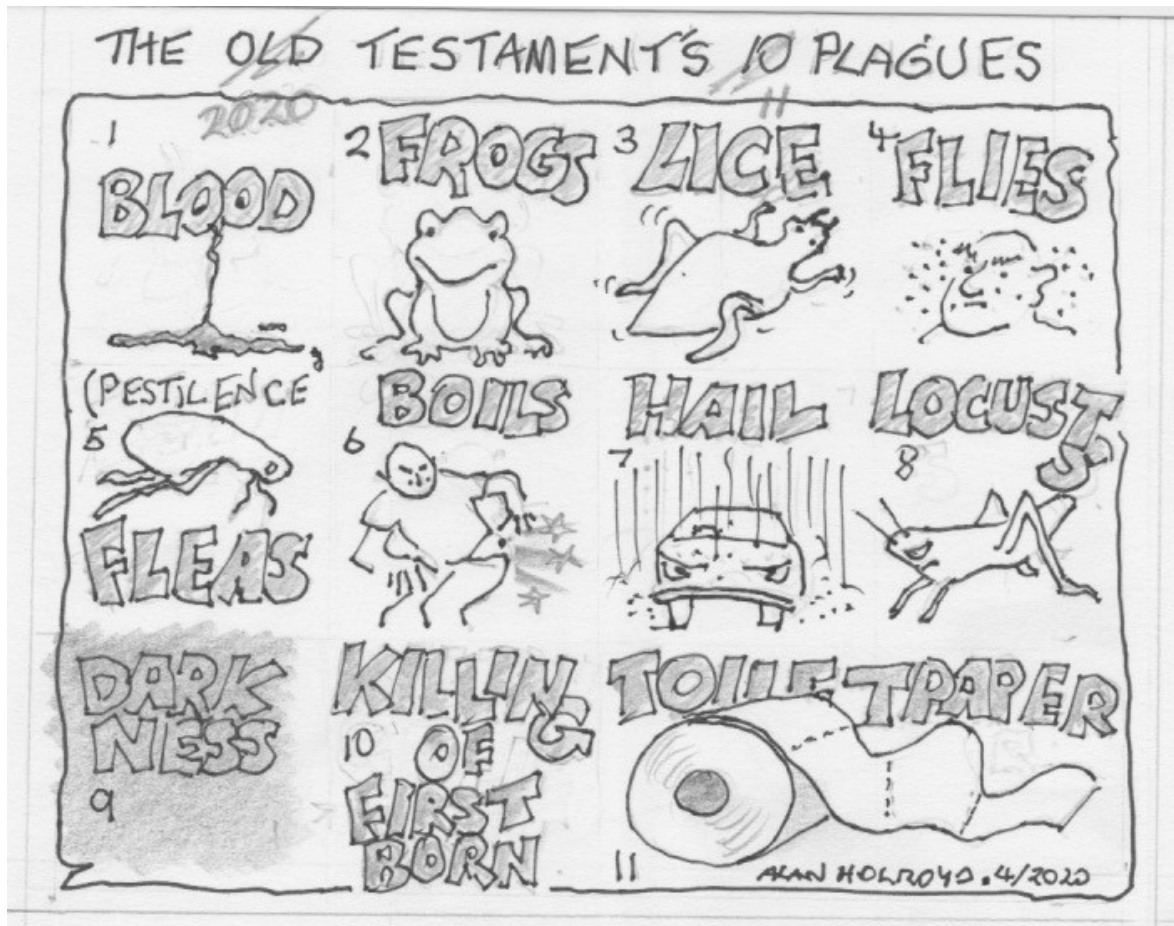
My biggest hopes for the Plenary Council are that it will be a genuine exercise in synodality, even if it is circumscribed by the strictures of Canon Law and existing clerical culture and mindset.

Even Pope Francis has often warned against an elitist process, stacked in favour of the ordained and their like-minded faithful. Against the tendency towards clerical dominance, he states that ‘the flock has an instinctive ability to discern new ways that the Lord is revealing to the Church’.

The convocation is itself an act of faith and hope in the God of history who accompanies his people and does new things.

I hope this will be an opportunity for the church here to rise from the ashes, to listen to the Spirit, especially through the lay faithful and women, and move into a new and promising future.

JOSHUA J McELWEE is the Vatican correspondent for *The National Catholic Reporter*
This article was published on 1 May 2020



Original Sin, Infant Baptism, Myth and Sex

Alan Clague

The Catholic Church has reluctantly accepted that the Bible is not a reliable scientific or historical document. It no longer demands that we believe we live in a geocentric universe created about 12,000 years ago. It accepts that our putative ‘first parents’, Adam and Eve, were not created *de novo* out of the earth, but by evolution over billions of years. Our DNA shows evidence of interbreeding of *Homo sapiens* with the more primitive hominid, Neandertal man. Thus, modern humans’ common ancestors, ‘Adam and Eve’, must have lived over one million years ago. Science also tells us that death is a natural process, not the result of sin. The biblical creation story is a nice myth with many messages relevant for today, but it was written in past times for the people of those times, and for today we need to discern those parts that contain eternal truths and those that were an enveloping myth.

From the myth of Adam and Eve, the Catholic Church has deduced the doctrine of Original Sin. The concept of original sin is one that was discussed by some early Church fathers, particularly St Augustine, and subsequently by St Thomas Aquinas, St Anselm and others. It was reaffirmed and refined in the sixth century by the Council of Orange and in the seventeenth century by the Council of Trent. The effect of Christian baptism to remove original sin puts original sin at the very heart of an organised church. Under a heading entitled ‘The Fall’, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains contemporary Catholic teaching on original sin. It states that ‘Genesis 3 uses figurative language’, but then goes on to base its text on the interaction of Adam and Eve with God. Adam and Eve disobey God and as a consequence they and their descendants are condemned to die, and their descendants receive a sin ‘transmitted by propagation’. The latter statement identifying sexual intercourse as the means of transmission of original sin was stated specifically by St Augustine. Original sin caused loss of obedience to the will, and this was particularly manifest in sexual lust, which was lacking in Adam and Eve’s pre-fall condition.

It is accepted that St Augustine was the most important single influence in formulation of the Church’s teaching on original sin. He developed his ideas in association with a controversy with Pelagius on the nature of free will. Pelagius proposed that humans could in theory lead a sinless life by exercise of their free will without the support of divine grace and that unbaptised infants who died would not go to hell. Augustine, on the other hand, taught that free will was limited and grace was required to avoid sin. He claimed that Genesis showed that the sin of Adam resulted in the loss of ‘original justice’, and led to the loss of the capacity to ‘pass from mortality to immortality without the medium of death’. This death was a physical death: ‘If Adam had not sinned, he would not have been divested of his body, but would have been clothed with immortality and incorruption’. Augustine analysed Paul’s epistles, particularly Romans, but his analysis, based in large part on Romans 5:12, was flawed somewhat because he could not understand Greek and used an erroneous Latin translation: ‘in him (Adam) all have sinned’ instead of ‘because all have sinned’.

Over the centuries, theologians such as St Thomas Aquinas and the Church have softened some of Augustine’s pronouncements, although Aquinas and the Council of Trent still maintained that human immortality was lost because of Adam’s sin, and St Anselm still claimed that unbaptised infants went to hell. Subsequently, some theologians suggested that unbaptised babies were sent to ‘limbo’ not hell, but in recent years limbo has been dropped. Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, accepted that salvation could be achieved without baptism: ‘The Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners ... in the paschal mystery’ (GS22).

In recent years, sexual intercourse has been accepted as an integral part of marriage bonding, not just the means of producing offspring, and its role as the transmitting agent of original sin has been de-emphasised. What has not been dropped, however, is the attribution of original sin to a sin of Adam and Eve passed on to all humanity. The Catholic Church was not discredited by its dropping of belief in six days of creation or of a 12,000-year-old world or other myths of Genesis. It may be unlikely to drop the entity of original sin (although it is not held by Orthodox Churches), but to associate it with an action of ‘Adam and Eve’ brings the whole concept into disrepute in modern society. To have associated the transmission of this sin with sex has been a factor in the Church’s past grudging approval of sex as a necessary evil.

In past times, it was believed that original sin could only be removed by baptism, through which God forgives all sins. Infants who died without baptism, even though they had not committed any actual sin, were condemned to hell. This was the rationale for infant baptism. Entry into the Catholic Church became no longer an important life decision made actively by catechumens, but a passive decision made for a powerless individual by others.

The belief in hell for the unbaptised has gone, but infant baptism lives on. In our society, this may be part of the reason why there are so many nominal Catholics with no active connection to the Church. Should the Church accept members only when they specifically desire to join, and so allow baptism only when a person is old enough to make a reasoned decision?

ALAN CLAGUE is a member of the ARC Secretariat.

New book:

Virgins & Jezebels: The Origins of Christian Misogyny

Chris Geraghty

This book is about men and misogyny in the early Christian churches—not specifically about women and their contribution to the life of the primitive church, though, of course, the two cannot be separated.

In truth, this book is about power, and who should exercise it. It is about men's clubs and the rules and regulations devised by members to exclude their women, about theological nonsense dreamed up and preached to keep women in their place, to undermine the fundamental and foundational values of Jesus' Kingdom—to keep the keys of that Kingdom safely in clerical hands.

The place of women in the life of the early Church is a vast area of historical and theological study, but my principal focus is confined to the startling prevalence of misogynistic attitudes and practices in the various regions in which Jesus' gospel was spread.

The world has moved on from those earlier times—and for the better. Society now has female prime ministers, governors, judges, lawyers, surgeons, cricketers, soldiers, commentators, journalists and jockeys—but not archbishops or bishops or even common priests ... at least not in the Roman Catholic Church.



The end of Clericalism

Phyllis Zagano

As the human race joins the rest of the planet in a struggle for survival, the church is also trying to find its footing.

For too long—say, 800 to 1,000 years—the sacramental life of the church has been under priestly lock and key. Around the 10th century, the custom of stipends for Masses arose. Suddenly, the spiritual value of men’s prayers gained over the spiritual value of women’s prayers and women’s abbeys and monasteries failed one after another.

Coincidentally, the *cursum honorum* (‘course of honour’) ended the diaconate as a permanent vocation. Unless one was destined for priesthood, he could not be ordained as deacon. Very few men became ‘permanent’ deacons and women deacons—even abbesses—were no longer ordained.

Which brings us back to clericalism, the attitude that grace is dispensed to the people of God only by a cleric, preferably a priest. Thousands of priests are not like that. But thousands are.

Pope Francis alluded to the problem in a recent homily. Eucharistic celebrations on television and radio, he said, create a ‘gnostic familiarity,’ but not community. Virtual celebrations provide some spiritual nourishment, but they are not ‘church’. As Francis said, church means coming together to share the bread.

The deeper problem with electronic Eucharists is they reduce prayer to priestly performance. What is the difference between today and the 1950s, when the priest with his back to the congregation, mumbled on and on in Latin at ‘his Mass’?

What does participation in the Mass mean? Some folks have taken to bringing their own bread and wine to the TV room, or even performing do-it-yourself liturgies without a broadcasting priest. Are these intended to do as the church does? Does either create the communion of church?

Then, there are other sacraments to think about. Drive-by confessions are an interesting innovation, but sacramental anointing of the thousands of dying COVID-19 patients is practically impossible. Marriages can be contracted without a priest, but far be it from chanceries to let that canon out of the book.

Here we go, one by one:

Confession

Recently, the pope pointed out that reconciliation can be postponed until the proper form is possible. Despite historical documentation of confessing to laymen (notably on the battlefield), to abbesses and deacon-abbesses (within their territories), and to deacons, the canons of the 16th-century Council of Trent reserved sacramental reconciliation to priests granted juridical faculties from their bishops, and that has not changed.

Anointing

The sacrament of the sick, once occasionally administered by laypersons and often by women deacons (to other women), is now restricted to priests. Confession occurs (if requested) prior to anointing, but only a priest, sometimes using an ‘instrument’ to apply the oils, can anoint. Why can *Canon 1000.2* not include a nurse or doctor as an ‘instrument’? The bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts, thought so, but the Curia quickly slammed that window down.

Marriage

Canon 1116 stipulates that if a proper minister (read: cleric) is not available in the foreseeable future, then two witnesses and the couple’s consent create a valid marriage. Bishops in mission territories often grant faculties for witnessing marriage, and for solemnly baptising, to lay ecclesial ministers (recall, 60% of Amazon parishes are managed by women), but the legal process can be cumbersome. Could the pandemic remind the church that couples administer this sacrament to each other?

So where is ‘church’ in all this?

We are clearly all in this together and we hunger for grace. We need community, we need blessing, we need charity. Community is where we find it. No longer the Friday fish fry, it is the Thursday afternoon Zoom with college friends. It is folks on the supermarket line. It is the garbage collectors honking and waving. Blessings come extra-ecclesial. They come from the school crossing guard, now

directing traffic at the testing-site, who says, ‘God bless you, honey, good luck’. They come when the landlord forgives a month’s rent. They come when the market owner slips a pound cake in the bag, on the house.

And charity is all around us. Yes, we learn about it on television and Facebook, but who cannot appreciate the nurse travelling hundreds of miles to give another nurse a break? What about the restaurant owner who packs lunches for the homeless? Try counting the soup kitchens and food banks that work, day after day after day because it is the Christian, or Jewish, or Muslim thing to do.

The pope is correct. Electronic liturgies do not bring us spiritually together. We are still detached, together but not together. The community, he said, is a sacrament. It is the community that brings intimacy with Christ that brings intimacy with the holy faithful people of God. It is community we need.

Difficult as it is, I rather think we are getting there.

Phyllis Zagano is senior research associate-in-residence at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. This article was published in the *National Catholic Reporter* on 21 April 2020

A Bible for Women?

Noelene Uren

Recently I read an article in the *London Times Magazine* by Caitlin Moran. She posed a very interesting theory: ‘What if the Bible is not for women? What if they were never intended to be its audience?’

It makes sense. Why would women, who for centuries were merely chattels, even be considered? A woman was owned by her father, then her husband, or if no husband came along by her brother who could pack her off to a convent if she proved to be too much of a nuisance. Women couldn’t own property, or vote and, if they did inherit money on marriage, it became their husband’s. We are almost entirely absent in historical records and if women did want to succeed in, for instance, literature, they published under a male name.

Being told to be humble? They didn’t have much choice. The same applies to ‘Turn the other cheek’. It isn’t a decision for women. As Caitlin said: ‘It is a survival tactic where most of those in power are simply bigger and stronger than you.’ Similarly, being exhorted to take care of the sick and feed the hungry wasn’t ever an issue for us. It has always been pretty much ‘women’s work’. It’s what we do. ‘Thou shalt not kill’, yes, there have been some very nasty female murderers but statistically it is rare

compared with men, and being warned against the love of money is somewhat pointless to a sex who even now own only 1 per cent of the world’s wealth.

Considering this, it is obvious that women’s problems are fundamentally different to those of men, for whom the Bible appears to have been written. Does that mean that we are not in need of betterment? Of course not! Women can be awful. Who hasn’t met a woman so bitter about the way her life has turned out that she makes everyone around her miserable. Or the gossip who delights in others’ misfortune and never has a good word for anyone. Or the social climber who must forever top some good news of yours with something bigger, more expensive or just plain better than anything of yours, unable to feel pleasure in another’s happiness. All women, whether or not they admit it, are crying out for spiritual guidance and advice, but as our readings, gospels and even, more often than not, our sermons are based on the old and new testaments, and our Church is dominated by men. What we need is rarely available to us.

So to quote Caitlin again, maybe the first commandment in a women’s Bible should be: ‘Be kind to yourself.’ For the rest, well, new books are written all the time.

We can always hope.

NOELENE UREN is a retired primary school principal.

The Lord's Prayer

a critique

Margaret Knowlden

It's a cop-out! Any occasion, when a bit of spiritual input is called for, someone suggests: 'Let's say the *Our Father*' and the people dutifully respond—whether mumbling the words in unthinking parrot-fashion or, perhaps for some, with a deep personal feeling of connection with the Divine. It is, after all, the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to say—or so we are told—hence sacrosanct and its removal tantamount to blasphemy. Imagine the Mass without it. But do we really consider what it is saying?

I only once heard a priest alert the congregation to the danger that lurks in the words: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us*. If we are not prepared to forgive other human beings (e.g. family feuds), then why should we expect the Almighty to be any different? It is worth pondering on.

Is it God who vents his/her spleen on the Australian people and its landscape with its fearful droughts and bushfires and now the virus—or aren't the causes man-made? How many of us have suffered the pangs of real hunger? And even if we did, would saying this prayer bring instant relief like manna falling from heaven? Do we live in constant dread of being 'lead into temptation' by God (not by the devil or other human beings)? Will it ensure deliverance from all evil—whatever that may be? (Child abuse comes to mind.) Is this really the image of God we need to preserve?

'Say three Our Fathers' is a handy penance when the priest judges that the sins confessed merit a harsher sentence than the softer 'Three Hail Mary's'.

The Lord's Prayer is even said in both Houses of Parliament at the beginning of each session, despite moves to have it replaced as it becomes increasingly irrelevant in our multi-racial, multi-faith and non-religious Australian society. Perhaps it is too much to expect that some elected members might be moved enough by the mention of 'daily bread' to be reminded that, while well remunerated themselves, genuine hardship still exists for many of their constituents—and to press for changes to legislation? An increase in the New Start Allowance and low rental housing would be a good start!

Gretta Vosper, in her thought-provoking book *With or Without God*, goes even further:

The image of God found in The Lord's Prayer was of a remote being upon whom we were entirely dependent: God gave us our food, forgave us our sins, and saved us from mortal ruin. Implicit in every line was our inability to do anything without God's gracious assistance.

Gretta's songwriter husband, Scott Kearns, suggested the following non-theistic substitute:

As I live every day,
I want to be a channel for peace.
May I bring love where there is hatred
and healing where there is hurt;
joy where there is sadness
and hope where there is fear.
I pray that I may always try
to understand and comfort other people
as well as seeking comfort and
understanding from them.
Wherever possible, may I choose to be
a light in the darkness,
a help in times of need,
and a caring, honest friend.
And may justice, kindness, and peace
flow from my heart forever,
Amen.

Source: Gretta Vosper: *With or Without God—why the way we live is more important than what we believe*
Canada: Harper Perennial, 2008

Joined by Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant leaders and faithful from around the world, Pope Francis led the recitation of *The Lord's Prayer*, imploring God's mercy on humanity amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Source: NCR Online

26 March 2020

ARC's Early Days Remembered

Alan Holroyd

In October 2001 the first issue of *ARCVoice* was published and the opening article was entitled *A welcoming word from ARC's Interim Secretariat* (signed by) Barbara Campbell, Ted Lambert and Jim Taverner. The third paragraph is worthy of quoting:

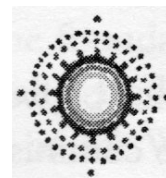
We currently live in a very interesting epoch when knowledge has increased exponentially and continues to do so. New light has been shone on our universe both spatially and back through time. We re-examined our beliefs in this new light.

Even though the article has triple signatures, its main scribe would have been Barbara Campbell who was also responsible for launching the journal *ARCVoice*. In Issue No. 3, Barbara gives thanks to Bill Welsh of *Epiphany* magazines who did the layout and the print-run of the first two editions. From that time, Margaret Knowlden accepted the tasks of editing, typing and layout of *ARCVoice*—as she does today, nineteen years later.

Margaret's first meeting with Barbara must have been serendipitous. On a Women's Day March in Sydney in 2002 Barbara was struggling in the wind to hold up the banner for Ordination for Catholic Women and Margaret offered to help. Later they met again at St Anthony's, Terrey Hills, where Barbara mentioned she was setting up an organisation to reform the Catholic Church—using a manual typewriter and a telephone! With computer experience from typesetting *Women-Church Journal* and *WATAC News*, and being recently retired, Margaret offered to help—and the rest is history.

By that time I had designed the ARC logo in a stage as what is termed as a 'rough draft', which thankfully was accepted at the Secretariat meeting. The brief I followed included the essential feature insisted by Ted Lambert, which was the map of Australia and the lettering style was a mix of upper and lower case, using two words, 'arc voice'. In March 2002, Issue No 3 *ARCVoice* was in the font named 'Century' in lower case, spelt as one word, while the logo and full title was placed in a rectangle. One of the unusual points in the design is that the letter 'C' has the shape of the crucifix on its side.

In the preparation for the Inaugural Conference of 4-6 October 2002, which was held at Abbotsleigh College at Wahroonga, the Secretariat felt that the venue needed a background visual on the stage. So within two weeks I designed a multi-coloured spectrum which was made using long drops of felt material—which followed the approach I used regularly at St Michael's parish church at Meadowbank in Sydney. The design was explained at the opening of the conference and it had a lasting publication life by featuring in its miniature form in *ARCVoice* for the next ten issues.



Barbara was a charming lady, devoted to her small dog named Walter. Whenever she spoke at meetings Walter was nearby or, well-trained, out in her car with toys to occupy his time. At one meeting, Walter had not been happy at being left in the car, so Barbara held him in her arm while giving the opening address, and so receiving tumultuous applause at the end of her speech. Walter endeared himself even more by 'singing' on command.

My wife and I had occasion to visit Barbara at her home in Sydney's beachside suburb of Bilgola. The house was up in the forested hills and, as appointed, we were invited for morning tea. After her welcome, Barbara ushered us into the dining room which had an expansive glass window giving ample views of the surrounding bushland. Once all were settled, we sat at the dining table and then Barbara turned and approached a decorative wooden armchair, three legs placed on a large timber box, while the fourth leg sat on an adjoining box, a narrow space from the bigger box. After Barbara finished serving our tea and cake, she climbed up into the armchair with her cuppa in hand. Then laughing, she told us that this assembly allowed her to see down to the beach, where she swam every morning for thirty minutes.

Barbara retired from the ARC secretariat in 2004. She is now in a nursing home in Lithgow and still receives the newsletter. It is thanks to her vision, together with that of Ted and Jim (both now deceased), that we can continue to be part of the 'new light' that shines on our universe, one of many voices crying out for reform of our church. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.

ALAN HOLROYD is the illustrator for *ARCVoice*.

Have your say!

ARCVoice is a report of news, opinion and reflection on the renewal and reform urgently needed in the Catholic Church

Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome

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

Please send material to:

The Editor

ARCVoice

Unit 68/28 Curagul Road

NORTH TURRAMURRA NSW 2074

OR (preferably) email:
mknowlden@bigpond.com

Tel: 02 9488 7927

ARC Secretariat

Barbara Brannan 02 9451 7130

barbarabrannan@mac.com

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

John Buggy (Spokesperson)

0419217543 jbuggy@ozemail.com.au

Rob Butler 03 5989 8496 butlershore2@bigpond.com

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

Margaret Knowlden (Editor) 02 9488 7927

mknowlden@bigpond.com

Peter Meury 0243 884 809 petermeury@bigpond.com

Ron Watts 0415 389 910 claudew1@bigpond.com

Standby Committee

(for special events)

Maureen Brian

Maureen Couch

Norma Piper

ARC Website: www.e-arc.org

Contains all back copies of *ARCVoice* + indexes of subjects and authors (1-25 only)



Annual subscription (from 1 July to 30 June):

\$30 Concession: \$20 for Religious & Pensioners (NOT Seniors)

Renewal [] New Member []

Name

Address

..... Postcode

Telephone (....) Mobile

Fax (....) Email

Subscription \$

Donation (always welcome) \$

TOTAL \$

Payment can be made by cheque, money order, cash
or by direct deposit to
ARC's Westpac Account BSB 032-089 Account No. 14-7944
Please email a copy of the electronic transaction to:
rbrian@vtown.com.au

Would you like to share in the work for ARC in any way? circle: YES / NO

If YES, please let us know what you would want to do.

Send to ARC c/- Rob Brian 28 Lancaster Road, DOVER HEIGHTS, New South Wales 2030

Tel: 02 9371 8519 e-mail: rbrian@vtown.com.au