



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics Inc.

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The Essence of Sacrament

Our beloved Father Peter Maher died in November after a long battle with cancer. Peter was a member of ARC since its inception and was a beacon in showing how Jesus' inclusiveness of everyone should be enacted. His manner of embracing those who felt rejected or marginalised was accompanied by an assurance that they should not be forever burdened by any ongoing guilt. God's unconditional love was paramount.

Peter wanted a simple funeral and he set out some of the readings and hymns in addition to nominating a priest friend to conduct the ceremony in the manner he desired. It was to include some elements not present in the usual send-offs for priests but which expressed the values and 'down to earthiness' of the ministry he exercised.

But it was not to be. An archbishop, two bishops, and a contingent of around thirty priests concelebrated the Mass and, through their powerful presence, set the tone of the gathering. The archbishop, while giving a brief mention of Peter's qualities, referred to his theology as if it was to be questioned, thereby giving an implicit denial of some of the values that shaped his ministry. The fully robed bank of clergy, seemingly supporting the arch-conservative episcopal trio, helped to ensure a counter balancing stamp of orthodoxy against any statement or sentiment that traditionally might be considered inappropriate.

Yes, some items were permitted on Peter's coffin that evoked memories of his life. But others that were symbols of his compassion for the LGBTIQ+ community and the women traumatised by the experience of abortion were not. Even the hymn 'Come as You Are', sung in many congregations for years, was not included. Was its expressed inclusiveness a step too far in this context? No chance for any multi colours that could be construed as a rainbow or even a copy of Father Ted Kennedy's book that might remind us of 'Who is Worthy'.

The concept of sacrament since Vatican II has broadened in practice, if not strictly in theology. We have moved from participation in the 'priest's Mass' with his back turned to us towards various ways of expressing more personal encounters with God through sacrament and thereby drawing others to God through the 'earthy' connections. So, when certain objects are placed on the departed person's coffin that symbolise the way that person responded to God's love, those symbols can be catalysts in drawing others to the love of God as they witness it. This is the essence of sacrament – the sign of God's grace and enhanced by the manner in which people respond to it.

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The symbols that many of those who attended expected to see associated with Peter's life were not shown here. Where was the sign of God's grace for some of those people? The sacramental experience felt incomplete. The rejected symbols were carried down the road to an informal reception at the local RSL. Individuals in this small gathering lovingly picked up an item and placed it on a table beside a lighted candle. The group sang 'Come as You Are'. Spontaneous expressions then came forth along with stories of comfort gained in the encounter with God's love through association with Peter. All were drawn together strongly in these moments. The sacrament was complete. The spirit shone through.

John Buggy

ARC Moves Forward 2023

We have already given you details regarding our decision to withdraw from the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR). Toowoomba Catholics for Church Reform made the same decision, closed their group, and a significant number of their members have now become members of ARC. We welcome them wholeheartedly and look forward to their contribution to our efforts to reform our Church in ways that we all consider more appropriate.

We have plans to develop a new website in the coming year and, hopefully, get back to enabling discussion and activity about key matters of interest. Now that we, as a community, have learned to use video techniques for closer communication with loved ones during COVID -19, we should now be able to draw together, on occasion, ARC members from all over Australia. The tyranny of distance should no longer restrict us. Meeting on screen can work quite well.

The administration of ARC over a considerable period of time since the year 2000 has been attended to diligently by Rob Brian who is now handing over those tasks to Wendy Rowe. Rob has dealt with all our obligations as an incorporated entity, handled all banking arrangements, and kept our data bases up to date. His quiet contribution has been essential in enabling us to maintain a professional standard in our work as an accountable and transparent organisation. We will continue to have the benefit of his wisdom as he continues to be a member of the ARC Secretariat. Many thanks to you Rob.

John Buggy
on behalf of the ARC Secretariat

Synod on synodality: Where has it been and where is it going?

Thomas Reese

With the calling of a worldwide synod on synodality, Pope Francis set in motion the most extensive consultative process the world has ever seen.

In recent months, each diocese produced a report on its listening sessions, which were then synthesized by their national episcopal conferences. The conference reports were sent to Rome, where they were in turn incorporated into a ‘synthesis of syntheses’ that was prepared for the next stage of the synodal process: a continental consultation.

For the millions of people who have participated in the synodal process, the synod is no longer an abstract concept but a lived experience. They have met together as brothers and sisters, shared their experience of listening to the word of God and reflected together on the future of the church.

My guess is that for Francis, this lived experience is as important as, if not more important than, any proposals that come from the synod.

The **‘Working Document for the Continental Stage’**, issued last month, gives us a picture of where the synodal process has been and where it might be going. The document describes ‘the shared sense of the experience of synodality lived by those who took part,’ its authors wrote, including ‘the hopes and concerns of the People of God from across the globe’.

Pope Francis' big gamble: The synod on synodality

This material will allow participants in the continental assemblies to listen to voices from every part of the world. The cultural, political, economic and religious experience of the church is very different in Africa, Europe, Asia and North and South America.

These continental assemblies will then draw up a list of priorities for the first session of the Synod of Bishops to begin next October. The first section of the document reports that there was great appreciation of the opportunity to speak and to listen to others in the church.

‘What emerges’, according to the working document, ‘is a profound re-appropriation of the common dignity of all the baptised.’ This theological foundation ‘enables us to continue to promote and make good use of the variety of charisms that the Spirit with unpredictable abundance pours out on the faithful’.

The second chapter is organised around a quote from Isaiah: ‘Enlarge the space of your tent!’ where the tent is seen as a space for communion and participation, the necessary foundations of mission.

‘Enlarging the tent requires welcoming others into it, making room for their diversity,’ says the working document.

At the tent's centre ‘stands the tabernacle, that is, the presence of the Lord’, explains the working document as it further develops the metaphor. ‘The tent's hold is ensured by the sturdiness of its pegs, that is, the fundamentals of faith that do not change but can be moved and planted in ever new ground, so that the tent can accompany the people as they walk through history. Finally, in order not to sag, the structure of the tent must keep in balance the different forces and tensions to which it is subjected: a metaphor that expresses the need for discernment.’

The third chapter describes the church as needing to live ‘a Christological paradox: boldly proclaiming its authentic teaching while at the same time offering a witness of radical inclusion and acceptance through its pastoral and discerning accompaniment.’

Rather than behaving like gatekeepers, we are called to a ‘vision of a Church capable of radical inclusion, shared belonging, and deep hospitality according to the teachings of Jesus.’

The path toward greater inclusion requires ‘listening deeply and accepting being transformed by it’. Obstacles to such listening include hierarchical structures, clericalism and socio-economic differences.

In the listening sessions, many spoke of the need for the inclusion of many marginalised groups, including; young people, those with disabilities, those unhappy with liturgical change, those who have had abortions, people who have divorced and remarried, single parents, people living in a polygamous marriage, LGBTQ people, those who left ordained ministry and married, and ‘women and eventual children of priests who have broken the vow of celibacy, who are otherwise at risk of suffering serious injustice and discrimination.’

Also listed were ‘the poorest, the lonely elderly,

indigenous peoples, migrants without any affiliation and who lead a precarious existence, street children, alcoholics and drug addicts, those who have fallen into the plots of criminality and those for whom prostitution seems their only chance of survival, victims of trafficking, survivors of abuse (in the Church and beyond), prisoners, groups who suffer discrimination and violence because of race, ethnicity, gender, culture and sexuality.’

The document recognises that ‘the challenges of tribalism, sectarianism, racism, poverty and gender inequality’ exist ‘within the life of the Church, as well as the world’.

In response to these challenges, ‘the Church's mission is to make Christ present in the midst of His People through reading the Word, the celebration of the Sacraments and through all actions that care for the wounded and suffering’. Peace building and reconciliation, as well as working for justice, are crucial parts of the mission. The church's mission in many places in the world involves dialogue with people of different religions.

The liturgy, which brings the community together, was seen as important in making communion tangible, enabling the exercise of participation and nourishing the momentum toward mission with the Word and the sacraments.

Finally, the synthesis said, ‘Almost all reports raise the issue of full and equal participation of Women’. Many reports ‘ask that the Church continue its discernment in relation to a range of specific questions: the active role of women in the governing structures of Church bodies, the possibility for women with adequate training to preach in parish settings, and a female diaconate’.

But on the question of priestly ordination, ‘much greater diversity of opinion was expressed’, with some reports calling for it and others considering it a closed issue.

The fourth and final chapter of the working paper looks to the future, urging the participants to be a ‘Church that learns from listening how to renew its evangelizing mission in the light of the signs of the times, to continue offering humanity a way of being and living in which all can feel included as protagonists.’

A welcoming church enhances communion and participation

There is much controversy surrounding the synod. Liberals see it as an opportunity to push for reforms blocked by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI after the Second Vatican Council: married clergy, women priests, greater inculturation in the liturgy, acceptance of artificial birth control, a rethinking of sexual ethics, etc. Conservatives see it as an attempt by liberals to pressure the church into changing its teachings.

Liberals point to public support for their reforms; conservatives counter by saying that the church is not a democracy. (The synodal process certainly emphasised the importance of listening to the people of God, but bishops and the Vatican have also made clear that decisions will not be made by popular vote.)

Conservatives fear the pope will give into public pressure; liberals fear that the hierarchy will once again reject their reforms. The working paper acknowledges these fears. Francis, on the other hand, is focused on improving the church's mission of proclaiming the Gospel and creating a more synodal church.

The introduction to the ‘Working Document for the Continental Stage’ of the synodal process states that the basic question guiding the entire process is: How does this journeying together ‘allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?’

If liberals want to win Francis' support for their reforms, they will need to show how the reforms allow the church to better proclaim the Gospel and how they make us grow as a synodal church. If conservatives want to kill these reforms, they must show that the proposed reforms do exactly the opposite.

My view is that many of the proposed reforms would help the church better proclaim the Gospel and make it a more synodal church, but I am uncertain what Francis will think. My guess is that he will adopt more reforms than conservatives want but that he will go slower than liberals want. Doing otherwise might destroy the very synodality he wants to foster.

Four lessons for the global synod from the Australian Plenary Council

Francis Sullivan and John Warhurst
9 September 2022

The Australian Catholic Church is in a state of crisis. Plummeting weekly Mass attendance suggests the church is no longer attractive to middle-aged and younger generations. In 2017 Hans Zollner, SJ, a founding member of Pope Francis' Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, told church employees in Brisbane in 2017 that 'there seems to be almost nil trust in what the Church says' in Australia, particularly as a result of the sexual abuse scandal. 'This is not true in other parts of the world', he went on.

Widespread calls for reform of the Australian Catholic Church's governance, management and clerical culture have been consistent and loud for years, including from the Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, of which we are a part.

This was the terrain on which the Australian Plenary Council, a gathering of 277 bishops, clergy, religious and lay people that has just completed four years of consultations, discernment and drafting ideas at its second and final assembly, strove to demonstrate that our institution can still be relevant and effective.

The council was hamstrung at the start by unrealistic expectations. Leading bishops over-enthusiased participants with claims that 'everything would be on the table', though not all Australian bishops welcomed the prospect of an open dialogue with the faithful.

Also, asking Catholics to 'read the signs of the times' and discern 'what God wants for the Australian Church' are loaded requests at the best of times. And these are not the best of times. As with other Western societies, the role of women has been a flashpoint of discontent and disaffection in Australia, as has the integration of divorced and remarried Catholics. Meanwhile, questions of gender identity and orientation go largely undiscussed by the hierarchy. It is as if the church can only cope with one heated debate at a time, and then only in a carefully orchestrated and reserved manner.

The plenary council did not afford opportunities for the voices of divorced Catholics and those who identify as LGBT to be heard, either. They may be given a more respectful treatment in the planned local synods where procedural rules are less constrained, but the needs and issues of these groups did not make it onto the plenary agenda.

The council was hamstrung at the start by unrealistic expectations.

Still, when asked for their opinions, Australian Catholics turned out in force. Over 200,000 people attended the initial consultations and 17,500 written submissions were made, an impressive turnout in a church where under 10 percent of nominal Catholics choose to practice. And at the plenary session itself, even though consultation processes were truncated and the topics of discussion were heavily controlled by the bishops, an atmosphere of hope and optimism persisted among the council members. Every council member realised that no change was not an option.

With all indicators pointing to a church in decline, Catholics needed to take responsibility for their church and not leave it to the bishops, who for too long have been either shell-shocked by the sex abuse scandal or ineffective in mounting effective pastoral responses to the pressing social and cultural issues of the day.

From the Australian Plenary Council process, here are four major ones. The most important lesson is that in its construction and operations a council or synod must be inclusive, transparent and accountable.

1. An inclusive, supported membership

The most important lesson is that in its construction and operations a council or synod must be inclusive, transparent and accountable. Those who are chosen to be around the table, the 'insiders,' must represent as far as possible the composition of the people of God and not an elite reflecting the comfortably orthodox views of most of their bishops. The voices of the whole church must be heard if the speaking and listening is to be genuinely synodal.

They also must have the help they need. Many of our plenary council members were ex-officio church officeholders, a minority were selected volunteers, and most all lived very busy lives and struggled to give the council sufficient attention. They need considerable support and opportunities for formation and adult learning in a church context, ideally from their dioceses, parishes and church employers when relevant. Some members were fortunate in having informal networks to compensate when official support fell short. But given the considerable time and effort they put in over a long period of time, all needed that support.

Our council struggled with two competing metaphors: the council could be viewed as a 'bubble' or a 'bridge'.

2. Clarity of purpose and communication

Also, the processes must be clear and open to the whole community, engaging them and drawing on their wisdom. Those in charge must be held accountable, public reporting must be regular and frank and participants need a clear sense of the official vision for the council and about the role they are being asked to

play. In Australia, early expectations were set high for what the council should address, as church officials were calling it ‘a new future for the Church’.

The agreed-upon premise was that the church was in crisis and spiralling downward. Consequently, we were told ‘business as usual’ would not do and ‘everything would be on the table’. But in fact, from the beginning not every bishop agreed with these comments by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. As the years went by there was a temptation to water down these ideas and to temper our expectations for renewal.

In our opinion, our council also struggled with two competing metaphors: the council could be viewed as a ‘bubble’ or a ‘bridge’. Broadly speaking, we saw the Plenary Council authorities viewing the council as a ‘bubble’ within which a community of members toiled to engage with each other and the Holy Spirit, and the wider community only secondarily, in a semi-monastic fashion, perhaps like a religious chapter. The alternative vision, exemplified by church renewal groups such as the Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, believed that engagement with the broader Catholic community was the most important element of the council. In this vision, Plenary Council members were a bridge to that wider community and should act as its representatives.

3. Proper allotments of time

Another lesson of the Australian council was that the process takes time and should not be rushed. Four years, extended by 12 months because of the interruptions caused by COVID-19, is a long time to maintain the attention of the Catholic community, and yet in many ways the steady pace of the council proved exemplary.

But as the Second Assembly approached, new developments became rushed. The final draft of the agenda for deliberation by the members appeared only five weeks before the assembly was due to sit, and the final agenda, including motions and proposed amendments, was issued less than a week before the assembly. Much-needed internal discussion was truncated, which also meant communication with the wider community was made more difficult. Plenary Council members, and the general community, would have benefited from greater time for deliberation and discernment.

A potentially disastrous failure of the synodal process was overcome by agile and flexible church leadership and a generosity of spirit within the council.

4. Cultivate a spirit of generosity

There are still competing understandings of the meaning of synodality within the church. We may collectively understand that walking together involves deep and respectful listening, evidenced in the

successful small-group spiritual conversations undertaken at the Australian council. But disagreement remains about how a synodal church approaches the vexed topic of traditional hierarchical authority of bishops and priests.

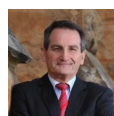
This tension is highlighted when it comes to voting. So the Australian council faced a mid-week flashpoint when some key motions on witnessing the equal dignity of women and men failed to reach the required two-thirds majority of bishops’ deliberative votes. The bishops were clearly shocked by the visceral reaction within and outside the council after the first vote, which was itself deeply surprising and disturbing both to people at the synod and the broader Australian church.

Why we need a living wage and economic justice

But this potentially disastrous failure of the synodal process was overcome by agile and flexible church leadership and a generosity of spirit within the council. Some bishops, recognising that bridge building was essential and that the days of hard-line positions were over, enabled the topic to be revisited, and a small writing group was tasked with revising the text without diluting the contents. The council as a whole also allowed its timetable to be reshaped. The Plenary Council even ended up shifting the church towards the prospect of women deacons, within the normal authority structures of the church. It is a modest step forward, not a revolution. The universal church should learn from this flexibility and generosity.

The Australian Plenary Council was a huge operation by any standard and flew in the face of apathy, scepticism and some outright opposition within the Catholic community to reach a successful conclusion. The outcomes must now be explained and ‘sold’ to the wider community. The decentralised structure of the church means that a considerable proportion of the implementation will be in the hands of diocesan and parish leaders.

But in what was a relatively modest array of motions, the 277 council members managed to shift the dial on church reform, embed new shoots for change and instigate models of governance to unshackle the grip of clericalism.



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JOHN WARHURST is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn.

Both were lay members of the Plenary Council.

Blessed

John Henry Newman

Frank Brennan SJ

Today is the 177th anniversary of John Henry Newman's admission into the Catholic Church. When our Church canonised him three years ago, the Vatican officials decided to choose the date of his conversion, rather than the more customary date of his death, as his feast day. It was not the most ecumenical of moves. Our now King Charles, Supreme Governor of the Church of England, was very gracious in the remarks he made on the occasion of the canonisation – remarks which are worth recalling in light of the kerfuffle this week over the sacking of a conservative Anglican banker as CEO of a Victorian football club. Charles said:

In the age when he lived, Newman stood for the life of the spirit against the forces that would debase human dignity and human destiny. In the age in which he attains sainthood, his example is needed more than ever – for the manner in which, at his best, he could advocate without accusation, could disagree without disrespect and, perhaps most of all, could see differences as places of encounter rather than exclusion.¹

The events in the Essendon football club and the response by civic leaders, including the Victorian Premier, would have you wondering about our capacity any longer to see differences as places of encounter rather than exclusion. I happily voted 'yes' in the same-sex marriage plebiscite and I approved the change to the law. I did so on the understanding that the 38% who voted 'no' would suffer no adverse discrimination for their religious views and would be free to participate respectfully in all aspects of public life, even in the administration of Victorian football clubs.

During the week, our shores have been visited by two very refined and educated Englishmen who reflect something of the ethos which John Henry Newman inhabited and exhibited. Lord Jonathan Sumption, one time judge of the Supreme Court of the UK, spoke of the mounting tide of intolerance in democratic societies like the UK and Australia. He said, 'The campaigns of suppression conducted by pressure groups against unfashionable or 'incorrect' opinions on controversial issues such as race, gender reassignment, same-sex relationships or climate

change are a symptom of the narrowing of our intellectual world.'²

Archbishop Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, is presently touring many of the Anglican dioceses in Australia. He has been speaking about secularised western societies losing the ability to disagree well: 'We have not found a way of disagreeing without exclusion, without cancelling people. We are just in a place where, since there is no one authority, we seem to be going to no authority at all – even the authority of a common concern for each other's dignity and for freedom of religion and belief.'³

The Essendon fracas will be yesterday's news soon enough. But it is necessary for serious educated Christians to be clear about what is at stake. Those of us who are members of churches with a strong tradition of teaching authority on moral and social issues need to acknowledge four things. First, our authoritative teachings are grounded in the tradition of scriptures and the believing community's reflection on those scriptures over the centuries. The articulation of those teachings can be dated and jarring to a modern listener unfamiliar with the tradition, especially in relation to issues in which there have been profound new discoveries in the social and physical sciences. Those teachings can be so jarring as to be wrong, or at least in need of restatement. We don't need to look at the one-off sermon of a pastor from the little known 'City on a Hill' Church. For example the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* still states: 'Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.'⁴

Second, our authoritative teachings are not the end of the matter. In all instances, we are called to practise pastoral solicitude, respecting the dignity, experience, and reflection on experience of the other. Even the now outdated *Catechism* states that those with 'deep-seated homosexual tendencies' 'must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.'⁵

Third, we are to respect the formed and informed conscience of the other. As Pope Francis has famously said, 'Who am I to judge?'

Fourth, we need to be willing to give an account of ourselves and our religious beliefs and practices in the public square, conceding that some aspects of our religious life will be hurtful to non-believers who do not share our faith in the value of sacred texts and authoritative development of traditional teachings.

In the whole area of sexuality, we are in a new era. The committed Christian needs to admit that the traditional teaching is not only jarring; it is also hurtful to many people, especially to those who profess no religious beliefs but who espouse inclusion, toleration and respect for all. Even for many Catholics, the teaching is now just plain wrong.

Having been rector of the Catholic University in Dublin, and then having set up the Oratory School back in England, St John Henry Newman wrote in his journal on 21 January 1863:

Catholics in England, from their very blindness, cannot see that they are blind. To aim then at improving the condition, the status, of the Catholic body, by a careful survey of their argumentative basis, of their position relatively to the philosophy and the character of the day, by giving them juster views, by enlarging and refining their minds, in one word, by education, is (in their view) more than a superfluity or a hobby, it is an insult. It implies that they are deficient in material points. Now from first to last, education in this large sense of the word, has been my line.⁶

We need to be attentive to our blindness. We are always being called to enlarge and refine our minds. Through education, we can renew the tradition, enhance the scope of our pastoral solicitude, and respect the formed and informed consciences of those with whom we disagree. In a society increasingly antipathetic to organised religion, we can rightly request and demand the same deference.

Newman was always wary about his attempts to provide the faithful with juster views by enlarging and refining their minds. He always felt a need to be

looking over his shoulder. As he wrote in his journal: 'I should wish to attempt to meet the great infidel etc questions of the day, but both Propaganda and the Episcopate, doing nothing themselves, look with extreme jealousy on anyone who attempts it, and, giving him no credit for what he does well, come down with severity on any point in which he may have slipped.'⁷

Inspired by the witness of John Henry Newman, we hear afresh the words spoken to Timothy in today's second reading, heeding the warning and taking up the challenge of educated evangelisation:

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

Inspired by John Henry Newman, let's advocate without accusation, disagree without disrespect and, see differences as places of encounter rather than exclusion.

1. *John Henry Newman Autobiographical Writings*, Henry Tristram (ed.), Sheed and Ward, London, 1956, p.259
2. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2019-10/newman-canonization-prince-charles-editorial-britain.html>
3. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/inquirer/death-of-democracy-is-now-a-live-threat/news-story/8c6bf1f6315051c11a6f60adb7910bde>
4. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/archbishop-of-canterbury-warns-cancel-culture-hurting-human-dignity/news-story/328c33fb265e8da3b084be1df2162181>
5. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para 2357, at https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P85.HTM
6. *Ibid*, para 2358
7. *John Henry Newman Autobiographical Writings*, Henry Tristram (ed.), Sheed and Ward, London, 1956, p.259

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This homily was given on 9.10.22,
the Feast Day of Blessed John Henry Newman.

Letters to the Editor

I always look forward to getting the *ARC*Voice** knowing that there will be at least one or two really good articles helping to show the way forward for us pilgrims. However, the September issue is a *tour de force*. Every article is brilliant. The only problem is that your readership will expect such high standards with every forthcoming issue! Thank you.

Geoff Lee
Noosa, Qld

I have just finished reading the latest *ARC*Voice** - lots of good stuff in it. Congratulations to all who contributed and put it together. I particularly liked John Buggy's article. Be blessed.

Kevin Liston
Adelaide

Synod 2021-2023

International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW)

Synthesis: Executive Summary

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International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW) 2

Executive Summary

The International Survey of Catholic Women (ISCW) was undertaken for the Catholic Women Speak network as a response to the call for members of the Catholic Church to participate in the process of Synod 2021-2023. It was devised and managed by researchers Drs Tracy McEwan and Kathleen McPhillips at the University of Newcastle and Professor Tina Beattie, Professor Emeritus at the University of Roehampton, London. This report for submission to the Vatican is based on the survey findings, drawn from responses submitted by 17,200 women from 104 countries across the world. The survey was translated into eight languages – English, Spanish, German, Italian, French, Polish, Mandarin, and Portuguese – and made available online from Tuesday 8 March 2022 (International Women’s Day) to Tuesday 26 April 2022. The Executive Summary provides the key points and recommendations of the submission.

The overall aim of the ISCW was to gather feedback for the Synod on the experiences and insights of Catholic women from around the world. Topics included Catholic identity, significant issues of concern and views on church reform, and the impact of COVID-19 on women’s faith and practice. The large number of responses clearly indicates a desire by many women to share their hopes, aspirations and frustrations, and to make their views known to the Synod with regard to the current situation of women in the Church.

The ISCW is a significant and unique resource for the Synod in its aim to listen to diverse voices to better discern what it means to ‘journey together’ as the People of God in a Church of many cultures. It gathered quantitative data via ‘closed’ questions where respondents were invited to choose from a set of responses, and qualitative data through ‘open’ questions which asked respondents to comment and

share insights. Demographic information regarding respondents’ ages and regions of residence was also collected. The submission to the Synod includes quotations from the open responses which, alongside the statistical overview, reflect the diverse perspectives and concerns of Catholic women.

In preparing the report, the researchers have tried to reflect the diversity of responses as well as identifying common themes and shared concerns. The women who responded valued their Catholic identity very highly. Most had significant concerns about some aspects of church practice and teaching, but they also varied widely in their priorities and perspectives, with age and regions of residence playing a significant role with regard to particular issues. An important insight to be drawn from the survey is that Catholic women do not constitute a homogenous group but reflect the many different cultural and communal contexts within which their faith is experienced and practised. It would be reductive to fail to represent this by privileging any one group along the broad spectrum of women’s faith and practice. It is an area of concern to the researchers that this heterogeneity is rarely represented in official church documents, with the result that many women struggle to see the relevance of some church teachings to the complex realities of their lives.

The first major finding of the ISCW is that even when women have considerable struggles with Catholic institutions and structures, their Catholic identity is very important to them. Indeed, amidst the rich diversity of faith and practice expressed in open responses, Catholic identity was of great importance for nearly 90 per cent of respondents. Many who responded to the open questions highlighted the importance of their faith, the centrality of the Eucharist to their lives, and their active participation in parishes and church communities, while also expressing high levels of frustration or dissatisfaction relating to their experiences. Many also described social justice and care for the poor and vulnerable as vital to their understanding of what it means to be Catholic. Around two-thirds of respondents identified as ecumenical Christians.

A second major finding is that most Catholic women welcome reform in the Catholic Church. Indeed, a vast majority of those who responded supported some level of change in the Church, especially but not exclusively regarding the role and representation of women. Respondents highlighted the need to reform church teachings on issues of

sexuality, including respect for freedom of conscience and the place of LGBTIQ persons within the Church; women's leadership roles in Catholic parishes and institutions; liturgical issues to do with inclusive language, women preaching, and for some, the ordination of women to the priesthood and/or diaconate, and remarriage after civil divorce. A minority of respondents rejected reform and instead expressed a preference for the Church to revert to a pre-conciliar model of authority, priesthood and liturgy.

A third major finding is that respondents identified the sexual, physical and emotional abuse of women, children and other vulnerable people as a dominant issue. A substantial majority was concerned about the prevalence of abuse, racism and sexism in church contexts. A small number shared personal experiences of sexual abuse, racism and workplace harassment, while others expressed dismay at the lack of effective action to address the continuing scandal of abuse.

A final major finding is that Catholic women are deeply concerned about transparency and accountability in church leadership and governance. A substantial majority of respondents identified clericalism as having a negative impact on church life. There was also a high level of agreement that a less hierarchal and authoritarian model of Church was urgently needed, with greater collaboration and sharing of responsibility and authority between clergy and laity. Some respondents raised concerns regarding economic justice in church affairs, including the lack of adequate pay for female church workers, both lay and religious.

The ISCW constitutes one of the most extensive surveys of Catholic women ever undertaken. The substantial findings should thus inform lasting and genuine change in church institutions, structures and practices, based on all the principles of synodality set out in the Preparatory Document.

This is a synthesis only. If you would like to read the complete document please email your editor mknowlden@bigpond.com and the electronic version will be sent to you.

The Plight of the Homeless

I read with interest an article in *CathNews* that explained how Archbishop Mark Coleridge is working with the Queensland Government and developers to convert land which belongs to the Catholic Church throughout Queensland into low-cost affordable housing.

I then watched in dismay the ABC's *Four Corners* program last Monday which detailed the plight of low income families who cannot find accommodation in Coffs Harbour. A problem, the reporter stated, exists in nearly every city, town and regional centre in Australia.

The Catholic Church in New South Wales owns a lot of land. If you take my local Parish of St Anthony in the Fields at Terry Hills as an example, there exists parts of the land on that site that is not currently being used. Why can't the Bishops of this State get together and come up with a way of working with the state government and developers to provide land for low cost housing?

You never know, it might attract some younger Catholics to return to their Church if they see it doing something to alleviate a very real problem.

Kevin Doherty
Collaroy Plateau NSW

When homelessness first became an issue in London, the Bishop of Westminster offered the Cathedral hall for overnight accommodation. My sister, Gemma, a registered nurse, was one of the volunteers who welcomed the guests each night, providing them with food, mattresses and blankets for the night. Early morning they would be woken up with something for breakfast, and then sent out for the day, while she and other volunteers helped to disinfect and stack the mattresses, returning the hall to its day use. She also alerted nearby St Thomas's Hospital if any of the guests (many of whom were drug-users) needed treatment. What could be more Christian?

I have yet to hear that either of our Sydney Cathedrals (or cathedrals, churches, church halls and presbyteries throughout Australia) have been so put to such generous and hospitable use.

Let's hope the Queensland initiative is successful and that the idea spreads.

Margaret Knowlden
Editor

The Theology of Fear and Hatred

Alan Clague

Jesus gave his followers a message from his Father of love and forgiveness of sins, although he had dire warnings for those of power and wealth who exploited the poor. He ordered his followers to forgive their enemies and love them (Matt 5:43-48). He was tolerant of those who spoke in his name, even if they were not his immediate followers (Mark 9:38-40). He refused to condemn the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11). God was represented as a loving father who welcomed back a wayward son (Luke 15:11-32).

Soon after his death, Christians and Jews came into conflict, as predicted in John's gospel. The followers of Jesus split into mutually intolerant groups with differing understandings of Jesus. There was conflict with the Gnostics and with the Arians, who did not accept the divinity of Jesus. Following the endorsement of Christianity by emperor Constantine, Church leaders were placed in positions of great power, putting them in even greater danger of the excesses Jesus warned about. With this power, tolerance of difference decreased, and the trinitarian Church eventually split acrimoniously into a 'Catholic' West and an 'Orthodox' East. Arian and Cathar groups were targeted, culminating in the bloody extermination of Albigensians in Southern France. The dominant Christians were also now able to legally repress their original hated enemies, the Jews, which they did with great vigour over the centuries. Local pogroms were initiated by bishops. The spread of another Abrahamic religion, Islam, which conquered a number of Christian countries, stimulated a military response from Western Christians, the bloody Crusades. The final series of these bloody conflicts was the internecine struggles between Catholicism and Protestantism with prominent war, massacres and torture, resulting in mutual hatred.

Early on, some leaders of the 'mainstream' Christian movement developed an antipathy towards sexuality, partly because of the sexual freedom advocated by some Gnostics. The pastoral epistles of the late first century excluded women from the priesthood and leadership roles. Blame for sexual sins was often directed particularly towards women.

Indeed, many prominent saints considered women to be inherently inferior to men, and some were quite misogynistic. St Thomas Aquinas considered male fetuses differentiated earlier than female. Augustine promoted the concept of original sin, transmitted through the generations since Adam and Eve by sexual intercourse, and had a very negative view of sexuality. Through the succeeding centuries sexuality was tolerated but not endorsed, and men were encouraged to fear the seductive power of women. After a thousand years of optional marriage of priests, celibacy became mandatory. Catholics were forbidden to remarry after divorce, although this was tolerated by the Orthodox Churches. Homosexuality was condemned as a hateful, sinful aberration. In the crucial areas of power and sexuality, the Church began to move away from Jesus' message of love, tolerance and forgiveness of others to that of fear and hatred.

Underlying all these fears and hatreds was the fear of punishment in the next life for sins committed in this life. Human sinfulness was emphasised, as was the Church's ability to forgive sin, thereby enabling the penitent to avoid the eternal fires of hell. Indulgences could be obtained to lessen the penitent's liability for temporal punishment in the fires of Purgatory.

The situation in Australia in the years immediately pre-Vatican II reflected these earlier fears and hatred. We prayed for the 'perfidious Jews' and were not allowed to attend Protestant services. The path to salvation was considered to be very difficult for non-Catholics. Indulgences, particularly plenary indulgences, were eagerly accumulated so that time in purgatory could be reduced or eliminated. Pope Pius XII had just allowed families to use the 'rhythm' method of birth control, but families tended to be large. Women could not enter the altar during mass, much less participate as altar servers. Unmarried pregnant women were not treated with dignity, and were virtually forced to give up their newborns for adoption. Remarried divorcees were shunned by the official Church. Homosexual acts were a criminal offence, and homosexuals were reviled and persecuted by the whole heterosexual community.

Vatican II resulted in major changes in many areas. There was an emphasis on tolerance and love, not fear. Jews, Protestants and Orthodox Christians were no longer our enemies. The Pontifical Commission on Population, Family and Birth, created by Pope John XXIII, produced a report accepting use of oral contraceptives, but the influence of conservative Catholics led Pope Paul VI

to ignore the Commission's recommendations and issue the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* which forbade them. However, this has been ignored by Catholics world-wide, as evidenced by the decline in Catholic family size.

If we consider the issue of contraception to be effectively dead, the remaining issues relating to fear and hatred post-Vatican II are non-acceptance of homosexuality and remarried divorcees, and the exclusion of women and (effectively) married men from the priesthood – issues of gender and sexuality. A major goal of most Catholic reform groups is achievement of change in Catholic teaching in these areas. The Church may have moved somewhat from fear and hatred but it still falls short from acceptance and love. There is strong evidence of grass-roots

Australian Catholic support for major reforms in these areas, evidenced by the submissions to the Plenary Council. However, this was not reflected in the recent Plenary Council results. They were supposed to give voice to Australian opinion on areas requiring change, but the outcomes were cosmetic for remarried divorcees, homosexuals and women in the priesthood, and non-existent for married priests. With about 10% of Australian Catholics now attending mass, Rome is burning, but Australian conservative elements are still fiddling with a theology originating in fear and hatred.

ALAN CLAGUE is member of the ARC Secretariat and a long-time contributor to *ARCVoice*

The Pope's 'reasoning' why women can't be priests

In an interview with American Journalists, Kerry Weber posed the question: *Holy Father, as you know, women have contributed and can contribute much to the life of the church. You have appointed many women at the Vatican, which is great. Nevertheless, many women feel pain because they cannot be ordained priests. What would you say to a woman who is already serving in the life of the church, but who still feels called to be a priest?*

Pope Francis' reply: It is a theological problem. I think that we amputate the being of the church if we consider only the way of the ministerial dimension of the life of the church. The way is not only [ordained] ministry. The church is woman. The church is a spouse. **We have not developed a theology of women that reflects this.** The ministerial dimension, we can say, is that of the Petrine church. I am using a category of theologians. The Petrine principle is that of ministry. But there is another principle that is still more important, about which we do not speak, that is the Marian principle, which is **the principle of femininity in the church**, of the woman in the church, where the church sees a mirror of herself because she is a woman and a spouse. A church with only the Petrine principle would be a church that one would think is reduced to its ministerial dimension, nothing else. But the church is more than a ministry. It is the whole people of God. **The church is woman. The church is a spouse. Therefore, the dignity of women is mirrored in this way. etc. etc. etc. (!!!)**

As a further test of the Pope's credibility, go to:

[https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/11/28/pope-francis-interview-america-244225?](https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/11/28/pope-francis-interview-america-244225?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnsid=6r46Uj9VNL1A3POY_Gm5GZaJ4xa_TcJ8Muql2uR39gFmPYz1GKORxCfbKNnsOrLbkCAu93xR)

[utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnsid=6r46Uj9VNL1A3POY_Gm5GZaJ4xa_TcJ8Muql2uR39gFmPYz1GKORxCfbKNnsOrLbkCAu93xR](https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2022/11/28/pope-francis-interview-america-244225?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnsid=6r46Uj9VNL1A3POY_Gm5GZaJ4xa_TcJ8Muql2uR39gFmPYz1GKORxCfbKNnsOrLbkCAu93xR)

We would love to hear ARC Members' reactions to Pope Francis' extraordinary statements. What are they supposed to mean for the dignity of women?

Editor

Karen Armstrong: A force of nature

Peter Stanford

The former nun and writer on world religions talks to Peter Stanford about how early Christians experienced God in the natural world – a bond we must urgently recover in the face of the climate crisis.

I've long had trouble with God.' Karen Armstrong is talking specifically about the contrast between Christianity with its concept of a faraway God, 'stuck in the highest heaven', and Eastern religions where there is much more of a sense of God being present and close at hand in nature. It is the point she makes in her new and challenging – 'I don't usually like telling people what to do but we are in real trouble' – book, *Sacred Nature*, which examines how people of faith can rise emotionally and spiritually, as well as practically, to the climate crisis.

But as the admission that this celebrated intellectual has trouble with God tumbles out amid her flow of remarkable erudition, I find myself reflecting that her words might just as easily encapsulate the best-known parts of her life: struggling with praying to God as a young nun in the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in the 1960s before she left, disillusioned, after seven years, establishing herself as an acclaimed and multi-award-winning international expert on world religions in 1993 with her best-selling *A History of God*; working with the US Senate and House of Representatives after the 9/11 attacks in 2001 to encourage them to separate out acts of appalling terror from the God that their perpetrators claimed as inspiration; and in her many books that have come since, exploring with her trademark scholarship and accessibility where God is found, or not found, in the different faith traditions in their relationship with the forces shaping our modern world.

There remains a small minority in the Catholic Church in this country [i.e. the UK] who continue to regard Armstrong as 'a bad apple' – her words, not mine – especially among that older generation of religious sisters who continue to regard her memoir, *Through the Narrow Gate*, her first book published in 1981, as a betrayal. It was an unflinching and unfavourable description of the convent life she entered in 1962 as Vatican II began.

Armstrong, now 77, is aware of such lingering animosity to her – and indeed has, on occasion, encountered it at public events. Yet her memory of that unhappy period in her life remains vivid. 'They tried to break me in the convent. It was to do with emotions, that is what got to me – the absolute coldness of it, the

lack of affection. It gets into people's hearts and souls and minds. And it is not easy to get back, to start being normal and affectionate, if you have done that for 20 or 30 years. I was only there for a little while.'

However, she is also clear that things have moved on since, for her and the Church. There have been meetings with sisters from her old order who have read her books and admire her gifts as a communicator of complex religious ideas to a wide audience that all too often dismisses faith as irrelevant. There was even an invitation to supper with the remaining SHCJs in their central London house, and she has an enduring network of friendships with other former women religious of similar vintage.

Warm and witty, Armstrong is definitely good company as we talk in her Georgian terraced house in north London. And it is I rather than she who brings up her Catholic roots – growing up in the West Midlands, her parents of Irish origins, her father a 'bankrupt scrap-metal dealer', educated by Holy Child Jesus nuns, entering the order and being sent by them to study at Oxford where her formidable intellect saw her excel in exams. It is all now so long ago, she says, and no longer something that she dwells on.

She does, however, begin *Sacred Nature* with a vignette from her days in the convent. Her university tutor had encouraged her to visit the British Museum (of which much later she was to become a trustee), where she gazed in wonder at handwritten manuscripts by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats. 'I simply wanted to be in their presence.' She writes. 'It was a kind of communion.'

She has included that memory in the new book, she explains, because in their mourning for our broken relationship with nature, the Romantic poets can point a way forward in the climate-crisis debate, in line with her subtitle, 'How we can recover our bond with the natural world'.

Disaster is looming because we have taken nature for granted, seen it as a resource and commodity rather than something alive, spiritually, psychologically and sensuously. Even our encounters with nature in the raw, when we go to coasts and mountains and lakes, are too often dominated, she laments, by the need to take photographs that only further distance us from them and any sense of the divine that inhabits such landscapes.

By way of response, she invokes Wordsworth as a role model to regain what has been lost, especially in the West. She quotes spellbindingly from his 'Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey':

And I have felt
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy
 Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
 Of something far more deeply interfused,
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
 A notion and a spirit that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
 And rolls through all things.

‘That is it,’ she says as she finishes, her eyes flashing. ‘Wordsworth learning to look at nature differently. He had somehow put his mind in place where he could see what *qi* [for Confucians the energy that pervades all life, natural and divine] was saying. And if he has done it, we can do it.’

Her point, I should make clear, is not that we should all become Confucians – though she refers approvingly to one among their number ‘who wouldn’t cut the grass because he said the grass and I are the same’. No, instead she wants those brought up in the Judeo-Christian tradition (Islam is better on nature, she says, as are Eastern Orthodox Christians) to change their mindset, as Wordsworth did, and rediscover a lost sense of God as there in every blade of grass around us, that every inch of land is holy.

The more I read about the subject,’ she reflects on the research that lies behind the book – by design at 200 pages shorter and punchier than what she calls her ‘monumental’ works – ‘the more interested I became that people in China and India had both had a similar conception developed over time quite independently [of each other] not of a God as we know God in Christianity, but of a force running through nature, a sacred force, that is programmed in us, and is about how we should be seeing nature as something physical and spiritual that we can’t even imagine but is there in everything.

For her, she says, it was a way of seeing that made God suddenly so much more present. ‘In the convent, I could not pray, talk to God, because I always knew I was really talking to myself. The way I get my spirituality now is by studying, by reading, and I get moments of insight, of uplift.’

Her prescription for the rest of us is a simple one – something that goes alongside all the recycling, renewables and heat pumps that everyone else is pushing. ‘We have to get out of being obsessed with ourselves,’ she says. ‘We will only do it by working on it, as Wordsworth did. I suggest that for just 10 minutes a day you turn your phone off and listen to the birds. I spend a lot of time in my study upstairs watching a tree outside the window, especially during

winter when the leaves have fallen, and I can see all the creatures coming into it. It is a whole life in a tree. We can all find a place.’

The early Christians, she suggests, understood what she is talking about. And even as late as the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas was speaking of God in his definitive *Summa Theologiae* as ‘present everywhere in everything’. Not a being but rather ‘Being Itself’ (*esse seipsium*).

The rot set in, in her account, when religion responded to the rise of scientific rationalism from the seventeenth century onwards by ditching time-honoured distinctions, for example between mythos and logos. Regular readers of Armstrong will recognise this as one of the abiding themes in her books. Mythos is about conveying timeless meaning and deeper truths, while logos is objective facts. Once they were regarded by people of faith as complementary, but with the rise of science mythos was sidelined. She quotes Descartes to make the point. The seventeenth-century mathematician, philosopher and Catholic remarked of the new orthodoxy: ‘We will no longer have cause to wonder about anything.’ Yet a sense of wonder is precisely what Armstrong feels we need, to grasp what nature is.

So, is she saying that Christianity, by losing sight of God in nature, and thereby allowing it to be plundered, has somehow caused climate change? ‘No, I am not. To begin with it is what we have made of Christianity ... We have become more concerned with our technology and science, which of course has done wonderful things. But then look at Einstein. He got it about nature, when he talks about transcendence and the absolute myself of life, and looking into the universe. ‘In that sense only,’ he says, ‘I am a religious man’.

Her ability to summon up examples and quotations from history – often conveying the opposite of what we have come to believe well-known thinkers would say – is humbling. And challenging too the very quality that she has sought to instil in *Sacred Nature*: a challenge to think differently in the face of climate change, to recover ways of looking at things, including God (however troublesome), that will give a spiritual and psychological underpinning to the huge adjustments we must make in our lives.

‘All the environmental stuff is telling us is scientific facts. And they don’t move us emotionally. They frighten us. Being frightened is no good. Yet we are in great danger somehow with nature as we have to recover a sense of it that we would have had centuries and centuries ago.’ Before, I hear myself, adding, it is too late.

PETER STANFORD is an award-winning British writer, journalist and broadcaster, best known for his biographies and books on the history, theology and cultural significance of religious ideas.

60th Anniversary of Vatican II—and its aftermath

Pope Francis yesterday marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council by pleading for the Church to ‘overcome all polarisation and preserve our communion’.

In a Mass in St Peter’s Basilica, which served as the Council’s chambers during the 1962-1965 meetings, the Pope said the Council, which was inaugurated by Pope St John XXIII, was ‘one great response’ to the question: ‘Do you love me?’ posed by Christ to his disciples.

‘To rekindle her love for the Lord, the Church, for the first time in her history, devoted a council to examining herself and reflect on her nature and mission,’ the Pope said.

Yet while the ecumenical council revisited many areas of Catholic doctrine, reassessed its relationship with other Christian communities and religions, revised Catholic liturgy to allow for the vernacular, and reconfigured Church structures to allow for greater participation of the laity, in the 60 years that have followed, it also proved to be a flashpoint among various ecclesial circles.

During the 60th anniversary Mass, Francis lamented that those changes had sometimes led to deep divisions within the Church and warned against the temptation of ‘worldliness’.

‘Let us be careful: Both the ‘progressivism’ that lines up behind the world and the ‘traditionalism’ that longs for a bygone world are not evidence of love, but of infidelity.’

During the Mass, the Pope once more reiterated his support for the reforms of Vatican II.

‘How timely the Council remains!’ he said. ‘It helps us reject the temptation to enclose ourselves within the confines of our own comforts and convictions.’

Source: *NCR Online*

Editor’s Note:

Notable changes that I remember were:

Immediate:

- ◆ Mass was no longer said in Latin
- ◆ The Priest faced the congregation during Mass
- ◆ Fasting from midnight before receiving Communion was no longer obligatory
- ◆ Women no longer had to wear hats or veils in church
- ◆ The laity started to take part in the Mass as readers and distributors of Communion
- ◆ The altar rails disappeared
- ◆ Communion-on-the-hand and sipping from the chalice started

In the longer term:

- ◆ No more rules about ‘Fish on Friday’;
- ◆ No more Limbo for unbaptised babies;
- ◆ No more Purgatory;
- ◆ Catholic events like Benediction, the ‘Nine First Fridays’, Novenas, Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary and Corpus Christi Processions were mostly discontinued;
- ◆ ‘Indulgences’ were no longer mentioned;
- ◆ Fortnightly ‘Confessions’ gradually disappeared;
- ◆ ‘Catholic Guilt’ ceased to haunt us;
- ◆ The Catholic Index of Forbidden Books was officially closed on June 14, 1966;
- ◆ We were permitted to attend non-Catholic services without first asking permission from the PP;
- ◆ We learned to be guided by our own consciences (e.g. *Humanae Vitae*) – hence smaller Catholic families;
- ◆ With no more threats of ‘mortal sin’, attendance at Sunday Mass dropped significantly;
- ◆ Parish Councils were established;
- ◆ Lay people gradually took over work previously reserved for nuns, priests and brothers: teaching, nursing, childcare, social work, etc;
- ◆ Children’s homes and orphanages were closed in favour of smaller group homes and foster parenting;
- ◆ Lay people became involved in readings and distribution of Holy Communion;
- ◆ Nuns discarded their medieval habits, and moved from large institutions into smaller communities;
- ◆ Priests mostly abandoned their clerical collars;
- ◆ Vocations to the priesthood or convent life dropped dramatically;
- ◆ There was a great exodus from religious life by priests and nuns and many found partners and married;
- ◆ Feminist Theology was a new concept and women began to demand equal status with men, including the priesthood;
- ◆ Latin hymns were replaced by Australian/English versions;
- ◆ Spiritually-enriching movements like Marriage Encounter, Cursillo, Paulian Societies and Antioch were founded and run by the laity.

They were liberating days indeed!

What else have I forgotten? Perhaps ARC Members who are old enough to have experienced the changes which the Church went through during and after the Council would like to share their memories and impressions with us? We would love to hear what you remember of those momentous changes and exciting times, and the changes which they made to your life.

Margaret Knowlden
Editor

Have your say!

ARC*Voice* is a report of news, opinion and reflection on the renewal and reform currently experienced 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

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