



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics
December 2004
Issue No. 14

ARC Battles Ban - Campfire 2004 Huge Success

Report To ARC Membership

Over sixty delegates attended ARC Campfire 2004, the Second National Conference of Australian Reforming Catholics held in The Independent Theatre, Miller Street, North Sydney on Saturday and Sunday, October 23rd and 24th. Like the first National Conference held at Abbotsleigh College, an Anglican Girls' School at Wahroonga NSW in 2002, ARC Campfire 2004 was held around the theme of 'Conversations around Jesus Christ our Friend'. The brochure advertising the Conference carried the original ARC logo as well as the Campfire logo, both designed by ARC member Alan Holroyd and both now easily recognisable as emblematic of ARC.

Preamble

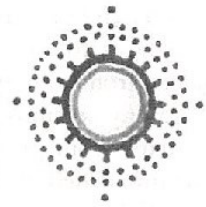
Despite forward planning by Barbara Campbell, who largely organised it, the Conference was not, unfortunately, held on catholic property, through the intervention of Cardinal George Pell of Sydney who formally instructed the Sisters of St Joseph to cancel the booking for the Conference which Barbara had made at Mary McKillop Place, Mount Street, North Sydney. The reason given was that teaching against catholic doctrine would occur at the Conference. The inclusion of Michael Kelly, gay activist, among the list of speakers may have prompted this Episcopal statement. In the event, it was unfounded. The Cardinal also formally instructed two of his priests who had contracted to give talks at the Conference to withdraw, so as not to seem to lend respectability to the Conference. Much worse, the Cardinal instructed Bishop Pat Power of Canberra-Goulburn not to assist in the planned Liturgy at the Conference because a non-catholic pastor had been nominated to preach.

Sister Katrina Brill rsj, Congregational leader of the Sisters of St Joseph and Bishop Power accepted the Cardinal's demands. But they both publicly dissented from his opposition to ARC's intention to discuss matters of

catholic interest at the Campfire. Sister Katrina also secured for ARC the alternative venue, The Independent Theatre, at no additional cost to ARC. The two Sydney priests were in a more difficult position as their jobs could have been on the line.

Later, in belated response to a letter from ARC seeking some explanation, the Cardinal's Secretary suggested that it is usual practice for groups meeting in the Archdiocese to give prior notice to the Cardinal. There may be issues of Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Association to be discussed here. The use of Catholic property may also be an issue.

The attempted ban on the Conference got what it deserved, public exposure in the media and widespread condemnation. Stephen Crittenden, in his religious programme on ABC Radio National, aired live interviews with Sister Katrina and Bishop Power, both defending



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the right of ARC to hold their Conference and discuss issues of catholic interest. *The Australian* published a substantial news story covering the same ground and quoting Sister Katrina and the Bishop. *The Advertiser* in Adelaide had a small paragraph about Bishop Power's espousal of ARC's right to discuss the Conference issues. *Online Catholics*, a weekly on the Internet, carried the story as its Lead feature.

The Campfire

After these alarms and excursions (which took their toll on Barbara!) it was a relief to get the Conference under way on Saturday, 23rd October. John Buggy very competently chaired all the sessions over the two days. Jim Taverne attended both days in spite of adverse health and, in the opening minutes led us in a short prayer composed by Paul Denny – 'Jesus our Friend, you are with us in all our conversations. Help us realise that we are church, and that any reform starts with ourselves. Enable us to pass on to our contemporaries insights gained from your Spirit. Amen'.

Many sessions had 50 delegates present, and the upstairs room provided at the venue could not have accommodated many more. There was a large table for the chair, secretary and those about to address the Conference. An overhead projector was available and someone brought a laptop computer with CD projection facilities that came into increasing use as the Conference proceeded. All presentations and plenary discussions were recorded. Margaret Knowlden will, in good time, produce these in 'ARC Occasional Papers 2' to join the first publication after the 2002 Conference.

The atmosphere throughout was heady. Apart from the facilitation of the Chair this came also from the easy approaches of delegates to each other, which breaks for morning and afternoon tea and a common lunchroom

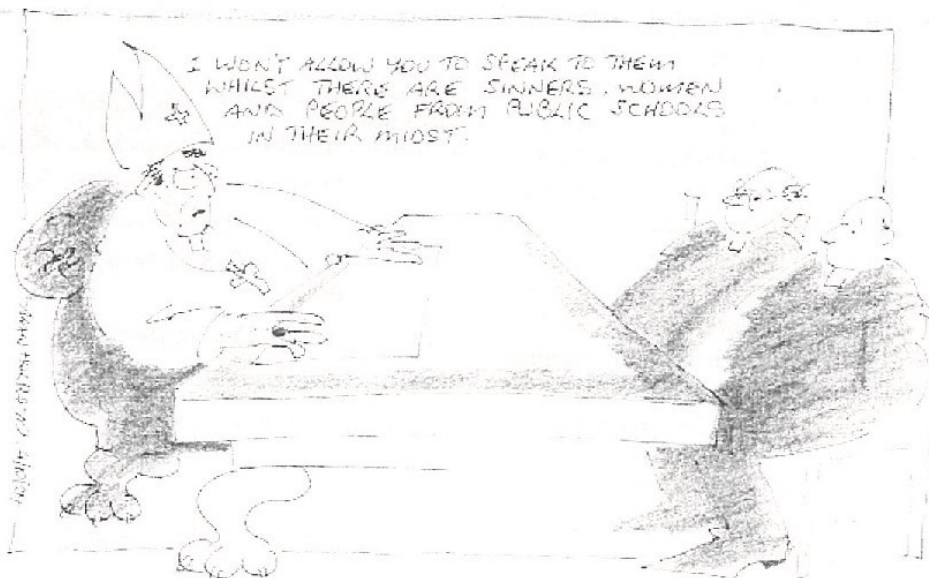
assisted, as did the breakouts into smaller discussion groups. The largest element in this excitement, however, was the quality of the speakers and their presentations. Buy *ARC Occasional Papers 2* when it is available to share in this élan.

This was a reform conference, the topics were about reform issues, and those in attendance had their hearts gladdened to listen to like-minded people, especially those who were experts in their field. The Campfire ended in high hopes that ARC may begin to bite into the reform agenda in the Australian Church. But the one misgiving continued to be about membership. We need members to breed members. There are just over 100 members, not all faithfully financial, concentrated in NSW but represented also in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, Northern Territory, New Zealand, Norway, USA.

Over the two days 32 resolutions were formulated, necessarily in some haste and, with the use of the laptop computer and willing operators, printed out under 12 headings. A further 26 observations were recorded to keep the Secretariat busy in the future.

On Saturday night some 30 of us who had prepaid \$25 each met at the Spicy Island Malaysian restaurant in North Sydney to enjoy a meal together which was worth every cent. A Barbara Campbell special.

The AGM established a Secretariat of 11 members to guide ARC until the next Campfire. Those elected were Barbara Campbell, John Buggy, Jim Taverne, Paul Denny, Michael Gravener, Chris Crothers, Lynne Green, Ann Ryan, Ted Lambert, Rob Brian, Rosemary Dustmann. Eight live in or around Sydney but all are on the Net and will keep in touch by email. Barbara, Ann and Rosemary found it necessary to resign subsequently because of pressing commitments.



Australian Reforming Catholics Campfire Declaration 2004

ARC Campfire 2004 was held in an atmosphere of conversations around Jesus Christ, our Friend, and a prayerful desire to be led by the Spirit of God. We shared our concerns about a perceived need for reform in our Church in Australia. Fifteen keynote speakers and small-group and plenary discussions over two days raised many issues. These come under the following three broad headings, which we ask ordinary Catholics to consider as a way forward – in faith and hope and love:

- **hearing the voice of the faithful;**
- **undoing the patriarchal accident of history;**
- **love being the main way of relating – not the Law.**

All of these require immense change to take place. Theologically, the Church is the people – it seems that in the first years of Christianity the community was an expression of this. It was probably easier, then, to determine the *sensus fidelium*, i.e. what the people believed. Such a time has come again, with widespread literacy and worldwide instant communication. We only need a shift in perception – from an authoritarian to a communitarian outlook. It means empowering ordinary people and those in control letting go of systems of power acquired in very different times.

Hearing the voice of the faithful: ensuring accountability

People in parishes no longer wish to endure the pain of having their pastors removed without consultation. We need to have priests and bishops appointed by the people to serve God and the people – the present system places them above the people. Major pastoral and financial decisions need to be made with the people's consent, be widely available and accurately reported on. Parish and Diocesan Pastoral Councils, Diocesan Synods and guaranteed access to shared decision-making need to be the norm.

Liturgies need to become more open to expressing the genius and culture of those taking part, rather than be exclusive and narrowly limited to a form which ties them to a distant past.

Restrictions on genuine freedom of conscience and on discussion of all religious and moral issues, including gender and sexuality, need to be removed.

Such shifts will acknowledge the Holy Spirit, dwelling in and informing not just a traditional ruling class, but all the people – and that the times are right for prophecy. Slavery and the subjugation of women have passed into history. The same needs to happen to absolute minority rule.

Concerning patriarchy

Our Church needs to be energised by a 'mindshift' which will refine the language and imagery of the dominant male and patriarchal thinking that pervades our received church culture. Our primary focus needs to be on purifying the language of the liturgy, creeds, prayers, hymns and religious conversation from exclusive and male-naming words for God. Other practices which elevate men and dishonour women – especially in Scripture readings, need to be removed. 'The Church' should no longer be used to mean Pope, Cardinals, Bishops and Priests, i.e. the clergy, as in 'The Church teaches . . .'. The people are the Church. More careful use of language will correct such practices.

Participants at the Campfire supported the idea of having a Feast of Jesus our Friend.

Love, not the law

Since Vatican II there has been an outward movement: the Pope apologising to Jewish people, engagement with science, improving relations with other churches. But Catholics often feel constrained by decisions which seem to give preference to the Law over Love.

Clearly, gay and lesbian Catholics deserve an apology for the pain of being unjustly discriminated against. Divorced and re-married Catholics are, as a group, excluded from the Eucharist. Aboriginal Catholics find themselves excluded from the priesthood and other leadership rôles by cultural criteria within their Church.

Constantly, pastors who seek innovative ways, particularly in liturgy, to attract and welcome people to gather as a community, find themselves looking over their shoulders for potential critics. Even some bishops do not always support compassion by individual Catholics for refugees, marginalised and indigenous people, and the community's advocacy of social justice in government and in corporate practice.

These are rarely simple issues. But people will recognise when love and compassion prevail over system, safety and law. They will also know when power is being used capriciously. Our hope is that the change John XXIII wanted will arrive as a breath of fresh air in the Spirit.

Love is the way!



A Way Forward and Perceptions of ARC

The incoming Secretariat of ARC has reviewed the manner in which ARC presents itself and has formulated the following statements to convey its mission and action. The statements are more general than some of those in the previous charter and do not highlight or emphasise any particular issues. We hope that this allows us room to grow as all members have the opportunity to participate in shaping our future and as we respond appropriately to the need for reform in our Church.

We present the statements here and invite comment by members. Please respond, if you so desire, by writing to the Editor given in this issue, or join and contribute your thoughts to the discussion group at e-arc@yahoo.com, or phone me directly on 02 9451 8393. The approach that we take will be in accord with the statements and new promotional information will be prepared as we seek to expand our membership.

John Buggy

Australian Reforming Catholics

Australian Reforming Catholics as an organisation is a group of Catholics who are committed to achieving change within our Church.

We wish to see and experience our Church structures, practices and teachings more closely reflecting the love of Jesus Christ as reflected in the Gospels.

We seek to overcome the central dominance of hierarchical structures that prevent many in our Church from responding to the Spirit in conscience to what they inwardly believe and to what they consider should be done as a result of that belief.

We wish to take action to deal with the issues in our Church that prevent ourselves and others from coming to an understanding and experience of the simplicity of Jesus' message of love, justice and peace.

To enact this commitment we will:

Converse

- Engage in conversation with those who join us about the richness of the faith we share and our needs in being able to practice it
- Draw in others who are disillusioned with their experience in our Church and offer them by conversation support in their spiritual search

Educate

- Bring ourselves to an increased understanding of our Church and its often hidden riches
- Provide forums where experts on theological, social and moral issues can enable ourselves and others to grow in understanding of how to live in and change our Church

Challenge

- Speak out on matters that those in authority in our Church should be addressing in order to reflect what Jesus taught
- Propose and publicise well-informed opinions about changes required in our Church structures, practices and teachings that will enable more people to experience the richness of what Jesus gave us.

In undertaking the commitment to action we hope to reflect the true meaning of meekness – 'never be angry when it is you who is wronged, but have the courage to express appropriate anger when others are wronged'.

Profiles of Members of the new ARC Secretariat

Rob Brian migrated to Australia from The Netherlands and spent twelve years with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. After leaving MSC he became a law librarian, holding the positions of first librarian of the High Court of Australia; founding law librarian at the University of New South Wales and, prior to his recent retirement, NSW Parliamentary Librarian. Rob's concern is that Vatican II reform has stalled and that in many areas Church leadership appears out of touch with its membership. Rob hopes to contribute his tuppence worth to bring about reform and is involved in OCT, WATAC, Catalyst for Renewal, Spirituality in the Pub and his local parish.

John Buggy has been conducting his own management consultancy during the past twenty years, advising on major organisational challenge in the public and private sectors. He was forced to resign from the priesthood in the 70's after his research led him to speak out on the church's position on birth control. John has a Licentiate in Theology, an Honours Degree in Social Work and post-graduate studies in Organisational Behaviour and Industrial Relations. He has lectured at several universities. John is particularly interested in working with people to form effective strategies for change and leads a successful progress association in his local government area.

Chris Crothers is a Carmelite in the Teresian tradition of contemplation and action for the church and the world; she aspires to live a contemporary expression of this spirituality. Her professional background is in education with tertiary qualifications in Sociology, Education, Religious Education and Librarianship, with current studies in Theology and Spirituality. Her special interest is Women and Church and she supports OCW, WATAC, Women Space and anyone who dares to speak out with a prophetic voice. Chris hopes to contribute to consciousness-raising and reform so that the church can more truly be the place where the compassionate and inclusive Christ comes into our world.

Paul Denny joined the Christian Brothers in search of an identity – as he later saw it – having been orphaned as a child. He grew increasingly uneasy about Christian Brother attitudes to women and, after much soul-searching, left after 32 years. He met Theresa who was similarly in church reform; they married and have a teenage family. Paul continued teaching and later became a psychologist in Community Health and in private practice, from which he is now retired. Paul lives in Victoria and became active in church reform through Australians Networking for Reform. He is particularly interested in a campaign to combat clericalism and dualism through education of ordinary catholics.

Michael Gravener was raised to appreciate the lived dimension of catholic faith. While recuperating from a severe illness, he cared for his parents and his sister who died during this time. Michael was a volunteer pilot for the Franciscans in outback Queensland and Papua New Guinea. He worked amongst the Aboriginal people of Redfern as a Saint John of God brother and left the Order prior to profession in order to respect and honour his relationship with the people of the First Nations. Michael is qualified in Applied Aboriginal Studies and has degrees in Theology and Social Work. In his current employment as Executive Officer of The Settlement, Michael continues to serve the Redfern community.

Lynne Green has spent most of her adult life in two working contexts: education and ecumenism. She is a Brigidine sister, professed in 1964 – and has worked extensively in secondary schools and in adult education at St Paul's National Seminary where she was Registrar. Lynne is currently Liaison Officer of Sydney's Catholic Ecumenical Commission. She is a member of two working groups of the New South Wales Ecumenical Council: the Refugee Support Group and the Taizé Planning Group. In her parish she helps animate meditative prayer nights to focus eumenical celebrations. The Taizé Pilgrimage of Trust and engagement in women's ecumenical action have been life-changing involvements for her.

Ted Lambert was with the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart for 33 years but now functions happily in the lay state and resides (in retirement) with his wife, Rosemary, in South Australia. He is a member of Epiphany Australia Association and Ordination of Catholic Women. His enduring concern is the subordination of the ordinary catholic under an autocratic, patriarchal and clerical model of church which Ted believes is causing confusion, suffering and alienation for increasing numbers of Catholics, especially women. Although this situation may worsen, Ted sees a prophetic role for those who are suffering in order that justice may follow. Ted manages the ARC website.

Jim Taverne was born in The Hague into a large family who encouraged him to think. Armed with a law degree, he undertook national service in the Dutch army as secretary of the Military Court. He later joined the Netherlands Insurance Co. working in The Netherlands, Indonesia, Canada and, since 1963, in Australia. He married Margot in Indonesia and they have five children and many grandchildren. For years he looked for people who supported catholic women's ordination before finding OCW and becoming a member immediately. Membership of the Eighth May Movement made him keen to be involved with wider reform. Jim and Margot offer their home and hospitality for ARC meetings.

Spies in the Pews

We have been in a sort of torpor (or maybe stupor) since the very excellent Campfire last month but are gradually awakening. As an example of the sort of things we talk about, and try to do something about – not an easy task – I refer to an article printed in *The Courier-Mail* on Tuesday.

Last Sunday week we were present at the baptism of a grand-son at St Mary's, South Brisbane. It was a friendly, Christian gathering with beautiful liturgical music from a grand piano, the congregation milling round the altar – a table in the middle of the Church – watching the baptism of three babies during mass. The criticism apparently came from a grandparent (who did not give his/her name) and Archbishop Bathersby was asked to intervene.

The article was headed: 'CHURCH REBUKED FOR 'NEW BAPTISM' and begins: 'Doubt has been cast on the validity of hundreds of baptisms at a Brisbane Catholic church'.

'I can't possibly believe they are invalid', Fr Kennedy said. However, he agreed to return to the traditional words in the face of a threat on canonical sanction which could result in his removal from office.

'One of the problems with the Church is the right-wing people who have the ear of Rome,' Fr Kennedy said. 'They come to your church as spies to report you in a poor light because you are seen to have broken the liturgical rules.'

Fr Kennedy said he did not believe that children would need to be rebaptised. He said the words 'Creator, Liberator and Sustainer' had been intended to be 'more inclusive' and less patriarchal. 'But baptism is more than

words, it's a lifelong commitment,' he said. 'I don't understand what the problem is'. Archbishop Bathersby was at a conference in Sydney and could not be contacted. End of article.

The mass we attended for the baptism was the closest to what we imagine a gathering in the early Church would have been like. The priests, Peter Kennedy and Terry Fitzpatrick, were dressed in casual clothes (the equivalent of what Jesus probably wore – in other words no brocade, satin or lace vestments) and welcomed everyone – including two old derelicts, one of whom walked over to the alter-table and proceeded to drink the altar wine from the glass chalice!!! The priests were obviously used to such unorthodox behaviour and, after a few kind words to the culprit, removed the chalice to the sacristy – no doubt for a good wash!! The old guy then took up the microphone and started to give us his version of a homily, with speech somewhat slurred. The mike was gently removed and he was told he could have his say at the end of mass – which he did but I couldn't understand a word!

Last Sunday we travelled an hour from where we live to attend mass again at this church which is filled with love, acceptance and intelligence. We have never felt more strongly that Christ was among us. And they are threatening to close it down.

Could we send a message of support or do Peter and Terry already know that we sympathise with their dilemma?

Bill and Elizabeth Flamstead
splyard@bigpond.com

Please refer to *Online Catholics* for the response from ARC to this issue by John Buggy entitled 'The Sacraments, Relationships and Meaning'

Tribute to Barbara

Barbara Campbell, who was the energy behind the establishment of Australian Reforming Catholics about four years ago, has recently retired from the ARC organising committee. ARC is much indebted to Barbara for her enthusiasm for, and commitment to, church reform. Barbara has a vision of a totally inclusive church and has been prepared to give her time and best efforts over the years to progress this vision. We thank you, Barbara, for all you have done and for bringing ARC into being.

International Observations

Australian Reforming Catholics are not the only ones:

In the same weekend as our Campfire 2004 there was a Conference of *Wir sind Kirche* in Regensburg about *Sensus Fidelium: pious cliché or achievable reality?*

In a curt letter, Cardinal Joachim Meisner of Cologne forbade the French bishop Jacques Gaillot to speak in any place in his Diocese. Gaillot was to hold a discussion with Eugen Drewermann in an open forum – organised by *Wir sind Kirche* – with the title *Being a Christian in the Third Millennium – Faith which gives hope*. This Forum took place in the Beethoven Hall in Bonn on 28 October and Gaillot's address was read. There were well over 1000 attendees.

A similar open forum with these two speakers had been organised on 17 June 2004 in Ulm with the theme *Farewell to the Clerical Church*. On that occasion Meisner had attacked the host, Bishop Gerhard Fürst of Stuttgart-Rottenburger and the President of the German Bishops' Conference Cardinal Karl Lehmann of Mainz, for not preventing the French bishop from attending.

Cardinal Meisner's intervention in Bonn led to a flood of protesting letters to him.

Jaques Gaillot is the peripatetic bishop of Partenia. He lives among the downtrodden in Paris. His diocese is 'without borders' through his website www.partenia.org. (See *arvoice* no.10). One of the reasons why Cardinal Meisner does not like him could be something Bishop Gaillot recently declared:

'A union (marriage) between homosexual persons is the work of the Holy Spirit. Why should a marriage of two homosexual persons be prohibited? Our democracy, which is based on human rights, cannot ignore this development. Theologically, I would say that the Holy Spirit is at work here, in the desire of homosexuals for a civil wedding. We, Christians, have sacralised the classic civil marriage (relationship between heterosexuals) so much that nothing else is allowed to exist. This has to change. Jesus himself put the heterosexual marriage in the second place. He renounced his family. Other forms of togetherness were important to him. He said 'Who does God's will, who loves justice, is my brother and my sister'. Jesus considered the biological family not so important anymore.'

Jacques Gaillot thinks that for the church leadership the traditional civil family is the last bastion for which it fights. He himself has taken another path: 'I have nothing against the blessing of homosexual couples. I have had good experience with them already.'

The Marënburgenvereniging of The Netherlands (introduction see *arvoice* no.11) held their annual Conference on 30 October in Amersfoort (in the centre of their small country) on the theme of *Being Church? Be strong!* 'So many ordinary Catholics and parishes suffer the resistance against renewal'.

Note: Many ordinary Catholics and parishes in Australia suffer in the same way; the worst would be the St Vincent's Parish in Redfern NSW.

Prof. Rik Torfs of the Catholic University of Leuven speaks out:

Adventurers are not welcome! Today's Catholics are people of principles with lips clamped together. They show the painful grimace of the merciless virtue. Big-hearted adventurers – who sometimes may swerve a little away from the norms but remain fighting for the ideals which they love and relativise – are no longer welcome. The Church of love and charity has been replaced by an institution that keeps hammering on principles and knows how to infallibly explain what is forbidden. The Church has become the institution of prohibition. That Church says no to life!

Catholic Reincarnation

Is there a place for belief in reincarnation in Catholic thought? Yes, there is. In the Catholic liturgy a great deal of attention and care has always been devoted to the dead through prayers and offerings for their purification and healing which are required for the full participation in the glory of God. Even if someone has lived her/his life in accordance with God's commandments, it is still possible that the purification process must be continued after death in order to make her/him ready for the unity with God. The fact that the Church prays for that outcome means that after death there is still room for healing and cleansing. The Church has never declared the 'how' of this process. The word 'purgatorium' only indicates that there is a possibility of purification, but does not specify its method. Well, if God has decided to realise this process of healing and cleansing – wholly or partly – by new possibilities during repeated periods on Earth, who will forbid God to do that? (a letter to the editor of *de Bazuin* on 22-4-02)

Quotable quotes

I deem it no less virtue to know how well to keep silent than to know how well to speak; and therefore me thinketh that a man ought to have a long neck like a crane so that, when a man wishes to speak, his words would pass through many joints before they reach his mouth. (St Francis of Assisi)

Small minds discuss people; average minds discuss events; great minds discuss ideas. (SDA News)

If you are afraid don't speak. But when you speak don't be afraid. (L'abancse saying)

Have your say!

ARCvoice 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 (maximum length: articles 700 words, letters 100 words)

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

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Proceedings of Campfire 2004

Australian Reforming Catholics

"Conversations around Jesus Christ our Friend"

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