



**Occasional
Papers**

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**Conversations Around
Jesus Christ Our Friend**

(John 15:14-17)



Proceedings of

**The Inaugural Conference of
Australian Reforming Catholics**

Keynote Speaker:

Father Tissa Balasuriya OMI

4 - 6 October 2002 Abbotsleigh, Wahroonga
(Sydney)

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Prelude

The transcriptions of the addresses given at the Inaugural Conference are presented here so that those who attended the Conference might relive them and those who did not might experience them for the first time.

During the Conference the first AGM was held and an Interim Committee elected. Its mandate is: to encourage around the country the formation of Chapters of initiative (see ARCvoice 6); to re-examine and refine the Trial Structure of ARC (available upon request) with a view to incorporating; and to develop general ARC policies and strategies.

Prior to the Conference the development of ARC has been guided by an Interim Secretariat consisting of Barbara Campbell, Ted Lambert and Jim Taverne. They would each like to express their main kernel of hope for the future of ARC:

Barbara True conversations imply free and open discussions where opinions are expressed in a respectful manner and where no conclusions are sought or necessarily made. However, everyone should leave a conversation a little wiser and, with respect to some important truths, a little closer to consensus (the *sensus fidelium*). I would like to see the theme of the Conference become the normal spiritual milieu of all those striving to reform the Church.

Ted: The structures of the Catholic Church must change to truly allow for a *sensus fidelium* to emerge as a real alternative to the clergy teaching down to the people. The theological basis for this is the doctrine that the Holy Spirit inhabits us all as individuals (sinful though we are) and reveals Christ to our hearts. I see the assembling of the ordinary Catholic to this task as being the main endeavour of ARC. An immediate project is the removal of exclusive language and imagery from Catholic life and ritual. While this is proceeding, a raising of consciousness will occur and perhaps conscience will be alerted to the injustice that exclusive male power does: to god (who is not male); to women in the Church; and to males themselves because of the sad illusion it puts them under.

Jim: At ARC's Inaugural Conference the conversations around Jesus, our friend, were held in a special format with which not all of us were completely relaxed at the start. It was a really new experience. Let us proceed from this beginning and continue our conversations in various ways among members and not-yet members, talking our way towards the principal goal of ARC, namely to build up the *sensus fidelium* of the People of God. Let us think about our beliefs and share them and our experiences on our faith journey with others.

The Design of the Banner

for ARC Conference 2002

by the artist

The theme: *Conversations Around Jesus Our Friend*

The colour white prevails, revealing the exterior and interior presence of the divine being we call God. White is the brightest and most reflective of the colour spectrum.

The multi-dimensional character of our divinity has a long symbolic tradition of expression using three circles: the three persons of God. In this depiction, the yellow represents whom we call the first person of God, the orange is an expression of the Holy Spirit while the vibrant red symbolises Jesus of Nazareth who personified and materialised a new way, a new truth and a new life.

The extensions of the red circle show the disciples, a small community collected around a campfire perhaps, or around a table, talking with Jesus. The red represents the visibles while the white is the invisibles that are a real part of the community of God.

The dots show the extended family, the village, the suburb, and the people of the world and beyond. Again, the colours of the visibles and invisible are a part of the narrative.

The four outer dots reflect the ancient Christian symbol of the cross that links traditions of the past to the emerging signs of the new.

The colours red, black, yellow and the dots link to the indigenous peoples of the land we now call Australia. It was and it is this land that forms an integral belonging to their faith belief, which is now being explored by newcomers.

Alan Holroyd

Speakers Bio-Details

Tissa Balasuriya OMI was born in Sri Lanka and educated there and in Rome, Oxford and Paris. He is founder and director of the Centre for Society and Religion in Colombo and a founding member of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT). His publication, *Mary and Human Liberation*, caught the disapproving attention of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith which excommunicated him in January 1997 but this was rescinded after an agreed settlement.

Veronica Brady IBVM, originally from Melbourne, has spent most of her adult life in Perth associated with the English Department of the University of Western Australia. Educated at Melbourne and Toronto Universities, she obtained her MA and Ph.D. at the latter. Sr Brady has also held several public posts including the Board of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Brian Gore, a Columban missionary priest, was assigned in 1969 to Negros Island in the Philippines where he organised parishioners into small Christian communities dedicated to achieving justice by active non-violence. This attracted the enmity of corrupt government officials. During 1982-84 Fr Gore and several parishioners were arrested on trumped-up charges, including murder. After 50 court hearings, all charges were dropped and he was deported. He is currently convenor of the Peace, Ecology & Justice Centre at the Columban Mission Institute in Sydney.

Therese Vassarotti is Executive Officer of the Commission for Australian Catholic Women created as a recommendation of *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*, the report commissioned by the Bishops Committee for Justice, Development and Peace. Therese is a consultant with the Catholic Education Office on the Formulation of Religious Education Guidelines for the Archdiocese of Canberra/Goulburn and is a casual lecturer in Religious Education at Australian Catholic University. She is convenor of Spirituality in the Pub in Canberra. Therese is married to Kevin and has three sons and three daughters.

(Transcription of her address not printed here.)

Mark Yettica-Paulson is an indigenous man from the Birri Gubba and Bunjalong peoples. Mark was born in Darwin to Graham and Iris Paulson, Baptist missionaries working among the Gurindji people. He studied at the University of Queensland and the Baptist College of Victoria. Mark is co-director of the Indigenous Future Leaders Forum for the Foundation for Young Australians. He is currently Executive Officer of the Lingjari Foundation. Mark is married to Maryann and has two children.

Jesus Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Tissa Balasuriya OMI

I have a topic that is fairly vast and partly imaginary – *Jesus Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. The first presentation is on *Jesus Yesterday* – as far as we know of Jesus, as he really was when he was alive, before he descended into hell and came up from there as we say every Sunday. Secondly is *Jesus Today*. I was thinking of the period 325 Council of Nicene until – for some people – Vatican II, for some others till about 2003. That is Jesus today. *Jesus Tomorrow* is what most of us will see for the rest of this century, so this is wholly imaginative.

My thesis is roughly this: that in our present world, is it legitimate to go back to the Jesus of the first centuries and of the gospel? Is it legitimate for us to have a theology similar to what was in the church in the first three centuries? If so, what have we to conserve, what happened afterwards in theology and what would be the relevance of the first three centuries for the 21st century?

Yesterday: Now in the first part I will say things which we all know about Jesus and his teaching and his personality. I don't have to repeat that the gospels give different perspectives of Jesus. The Synoptics and St John present Jesus decades after his death in the way that people were reflecting on his life and so there is a good deal of evidence that is real plus also a bit of imagination. One thing very important in theology is to have imagination, as for instance that three kings came from the east and were following a star and what we think in Sri Lanka is that one of them was from Sri Lanka! So you are allowed to say that one came from Australia, I suppose! But those are stories. Many of you are scholars and are leaders in your communities so I leave that open. But if you reflect for a few minutes: what is the personality of Jesus, what type of person was he, you will answer that he was a young man, the type of person who might not come to these seminars as you were saying yesterday. He was from a poor family; he was kind, noble. There are many different books and films presenting Jesus, invariably reflecting that God is love. When he was asked: What is your main commandment? he gave that summary: Love God and love one another. When he was asked about eternal life, he said that it was very difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom, and remember his advice to the rich young person. He also said in Matthew 25, eternal life is for those who would give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty. And he taught mainly in the form of parables and stories. He did not have an ecclesiastical council to

define dogma. There were no definitions of dogma. His understanding of morality was that you were to be honest, sincere, truthful – not say that we would do something and not do it. So you know the type of person Jesus was in his life. He knew the Father he said and the Father knew him. At the same time, there are certain things he did not know. If you take the texts of the gospel, it would seem that he probably thought the end of the world was coming and told the apostles and everyone else to be ready for it. He was not a political leader as such but he was strongly critical of the type of political power or the type of exploitation that took place. He was also against the Roman Empire. His idea of prayer was not to go into a church; he did not build a church or even a sanctuary. It was to meet God in the reality of life and he did not want to have long ceremonies and chasubles etc. He wanted honesty and sharing. So you know this Jesus and what he taught and for him the important thing was the Kingdom of God which he spoke of very often. Only twice he spoke of the community of church. Others would say that what he began was the community of disciples – disciples who were equal, as Elisabeth Fiorenza would say. So there are many comments like that on Jesus. What I want to suggest is that we can go back to that personality, reflect on it and make that the primary source of our spirituality. Then we can find out how much his disciples and churches were derived from that. He spoke of truth, honesty, justice, sharing and that was also the spirit of John the Baptist. He did not ordain any priests or bishops and if he wanted a pope he took a married person whose mother-in-law he helped to cure. He had no definitions, he had no canon law etc. and he left people free to think for themselves – you don't need a master, etc. Anyway God is love.

But I would like us to stop for half a minute to ask ourselves, what do we think is the most important aspect of Jesus' life: his teaching, his personality, his social concern? And you can just take half a minute of meditation, noting down at least five words about Jesus and we will take a minute for that and I will ask for things that are there, or not there, from your five words. I have tried this all over the world. Who is Jesus? What is the most important thing of Jesus of Yesterday, of the gospels, of how we know him? We will take three or four responses, not more than five words: love, social concern, being open-ended, abba, father, servant, he gave himself, openness, frankness, anger against hypocrisy and commercialism, compassionate, accepting. So we have I think more or less similar ideas all over the world. What he did not say was what we think are important now.

Today: Now after this is what I call the second part – *Jesus for Today*. That is, from 325 till 1965 or next year, or the end of the Conference. So what have we

made of Jesus? What have we made the Church of Jesus? This is the question. I think we have to say that the Church increased in numbers. You know church history and how Christians were persecuted etc. But they grew in numbers, they became important. The political powers thought that it was useful to have them on the side of power, which is normal. However, in this second part I have to say some things which may not be so friendly or appreciative of what Christians have done. Nevertheless this is in the framework of the reality of Christianity and Christians: that there has always been a tradition of love and generosity throughout these 17 or 18 centuries of Christian history. It is helpful to put other-centredness – compassion, for example – within that framework of Christian peoples. Now we want to reflect on what we have made of Christianity in order to see how we might walk into the future. What were the contributions of Christianity towards science, democracy, art, culture during this period? Within that framework, you know how the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, or rather he converted Christianity to the Empire. It was mutual. And Christians who were earlier few in number and practised sharing etc. (the early Church took sharing as very important as we know from the writings of the fathers of the Church) became numerous and the Church and Christians fairly rich. The basilicas in Rome etc were handed over to the Christians.

At this point I would like to speak for a few moments on how Christian doctrine evolved. In the first three centuries there were many different ways of presenting Jesus but there were no definitions. Each community had policies and tried to think through what Jesus would say and do. So it was an open religion, without all the definitions, without a pope. But gradually different problems arose and these problems concerned very much about who Jesus was, what was his identity. The Christian community had to solve many problems when the question of identity came up, eg: They had to find out how is this Jesus God? How is Jesus man? What is his identity – half God, half man? Was he like some mermaid? All sorts of questions were discussed. What was his function? What was his role? Is he a teacher? Is he a saviour? Is he a Lord? Is he a servant? and so on. So they had to find this out and to discover this.

I would remind you of a story which you all know. In our country we have elephants and the story of the elephant and seven blind men trying to define the elephant. You can imagine now what happens trying to define the elephant – the blind men are different persons trying to identify what the elephant is. They each take one portion. One fellow takes the trunk, the other takes the ear, the other takes the toenails, so each one has got a portion of the elephant. So in order to define what the elephant is, they have a discussion. One says the elephant is the trunk; the other one says no, the elephant is the ear; the other one says, no, it is the foot. So they have a big discussion and at the end they have

a fight. But at the end of the fight, each one decides “I am right – I have the absolute truth and others are wrong”. Knowing God is a bit like knowing the elephant. The history of theology is dealing with a question concerning which we cannot know the full answer. We cannot know what the divine is very much, and we certainly cannot know God because of what somebody else writes. One writes one way, another writes another way. My friend, Cardinal Ratzinger, has a book on *Introduction to Christianity* where he says we cannot know God. God is unknowable. This was Cardinal Ratzinger Junior, published in 1960 or about then. What doctrine we have about God is often the result of political decisions. Ratzinger points to the special position which Rome acquired in the West as the administrative centre of the apostolic tradition and to the tensions which consequently arose in the Church and became obvious during its growth. The text which is also the Creed expresses the politically-inspired belief impressed on the Church in the West, and thus the political alienation of beliefs as a means of achieving unity. Ratzinger says that the use of this text as a creed was promoted as “Roman” although forced on Rome from outside. He speaks of the tricks of the powers that gave us this type of Creed. That is from Cardinal Ratzinger Junior! Sometimes juniors are wiser than seniors. Anyway I don't have to prove to you that God is unknowable but you all accept the necessity of a transcendent, something beyond this life. But when we try to define God we can be like the blind persons trying to define the elephant. Anyway, we can take some of the conclusions of the theology.

(Using Slides) Very briefly I am taking these from the books of Catechism to see the type of theology that was presented in the period from 325 onwards. They are from books of the 1960s which I found in a house here in Sydney. So these are not ancient things. These are things which were taught to your grandparents and also perhaps to you all and maybe to your children. The first is the idea of who God is. This is from Ratzinger's Catechism published in the United States (Baltimore Catechism). If you look through that you will find God is all this: all merciful, all present, all kindness, all good. God is love. But nothing about love of others. God loves himself – God is a 'he'! That is very important. Infinite love – noble in himself. After that the Trinity – the Father, Son and Holy Ghost – Father is not the Son, Son is not the Holy Ghost, Holy Ghost is not the Father, etc. Now these are definitions that were taken at Councils. They are not about things that we know and if you ask 'what does it mean?' hardly anybody understands what it is. What is 'begotten not made?' consubstantial? 'What is the substance of God?' These are human words put in to express the divine. They also use the imagination to show the angels and the whole hierarchy of angels created with wings etc. These are put down for children. It is alright. You can understand it. But theology is part of this. What are the other definitions.

Ultimately when you analyse this you will see that these definitions were made by the Emperor who often took positions. For instance, the son of Constantine said to the bishops: 'I am the canon law'. You can take as part of a group for later on the study of church history and each of the Councils, how the papal influence was brought to bear on the Councils through money, power, family relationships. And it was how they decided on these things that later became very ordinary common knowledge. This morning when I was coming up from that house to here, a lady and a gentleman were discussing theology and the Nicene Creed. We don't understand anything about it, they said, yet we recite it every Sunday. What is being recited every Sunday was decided by some powerful people, some few bishops coming together, and we go on repeating it and repeating it and that becomes holy tradition. You don't understand it but it is "knowledge"; it is tradition; it is law-driven.

Now this revelation tells us about creation – it is from the Catechism again. With creation we always give it some text and give it some meaning, that we are all in sanctifying grace. We have the right to heaven and the great knowledge, control of the passions and freedom. So when Adam and Eve were there, they were good. Then what happened after that: the Fall. And with the Fall, the loss of innocence through sin and ignorance. In other words, what is said first of all about the Garden of Eden – again we know that it was Sri Lanka, but beyond that nothing much is known. But within that story it is said that they fell, and after that the whole of humanity is in sin – grievous sin, with the result that we lost the right to heaven. It is in the Book afterwards. The whole of humanity lost the right through God's punishment. So these are imaginations. And after that we say Jesus redeemed us. So that is grace coming down from Jesus. I am sorry to disappoint anybody but this is the type of thing that is said. Every Holy Saturday we still sing 'Oh, happy fault – O Felix Culpa – that merits us such a redeemer'. In other words, God decided after the Fall, after the serpent, to send down his Son. These are imaginations that we make. Anyway that grace comes down with salvation. So this is the type of theology in a few minutes, the whole of Christian theology, for which we spend months and months writing doctorates and getting degrees and getting promoted to the priesthood, etc. After that – this is what the result of this is: you must have seen beautiful pictures showing how man had to work hard and endure the suffering of death. The one is closed, barred, and is open only due to the sacrifice of Jesus and Baptism. When we have Baptism, original sin is taken away. So you put the water and say the words 'abracadabra' and this works. So you see that after original sin, no grace, then after that you are all right with Baptism. These are things that we were taught. I don't know if they are still being taught. But these are one of the effects. It is after the Baptism formula that they came to the Trinity. Cardinal

Ratzinger explains that: How from the formula of Baptism they came to the idea of Trinity (why it had to be three?). So then after that you see how from the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, you find the establishment of the Church. The Catholic Church is *the* Church of God. This is also mentioned in the latest document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith: *Dominus Jesus*. We are the only Church, the true Church. And then after that the different sacraments, the means that are used for salvation to make disciples. Now we all know this history and this is the sort of church we were in, Ratzinger said. I am just repeating this to show that a good deal of this are things about which we don't know anything. That was what Luther found when they were collecting money for building St Peter's with the indulgences. Our souls are kept in Purgatory and if you give a lot of money they will give you a certificate and your soul is released. But this theory of indulgences which I still remember from my childhood – a particular day when we used to go to the church and come out and say 'one soul saved' and finished, like that!

So then after that the moral teaching, the way morality is taught, there was great emphasis on obedience, morality, chastity, moral virtues, a little bit on justice also there. But a good deal was about the sacramental life and so on. Now all this was to show how the teaching of the church for many centuries – this is also from the Catechism – that we are all damned, *massa damnata*. Only Mary is saved and all the others are in original sin. Then the Catholic Church is like a staircase – the only way you can go to heaven. (Baltimore Catechism slides!) After that the channels of grace – please don't laugh at me, children – within that on the right hand of God and then the Priest, then the religious Brothers and Sisters, then the laity, men, women and children. Also the other one shows that the only safe bridge from this sea of sin and evil is the Catholic Church. So that is the normal teaching that we had. This says that the problems they have solved, the early Christian Community in the 3rd/4th centuries how Lord Jesus God/man, his humanity and his divinity, his body/soul, flesh/word, and in the Trinity three persons in one. All these questions they had to settle – how was Mary a virgin and mother? how did the Holy Spirit work? But what I want to say, and I am saying this consciously and reverently, is that a good deal of this is imagination about what we do not know, taking one word out of Scripture and with that one sentence the whole of humanity is finished. In Roman V, 12, all of humanity is seen in sin for ever and a day and salvation is only from Jesus Christ. Now what is good and bad about this is that – and I quote different theories of how Jesus is God and denied full humanity; God seeming to be human; another would say he is human, seeming to be God. All types of theories and one of them was very important: that was subordination – that Jesus is God but not equal to the Father. That was the Aryan position and a good deal

of these ideas were accepted within the framework of Christianity, not knowing what to say or how to manage it. But after some time they had to come to some definitions and the decisions were made at the Council of Nicene that Jesus is God and man. Now what is important is that if Jesus is God, and Jesus gives power to the Church and to Peter, and the Church to the Emperor, then both the Pope and the Emperor have divine power. And that is how the Divine Right of Kings came about. But that was a very important political decision and they divided according to these different opinions. Now the significant part of this is that, whilst we believe that salvation is only from Jesus Christ and in the Church we are all *damnata*, it is extremely important that we belong to the Church. The mission of the Church is to convert the others. And the biggest danger is people who don't believe, or believe different things. Therefore we must have one authority, one way of thinking. 'Go ye and preach to all nations, make disciples' is what he said – the command. Political authority has the responsibility to see that there is unity. So with that we get the theory of intolerance. The Church says 'you can compel people to come into the Church because you are doing them the greatest favour. If people have known Christ and don't accept him, then they are going to hell.' So to save the soul is very important. If there are robbers here you take a war against terrorism. What is more important is a war against error because that kills souls. So that is how the Church came to the position that you can have a holy war against the enemies. The concept of Holy War is basic to what is called international law today. So with that you have the intolerance of the Church and when other groups came up like Islam it was a question of Crusades. If Islam had come in the first three centuries there would have been no conflict. Jesus would have been made an insubordinate God as soon as possible. I have no time to discuss this. But opposed to the other faiths it would have been different. But because the Muslims were attacking the holy places, we have to fight. You know the whole story of the crusades – for two centuries, part of it was for political gain for property etc. but after that the Church became very intolerant. Also at each of the Councils, the Church divided on unknown things like the Greek and the Romans as to whether the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and Son or not. But also on political power for most of the divisions are political – Constantinople and Rome. Or even Germany, if you are from northern Germany you are Protestant, if you are south, you are Catholic. Denominations are also due to political reasons, with vertical boundaries *de facto*, though we have all types of arguments after that. So then the situation is that Christianity gets involved in this political process. After the Crusades, we have the Inquisition. In the 4th century began this long period of intolerance. In Vatican II, the last document was to accept religious tolerance but you could fight this.

It was also in this period that you had the legitimization of colonialism when the Western powers saw the possibility of going out to the rest of the world. The Popes said it was legitimate. You know the Papal Bulls of the 15th Century – Pope Nicholas V wrote to King Alfonsus V of Portugal and said: ‘Go and take the other lands. Go and conquer them. Occupy them. Make slaves of them. Take all their properties.’ For over 150 years they said this. Encouraged them. Similarly also the Protestant countries were encouraged to go and conquer. So we are the pilgrim people going to North America and taking those lands. Driven to it by God, like the Israelites. Those are the traditions we celebrate on Thanksgiving Day in the United States soon. They are eating each other’s hearts. They must be saved from killing people so we destroyed them. A study of Christian people in the last five centuries – excuse me for saying this – is the greatest terror on earth. I wrote an article a few months ago on *Terrorism Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Terrorism Yesterday is 500 years of European expansion. We have totally destroyed whole civilisations – North America, Australia, Africa, Siberia etc – took their lands, took their property, took their worth. I have no time to discuss that but these are connected with this theology, this imaginative salvation, imaginative war. So what I am saying is that such a theology can be criticised in terms of tradition, translation etc. But I have one other argument, namely the point of view of the victims. Theology says that women are not equal to men; only men can forgive sins, women can’t forgive sins. Only men. And what you forgive is forgiven; what you don’t forgive is not forgiven. That theology will not be acceptable by women. If God loves everybody, why should we have exceptions. You don’t need further arguments. Similarly for our people. All the people of humanity before Christ and even after Christ, if we are said to be people for whom God did not give a chance, in the same way he did not treat us equally. We are deprived of the right to Heaven except if we have baptism or baptism of desire – again concocted by somebody. Who said that? Who has the right to say that the whole of humanity is like this? So we reject such theology as totally undivine, un-Jesus-like. It is a very important hermeneutical principle. If somebody tells you that forever the British are right and the Irish are wrong, the Irish don’t have to accept it. Or if the Irish make a pale and say everyone else outside is wrong, you don’t have to accept it. I know from the names of participants, there are a lot of Irish here. So if God is made to exclude us we don’t accept it. When a tradition at the beginning is wrong, it is wrong forever. So we don’t have to be too sorry sometimes if we can’t hand on the tradition to our children, as we said yesterday, if the tradition is bad. So now that is for the second part to say what we have done. We have been intolerant. We have a crusade of Christian civilisation, of democracy, against terrorists and let us fight this war against the same tradition. You are not surprised! For 500 years they

did that and they are convinced others are bad, we are right, and therefore we can take their oil etc. Now that is the end of the second part.

So just to reflect a little bit on what we have inherited – you are good people, you are not bad, it is not our fault. We have taken it from others. We call ourselves Christians – the greatest robbers of humanity, so-called Christians. They don't realise it. There is no confusion about that. The greatest robbers, murderers plunderers, genocides. We are benefiting from it, we are not guilty of it. Somebody else did it but, in that situation what do we do.

Tomorrow: So the third part is what is the Christianity of the future? *Jesus Tomorrow.* So I would say that we have to go back to Jesus, go back to Jesus is good. We can be proud of the gospel and the main spirituality of the Church in Today, namely kindness and love. However, we must reject Today's distortion of this spirituality by the misuse of power through oppression, extermination, alienation and misrepresentation. Power hi-jacks Jesus. Jesus needs to be liberated from dogmas, from hierarchies that misrepresent Him. Now within this situation we have the reality that the modern world is telling us something. Secularisation – is it good or bad. There are bad things, the Pope often says – materialism, consumerism, power. But there are also good things that secularism is showing us, that most of these things of what we call religion are not valid. There is a de-Christianisation, de-clericisation, de-sacramentalisation taking place in mainly the western world. It is partly bad, but partly a message coming to us I think through the spirit and the spirit is not only *sensus fidelium*. It is of people, it is the *sensus* humanity – God is in all. The spirit is in all. So through all today we are also realising that what is called prayer is often meaningless. Rituals don't meet the reality. You can have a million Masses and go on with slavery. I saw in Tanzania a place where they used to launch slaves to the ship and on top of that was the altar. So those things are going on. We can say a million Masses and also see that a million children are killed in Iraq due to sanctions. Food is not shared. When I turned the car into a church compound in Holland, I saw that they had mountains of butter.

So the world is reacting to the meaninglessness of ritual, of religion. Today many will say as you have said yesterday, our children are not religious but they are spiritual. Many people are spiritual. They want to do something for the world. They want to reform structures. They want to conserve nature. There is a spirituality in the modern world that is not religious, that will not enter the institutions' methods or forms of community. It is an opportunity; it is a challenge. The world's humanity is going towards a new world – a new reality with communications, confluence, revolutions, you know that. And that reality cannot be met with the formulations of theology of the past, with the hierarchy

and the clergy of the past, in the sort of canonisation of yesterday for today. You have to have new forms of community, new forms of commitment, new understanding of mission which is not so much to bring people to the Church as for all persons to go towards righteousness, towards justice, towards participation, towards sharing, towards honesty. The younger people feel that in themselves and I think that is a good thing, that is a message of youth. All of youth in a sense. So the problem is not that we are old but the old must listen to the world and then take up the issues for which some youth will be prepared – not all. Many will go for capitalism and globalisation. But there is also something else taking place in an effort to build a new world, to take care of nature. There is a globalisation of resistance to capitalism, of resistance to big finance that is taking place in Seattle in the United States, in Porto Alegre, in Genoa, in Prague. So there are movements in the world in different directions: new communities, groups of youth going out to other places because they don't want to go through with this. So the spirit is present in the world. It is for us to touch that. To find out how we will act. And here I would like to suggest that one of the things we have to undertake is re-education. I know many of you are involved in education. But a fundamental re-education and deeper, profound questioning (as Cardinal Ratzinger did in his youth) of a dangerous theology, of a dangerous tradition of isolation, of alienation, of marginalisation of others, thinking we are superior, that God loves us more than others. This is not true. It is not Jesus. So we have to get to them and tell that clearly and it is only in saying that that we can respond to children, to the youth. But, secondly, take up the mission that we have, the whole world order has to be changed in addition to beginning at the base as Therese said yesterday. We have to begin at the base but I would suggest the base, along with the global – national and global – because the world is in a one-world situation. Today we know what happens all over the world and there are major issues on the world's agenda. We have to link into that and in this I think we do not only think of reforming the Church but the reforming aspect. The Church has many good aspects. For instance, did you see the news item that the Archbishop of Canterbury is against the threatened war in Iraq? The Pope is against it. The Vatican is against it. The Bishops here. Let us join together in some of those things which are good also because the Catholic Church is one-sixth of humanity. Christians are those in power. They are threatening war in the name of Christianity. So I am saying that, if we begin to take up actions which are relevant in a given time and try to move the Church bodies starting at the base, but linked up, then we become a powerful agency of change. The institutions' fights of yesterday may be irrelevant but imagine today that at this conference you decided that we will clearly ask the whole Catholic and Christian world to come out and stop this threatened war on Iraq for oil. It would begin

to make a voice. You can tell the young people to come out and, as somebody said yesterday, you are the strength and can say 'we don't want another Vietnam'. More bombs were dropped on Vietnam by the United States than the whole of World War II. But where is compensation for that? We want compensation. We owe a debt to the poor people. Take up some issues – also Kyoto and the climate, or the women who are migrants, refugees. The whole land distribution has to be changed. I have no time to deal with that. There is no reason why Siberia should always be Russian because the Russian Emperor went there and Communists maintained it. There are 500 million more Chinese in the next 50 years and fewer Russians. Why should they have all that territory? Why should it always be like that? This world order will crash. In the 21st century they will break the world order built up by five centuries of European expansion. It has to break. The earth will not maintain this civilisation that is destroying so much, consuming so much. So let us choose certain objectives and in doing that the churches will move. We will move and so will other people also, and other religions. And the poor are mostly of the other religions and the poor women are also of the other religions. So if you work in that direction of reform, of claiming land in the quest for peace, for justice, then you will see that the churches will change. They will also find inspiration in the Jesus of Nazareth of the gospel to be the revolution of the future. The changes will come, whether we like it or not. But it is important for us to be in the direction of change and to mobilise ourselves for that, to re-educate, to re-think, to opt, to take positions, and to use some media of today – the e-mail. The revolution will have to be non-violent; there is no chance for violence. We will discuss that at later talks. Through the e-mail we can be easily connected with 100,000 people and if you begin one movement like that you realise it. In 24 hours you can change. You can change the position of the Australian church if you have units in the base as you have said, but take something with the agenda of today; go to the media and say some good things about the Pope and the Bishops that they are taking this up. Encourage them and the others because in some things the Pope is an idiot as against God's war – but he has also some sense of where the youth are. In a sense, the Pope is closer to the youth than we are. Whatever it is, he is able to get to two million people and tell them we must fight materialism etc. But to respond to the youth is to get the youth together and ask them 'what do you think and how are you going to contest this?' I was in Australia during the Vietnam war. I was Asian Chaplain of students who were also involved in Australia, so the Australian chaplain who met me said: 'Let's go immediately to the courts because Vincent somebody is being charged for being against the Vietnam war'. But the youth of today have not got that inspiration yet. So you can begin something. I am just taking one occasion. There are many more that

you can think of in your workshops. Take up some action. It is when the action is taken that you become real. It is relevant action. Local group action. Commit yourself. Engage, if possible, the churches. More than fighting with the internal affairs too much (which are also necessary – I have done a few things) but move ahead. Then I think we shall be part of the hope for the future; we can be part of the revolution that is to come – a sort of multi-national for human liberation.



Gender and the 'Sensus Fidelium'

Veronica Brady IBVM

Let me begin by remembering where we are, on the land of the Garigal people. Nor was it *onæ* but still is their land. We are the only former British colony which never made a treaty with the indigenous peoples of the land to which we came. We are on sacred land, on land which has been celebrated and prayed upon by its indigenous peoples where God has spoken.

But since Tissa has spoken about young people and the unchurched, let me begin with some lines by a friend of mine, an academic, a poet who has never darkened the door of a church. This is the very first entry in a collection of ideas and poems he gave me last night. It leads, I think, however, into my subject, gender:

Life is defined by those who lose
Because by losing they discover the point
At which loss becomes possible, indeed necessary.
There are those who live on edges,
The edges of language, of politics
(And, I would add, of the holy Catholic Church)
Of life itself.
Haunters of frontiers, they can't be safe
Because safety is death.
They risk all to find out what it is that they have
They live between borders in no-person's land.
It is only by losing that we are given ourselves.
Those who in this way have themselves completely
Are terrifying because they have lost everything.

My subject is *Gender and the Sense of the Faithful* which I would like to approach from an inclusive position – there has been far too much ‘male-bashing’ in my view. Let me start with a proposition by Julia Kristeva: ‘This “situation of women” raises questions more generally about the way we represent and define ourselves and our search for meaning and value’.

I want to argue that these binary divisions which underlie the oppositions between male and female are ridiculous, nonsensical, non-Christian and out of touch with reality. As the Macquarie Dictionary points out, gender is essentially a grammatical term, that is a way of ordering reality, not ‘reality’ itself. It has to do with a set of classes, a system of classification, which means that it is part and parcel of our present epistemological foundation – the way we think about ourselves and about the world. I am woman and some of you are men, just as some of us are ‘white’, others are ‘brown’ or ‘black’ or belong to cultures which we call ‘Western’ or ‘Eastern’, ‘Christian’ or Muslim’. Ad so on. However, we tend to think we are the norm and everybody else the exception so that if they all became like us all will be well. That is nonsense, however, in social and biological terms but above all theologically.

We move now to what we mean by ‘the sense of the faithful’ – our reflection throughout the ages of the meaning of God’s gift to us in Jesus. As Tissa says, God has also spoken through Buddha, Mohammed and other religious traditions. But we believe there is a special revelation in Jesus. This sense of the faithful then is a great and noble tradition, if we really understand what it is as many of us have been privileged to do, growing up loving Mother Church – who sometimes now disappoints us – though we still, most of us, love her. We grew up with a sense of mystery, for instance, and we grieve for its loss. That is why I now want to draw on the work of Balthazar, a theologian who was preoccupied with aesthetics, the beauty of God. According to him, the problems we have today should always become more luminous in the light of the great mystery of God, that mystery of what we don’t know, we can’t know. Finally, he argues all problems can be contained within the light of that mystery. As he goes on: ‘We don’t grasp the truth without being grasped by what is the truth.’ Is-ness, if you like. As Shakespeare says: ‘We are such stuff as dreams are made of and our little life is rounded with a sleep’. ‘A faithful response to this truth and being grasped by it’, Balthazar argues, ‘constitutes the community of those of us who have been gifted with the call to live in faith, hope and love, and called also to share this gift.’ As one of my sisters, Sister Christine Burke, points out: ‘It is not that the Church has a mission, but God’s mission has a Church’. We are then figured and shaped by the fact that we are called into this mystery and this mission and sifted by it. In its light the problems facing us today dissolve. Take, for example,

the challenge posed by the new understanding of the world given us by contemporary science which suggests that the whole cosmos (of which we are part) has been evolving, stage by stage, from the Big Bang onwards towards some great fullness of life and energy, at each stage reaching just the point necessary to carry it on to the next stage. In this sense our genes go back to that original Big Bang. Surely this great vision of God, of the is-ness of things (and is-ness was amongst us in Jesus and still works in other ways in his Spirit) gives us a vision of God, a sense of the faithful: worthy of what I might call the “goodness of God”. In it there is no room for the egoism, the divisions, the violence, the individualism of contemporary culture.

This brings us back to the idea of gender as division. Whatever our anatomical differences, or differences in social position and power, they have to do with the economy of God’s creation which is infinitely various. To refer to the passage I quoted to begin with, however, it is perhaps easier for those who are powerless, live on the edges – where many, if not most, women live – to be aware of this. That, I suspect is why Alicia Ostriker can write: ‘I am concerned with the question of what will happen when the spiritual imagination of women is released into language and history’. The patriarchal church has silenced women and imposed an impoverished patriarchal view of the world on us all – you men, I think, have suffered almost as much as we women. To a greater extent, we are ‘male’ and ‘female’ inside, even in a patriarchal society like Australia in which the ‘feminine’ aspect is suppressed in most men. This means, as Ostriker argues, that so many of us are deeply fractured and living as we do in a pathological culture which neglects the ‘feminine’ – a dimension, I would argue, which goes beyond the dimension of mere ‘gender’.

We have to think about who we are in the light of the larger mystery of being which we have been trying to reflect on. To think about ‘gender’ and the ‘sense of the faithful’ we need a larger model. Here I suggest that the French feminist philosopher, Hélène Cixous, has much to contribute. She suggests that there are two main ways of being in the world – she calls them economies – the masculine and feminine. In our culture, she argues that the masculine is dominant, the economy of the proper which has to do with property, propriety, appropriation, control, of knowing where you are going. In the patriarchal economy, for example, we know exactly who and what God is. In effect, however, we make a God to our own image and we make the rules we say God wants us to follow. The other mode is the economy of the feminine and what Cixous calls ‘the economy of the gift’. It is preoccupied with internal reality and is not concerned with frontiers and boundaries but crosses them all the time, giving and receiving, in tune with whatever is the case. As we are beginning to realise,

indigenous cultures, the Aboriginal people of this country for example, were like that. They knew what we are only just beginning to realise what, as the British astronomer Fred Boyle wrote in 1942 as space travel was just becoming possible: 'When we have digested the implications of photographs from the earth taken from space, we will begin to realise what we haven't realised before, that all human beings whatever colour, culture, language or gender, all the animals, birds, fishes, insects, plants, the air, the waters and the earth itself all share the one life of our very small, very fragile planet suspended in space.' We have therefore to love and care for one another though we human beings may have a very special place in this planetary life because we are conscious of it. That, I suggest, is the 'feminine' mode and it may be the only way through for humanity in the future on this fragile, over-populated planet. To become aware of the importance of the 'feminine' mode, there is a call to develop the full range of our psychic possibilities, a call which the Roman Catholic Church has for some time avoided. It also involves different notions of power, based not on war and conquest, domination and hierarchy, but on mutuality, on giving and receiving.

There is a sense then in which we have neglected an important strain in our culture, a strain which I will argue is strong in great medieval Christian classics like Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Indeed Dante may foresee in the angel's lament in *The Purgatori*:

O, Christians, arrogant, exhausted, wretched.
Your intellects are sick and cannot see.
You place your confidence in backward steps.'

So those who have been excluded and oppressed may be in a privileged position since it is easier to see from the fringes. As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza says, it is very difficult being a Catholic Christian and a woman in these days. But that is not because there is something wrong with Christianity but something wrong with the people who have claimed to define and control Christian faith and practice. Prejudice by definition leads us to select some facts and not others and that is what has been done in the interpretation of the mystery of God amongst us and shown to us in Jesus and continued in the Spirit.

In this respect, we have much to learn from contemporary thinking. There is a wonderful essay in a recent *Concilium* on the subject of identity by a Brazilian Franciscan sociologist, Jean-Marie Susin. In the West, he argued, there are basically two notions of identity: the first one, which is masculine and patriarchal, is based on the model of Ulysses, the Greek hero who went with the expedition to Troy. His great feat, however, was his return home. As he travelled through strange places, he saw this strangeness as hostile, trying to destroy it or turn it

into what was familiar. In this sense his journey constituted a great circle around identity – the model perhaps of colonialism and its alliance with Christendom.

The other model of identity is, however, the model of Abraham who was called beyond the horizon to a promise not yet realised and, trusting in that promise, journeyed into strange and unfamiliar places. The model of Ulysses, if you like, is patriarchal and belongs to the economy of the masculine. But Abraham lives by the economy of the gift, lives by a model which is open and dynamic.

It is the notion of identity which is surely in tune with the definition that God gives us of God-self in Jesus and, through Paul, in his description of what the community of Jesus might be. It is a community in which there is neither male or female, Jew or Gentile, slave or free, since we are all one in Christ. We all exist as human beings, not just as Christians, or women and men, in relation to the other. They are not enemies; they are called in love by love. They are the other through whom the Other, God, speaks. This then is the tradition of faith – as someone has said, ‘Tradition means running errands for the dead!’ Amongst these dead, John Baptist Metz suggests that those who suffer, have been oppressed and marginalised, are the crucial people because until we recognise and context their suffering the Church’s vision of a new heaven and a new earth is still not realised. So long as people suffer, are marginalised and neglected, so long as some dominate over others, then the energy which is God’s spirit moving through the world has not achieved its goal. This wonderful passage is surely relevant to us in this country as we contemplate the sufferings of Aboriginal peoples.

What I am arguing for then is the need to recover our sense of who we are – a vision which is completely in tune with our time since it also demands that we care for God’s creation, the earth, the plants, the animals. The long tradition of mysticism is also in tune with this vision. Here too, the renewal of the liturgy seems to be crucial, reminding us that we celebrate the mystery of God’s gift to us, God’s presence amongst us, in bread and wine and in the community of friends, celebrating the giving of life, the losing of life and the taking of it. As Balthazar, to return to him, says: ‘God’s power also depends on his beauty, his unattainable, primal beauty’. This is one of the great ways in which God convinces and persuades us. Beauty used to be a mark of worshipping community, and we need to recover that ‘feeling for the glory of God’, ‘the grandeur of God’ that, as Hopkins had it, will ‘flame forth like shook foil’, something we have forgotten by turning God into a moraliser. The dream of God, to quote Balthazar again, is a dream of beauty, a dream springing from the old promise, that all God’s people can become prophets.

We have lost this way in a world of division and conflict. But we need to get back to this sense of the holy, return to this 'feminine' economy – men and women together. The whole idea of sexual difference therefore has become a great problem. But, as Balthazar says, it can be seen also as the *chiamus* of creation, i.e. the crossing place, where the masculine and the feminine come together and we commune with and receive from one another. It is, he says, a threshold which indicates no horizon or limit of the world of God who is always in an erotic relationship with us and the world, as we need to be with God.

This world then is a threshold as we move onwards across frontiers from the fringes. So we must never settle down. Perhaps indeed in this country we might reflect on the treasure we have in our folk song, *Waltzing Matilda*. Folk song it may be but it speaks to something deep in us about a man travelling light who keeps moving and, on the other hand, there's the rich man who grudges him one sheep and tries to keep control. Rather than lose his freedom, however, the swagman chooses to leap into the dark mystery of the billabong and chooses death. I learnt this, by the way, from some students in Spain! Today this is the kind of courage perhaps which we need to transfigure what we believe in, the mystery with which we are gifted.

So, to sum up: let us take our stand on God's promises and see the Church as a stained glass window through which God is. Institutions can become obstacles to human happiness and vision. But they can also become channels of grace and transcending all distinctions, transfigured in and by the mystery of God.



A Christian's Response to September 11

Brian Gore CM

Recently I was flying on Qantas and the stewardess came down to me after a while and said, 'You're Father Gore aren't you?' and I said 'Yes'. 'Well' she said, 'when you got on the plane we knew we knew you but we didn't know why. So we looked up the passenger list and saw "Father Gore"' and she looked at me and said, 'Why do we know you?' So it is getting a bit hazy now after so many years and it is mostly the older generation – these were more senior stewardesses on Qantas. Anybody I think under 35 it doesn't ring a bell. So if you remember me, you must be over at least 40 anyway.

When Barbara asked me what I would like to talk about, the first thought that came into my mind was the response to September 11. I think one of the reasons why I picked that was I feel it is the context within which we are, certainly as Church, trying to work. In the last year before September 11, I had invited a Philippino priest, Father Robert Ruez who was known in the Philippines as 'the running priest' and he runs for all sorts of causes: the environment, against corruption in government, on the debt campaign. So I knew him in the Philippines and he said to me 'Oh, I'd like to come and run in Australia'. 'Well' I said, 'I have just the issue you can run on.' So we organised this – a lot of organisation in 16 cities around Australia for six weeks. We thought we would have the whole media at our feet. And lo! and behold, in the middle of our run, two things happened: one was September 11 and the other was Tampa. So we were talking about debt and of course how do you connect debt with both the Tampa incident and also the September 11. So we had to sort of get a bit of media attention by linking what we were talking about with September 11 and the Tampa. And it wasn't hard to do that because, as you know, all these things are interconnected. So that was I suppose my realisation – of course we got inundated with the whole thing. The world will never be the same again. How many times did we hear that? Really, for the First World it will never be the same again unless we work very hard to change that. But for the Third World, for the people in debt, for the people suffering, this is a daily occurrence. The fact that seven million children under the age of five will die unnecessarily every year because the debts have to be paid is not put into the equation. But for the First World, for three thousand people to die in tragic circumstances and unjustly does create an element of 'these people are more important than those people'.

So, while we sort of say that this is a defining moment, we are paying for that because the world agenda is totally focused on terrorism – a particular kind of terrorism: not the terrorism of poverty and under-development but the terrorism of disgruntled people who want to change the world, albeit in a violent way, but certainly which does not have our approval. But civil liberties have been put on the back burner and legislation has been introduced into most Western democracies which have put democracy back generations. We have seen the legislation on the refugees. The asylum-seekers take a real heavy blow. International conventions are systematically abrogated unilaterally by Australia and other countries. Issues like world poverty and debt are relegated now to being not important. We have got all these negative effects of that event. What it has done to the so-called free democratic world has really put it back. And it has put the agenda of the extreme Right as the only agenda. Environmental laws, certainly in the United States, have been put aside because we need to be self-sufficient in oil which gives us now the right to go in and disturb habitats that have been put aside and preserved for posterity. But of course that is no longer so. In the name of fighting terrorism we can do almost anything. So, individual human rights have been given a very hard time. National security ideology, the ideologies of the Marxism of the Pinochets, the Suhartos, the Mubutos and all these friends of democracy – the prominent ideology was that individual rights were subject to the good of the state. I remember when the Pope came to the Philippines in 1981, the first talk he gave in the palace of Marcos, the dictator, was exactly that point: that never can you subject individual human rights to the rights of the state. It was very clearly said and not very well accepted by the administration, but said.

So September 11 has impacted on us in that way so much that, in the name of fighting so-called terrorism, the human rights agenda has now been hi-jacked for those who want to dominate, for those who want to control without any opposition, as was the case with the dictators of the seventies and eighties. So, these issues of September 11 and, for us here in Australia, the Tampa are two very defining moments and both feed off each and both have reinforced each other. I was just thinking that if this has been a conversation with Jesus – how would a conversation go on these two issues if we tried to fantasise or to sort of romanticise or to think about talking to Jesus about these events? And I think what I would have found certainly in the Catholic community is – as one woman said to me: ‘You know, Father, those refugees, they are the people that Jesus threw out of the temple.’ And I said to her: ‘Would you repeat that.’ I thought I heard her wrong. But she repeated it. And all I could say was, ‘how could you be so wrong?’ And when I talked about the whole issue of the lack of compassion

in our society and the demonising of people who cannot defend themselves, one woman said to me, 'Father, you are the reason why so many people are leaving the Church'. All I could respond in Christian charity was to say to her, 'You are the reason why so many priests leave the Church'. I was so angry inside me. This is in our Catholic communities. These are our good thumping Catholics who go to Mass every Sunday. One priest overheard a couple of old ladies in the sacristy saying: 'I think they should just take the boats out and sink them'. So we have got to the stage of demonising people so much that we could just throw them away, we could dispose of them. And we have gone back decades in our sense of compassion.

So, how would Jesus respond to violence against himself or how would he respond? We have a few examples in the gospels which I like to think about. Certainly in the garden, Jesus was confronted with violence against his own person in the form of the guards and the rabble coming along with sticks and implements of war to pick him up, arrest him. We know the very stories in the gospels. I think the basic story was he said to Peter, 'Put away your sword. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.' That was him being confronted personally with the violence of an invading force to arrest him and, as he would probably surmise, to kill him because at that time they did not take kindly to people who were causing trouble, stirrers. They executed them, they crucified them, and Jesus would have known that very clearly and he had enemies. Shortly after, before Pilate, Jesus was responding to the High Priest but he was slapped by one of the guards. 'How dare you address the High Priest in that manner!' And Jesus turned and said 'Why did you slap me. If I have done something wrong, tell me. If not, why did you slap me?' So he was looking for a reason for the offence against him in a non-violent way. He didn't call down the legions of angels to zap him. Then we have on the cross: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do' – the tremendous sense of forgiveness, of surrender, of forgiving those who killed him, crucified him. So there is no doubt in his own example his response to violence was not one of responding with violence. It was a response of questioning. It was a response of probably seeing a bit of good coming from his own suffering. Then the teachings of Jesus were very clear. Just to give you a few little examples: 'Love your enemies' – this most radical thing that even Christians today don't believe which is to forgive your enemies. You just pulverise them, you rumbelise them and you do everything else to get even. Vengeance. Forgiveness is one of the hallmarks of the Christian gospel – one that probably distinguishes us from a lot of other religious traditions. But forgiveness is a simple theme of the Christian gospel. 'The Our Father – forgive us as we forgive those.' 'Seventy times seven', not

seventy times seven but even more. The unforgiving steward who is forgiven and went out and really laid into his fellow servant who owed him. And the owner brought him in and told him that is not the right thing and he copped it. It is so very much of the Gospel thing, of the whole thing of forgiveness. So we go through so many examples in the whole gospels. The teachings down the centuries, in the encyclicals. Certainly in *Pacem in Terris* we have the so-called 'just war' theory which I will talk about a little later on. But I think one of the biggest witnesses of the Church have been the non-violent activists within the Church – people like Dom Helder Camera; people like Francis of Assisi, Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King within the Christian tradition. We have had people like the Berrigans in the States and all the groups there who are involved in active non-violence in opposing the violence of war. Liberation Theology was I believe an attempt to liberate poor people from the violence of oppression, political and economic oppression not through slaughtering your enemy but in some sense being the means of their redemption. Many groups took up arms struggle as a form of Liberation Theology, but many didn't.

So I suppose if we are looking at the whole response of Jesus in his teaching and his example, then we look into the conduct of the church – although we have so many examples of violence in terms of responding like the crusades and the inquisition. We have got an awful lot of baggage there which is negative. But on the other side there have been wonderful characters who have espoused a different road which was probably more gospel and closer to the Jesus way. But they never got a guernsey through the centuries because we live in a very violent world and a world generally where might is right. So if I believe the Christian response and I believe that meditating on that and talking to Jesus about that is something to say, 'Well how do I respond to violence in my life as a Christian, as a person who is a follower of Jesus?' And each of us have to ask ourselves, 'How do I respond to violence?' When somebody came up and landed me a real smack-on-the-gob, out-of-the-blue on the streets, how would I respond. I think this bears a little preparation because the natural instinct seems to be to strike back and give as good as you get – except if the person happens to be a lot bigger. We might sort of think of alternate means. So it is a very important question – how do I respond?

I would like to give a little bit of my own experience. As a young priest I went to the Philippines in 1969. In 1972 martial law was declared. Within three years of my arrival in the country, we were faced with a very cruel dictatorship – a rule by the military. Workers disappeared; anybody who caused trouble disappeared. Many people were murdered, tortured. That was the reality on the ground in our parish. So how do we respond to that. We only have three options:

You have the option to accept it and go along with it and remain silent and watch your Ps & Qs and try to keep out of conflict by submitting yourself entirely to the will of the dictator. Many people did that, including religious and priests and bishops. The other alternate was to join the revolutionary movement which said that the only way to overcome this injustice, this oppression, was the barrel of the gun which is arms struggle. We have so many examples around the world of usually Marxist revolutionaries because that was the only model of counter-revolution that was available – whether you followed the Moscow line or the Chinese line with Mao Tse Tung, I suppose the only philosophy of arms struggle for change came from that model. So there were many Christians in fact in my diocese – five of my priests joined the revolutionary New People's Liberation Army, all Philippino priests. So we had a choice. Do we join them or do we support them? Or just carry along and be cute and don't get into the limelight. Or do we just remain silent and keep out of trouble? Or do we opt for another way of bringing about change through non-violence. So we had those options. It was a very difficult time. The natural one was to join the rebels in the hills – it was a difficult one for me with my size and height and colour. To join the rebels I would be a give-away. But I could have still supported them in supplying arms, personnel, convincing people from my parish, 'This is the only way. Let's go up there and let's overthrow this government through the barrel of the gun.' So that was the choice we had and so many chose that. A lot of young people from our parish went to the hills. They didn't see the possibility of doing it through non-violence. But of course the vast majority of the people just played cute and those in the Church just said, 'O, well, this is not our fight; our job is just to be Church and be quiet' – whatever that meant.

Now the act of non-violence. I suppose looking at the life of Jesus, for many of us, it was the only way to go. After all, Jesus was supposed to be the Prince of Peace, not the Prince of War, not the Prince of Arms Struggle. It was a very basic tenet. We'd seen the bad history of those who went into arms struggle. What generally happens is that people who go in with ideals and devotion end up as bad as the people who they are trying to overthrow. And that has been repeated right through Central and South America and is happening in Asia. The people who relied on killing other people, in the process themselves become hardened and it also enabled them to oppress other people. It was not a very good history for arms struggle. The spiral of violence – violence begets violence. Dom Helder Camera was a person that actually had a lot of influence on me in those days. Reading his books on active non-violence, the spiral of violence, violence begetting violence. That was something. You could see it right in front of you and of course it didn't matter how many guns we had, the

government always had bigger ones. So you are on a very unlevel playing field, even with guerrilla warfare. So your chances of success were not very good, especially when you had an ally like the United States supplying arms to the government and the US bases in the Philippines who were there to support the dictatorship. You had a snowball's chance in hell of achieving a change of struggle without a change of thinking of the people. That is what active non-violence is about. It is a change of attitude and understanding, it is education. Of course the biggest, I suppose, recipient or beneficiaries of an arms struggle are the arms industry. There is one thing that they want, they want to sell more arms. The more revolutions we can have around the world, the more guns there are, the more money they can make. So actually you are subsidising the arms industry if you opt for arms struggle. So that was a no-no too. Then I suppose the whole idea of what violence does to people, especially the people who use violence. It dehumanises them and dehumanises other people. So it is very hard to jell this with the gospel. But the hardest part was that there was no 'Christian' (if you like) model for overthrowing unjust governments through non-violence. One of the hardest things was to say to people, 'what is the other option except arms struggle?' The only other option they could see was just to remain silent, to do nothing. But we should know there is another way and it is the road of active non-violence.

Now, had I as a young priest then opted for the violence, the arms struggle, I would have been condemned by the Church; I would have been condemned by the Australian government and the Australian community; I certainly would have been condemned by the Philippine government and by the international community as being a person of violence. So there is a kind of a double standard there. If I had chosen that, I would have been condemned and people like me would have been condemned as people of violence even though we were fighting back against the first violence, the prior violence. We were the reaction to the violence. And I often say it to people here when they condone violence on the international level, well why do we have two standards, one for the international level and one for the local level? Had I opted for that, I would have been condemned outright by my Church, by my community, by my government as being a violent person. And we were only responding to the violence of murder, torture, rape and whatever went on in the countryside for people with legitimate claims by a dictatorship.

Which brings us then I suppose to what we would call: How do we as a community respond? It is something that really puzzles me, like the schools with all these programs for non-violence against bullies. Bullying is a big problem in the community (though I wonder why with people like George Bush and

John Howard running around calling for war, it is no wonder we have bullies in the schoolyard). We have one rule for the kids in the school: You cannot solve your differences even if somebody hits you by going home and getting a gun and coming back and shooting them. Which has happened. We condemn solidly. We condemn violence in our schools, whether it be a person who has a good reason – people who have been bullied – we condemn it as not the way to go. We condemn violence in the family – domestic violence. We try to say, ‘Well we need to set up ways of settling our differences’ when somebody is beaten up – usually the wife – and the kids are beaten up and abused, physically or sexually. We say, ‘It is no answer to go out and shoot them’. In fact, you become liable. Even with mitigating circumstances there is guilt apportioned. This is not the way to solve the issue of domestic violence. In our communities and on the sports-field we have had a lot of incidences recently where people start to get very violent and it is quickly shown that this is not the way the solve the differences on the sports-field. There are now people being taken to court and being sued for hurting other people. Yes, fair enough. But if you retaliate, then you could end up in the same trouble yourself. Generally, even in neighbourhoods, crimes, invasion of your house, it is a very dangerous situation. If you respond too much to a person breaking in and you shoot them and kill them you could be liable for murder or manslaughter at least. So the message is that in our communities, in our schools, in our families we do not accept violence as a methodology of solving the problem. Yet when it comes to the international community, it is acceptable by some people – not by a lot of people, thankfully. So why this double standard? People say, it is different. Of course it is different but we use the same principles. You can’t have one set of principles for solving problems on the local level and another one on the international level. So I think this is another thing that is happening: people are saying, well if we can do it on that level, why can’t we do it at the other level if we think we have a just cause?

I suppose now with this double standard, especially when we are facing weapons of mass destruction, we are in a totally new category of warfare. Almost the whole planet could be wiped out. So going to war is a very serious thing to do. The questions needs to be asked: Why do some countries want to go to war? It is a bit like Jesus said, ‘Why did you slap me?’ We need to ask why? Why did this happen to us? We are not allowed to ask that question because it is not politically correct. Why September 11? Have we learned anything in the last year from that attack and it would seem by the rhetoric coming out from the US government that they haven’t learnt anything. Arrogance. Total absolute manipulation of countries around the world to follow what they want at any

cost. They haven't learnt anything. Stand-over tactics, bullying tactics are going on behind the scenes to get countries. Some are being offered debt relief if they join. When you look at the coalition against terrorism, some of the biggest terrorist countries in this world like Sudan are part of the anti-terrorist movement. A lot of window-dressing and of course a lot of lies. We are not being told all the right reasons, the media is controlled. So we are getting a certain spin. We are hearing the word democracy; they are jealous of our democracy and freedom, yet the freedoms of the Americans since September 11 have been greatly reduced. Certainly democracy in terms of voting, and you have the whole issue of the suffering of the people in the United States – the fact that 400 Gulf and Vietnam War veterans are still suffering very much. 40,000 have died. Yet we were prepared to go to war again. And you have 400,000 Gulf War veterans – that is just from the United States – who are suffering all forms of sickness.

So violence as a response to September 11 – certainly in terms of a Christian response – is just not on. Apart from the Christian response, even in terms of saying, What good is going to come out of this? there are too many questions that have to be asked and not enough answers have been given. So, those who peddle active non-violence as a solution, are they for the birds? If you read some of the people talking about war today, I don't like the word *pacifist* because it gives the idea of sitting on your bum and doing nothing. I think *active non-violence* is a much more engaging word to describe people who want to bring about social transformation, justice, through non-violent means: people power, or whatever you'd like to call it. But it is the active participation by people in trying to bring about a more just and more equitable and sustainable society. That is active non-violence. And the means we use are not violent means – we don't use the gun, we don't use violence. We use people power; we use the education of people, understanding that this is the situation, getting people on side.

People say, well if it is so good why aren't people using it? We saw it briefly in the Philippines on the streets when the cardinal and the opposition called the people on to the streets and the people went and separated the two armies. It stopped them. It could have been a very violent exchange. Nobody was killed, no blood was drawn because people put their lives on the line. There were risks involved. But there had been many, many years of preparation. This didn't happen out of the blue. For over 15 years before that time people were involved in movements, struggles and demonstrations. So when the moment came they were prepared. That is one of the very few examples that we have of active non-violence actually having a very good effect, being successful. And I saw that in my own experience in the parish. That is why they hated us so much. That is

why they accused us of multiple murder, inciting to rebellion, illegal possession of explosives and ammunition. Because they wanted us to be seen as violent people because violent people cannot deal with non-violent people. There are no text books or manuals on how to deal with non-violence. They are powerless in dealing with non-violence. Because the only thing they know is violence. One of the very funny things that I think is sending military people as peacekeepers. It is kind of a contradiction and we have problems when we do go. In fact, the Philippine peacekeepers when they came back from Cambodia, they went through their luggage and found AK-47s; and all sorts of arms they were going to sell on the black market. And these were the peacekeepers! What the hell were they doing in Cambodia? They certainly weren't bringing peace because they certainly weren't even prepared to bring peace to their own country. So we are spreading all these soldiers around the world, many of them from Third World countries, because there is a very big industry as peacekeepers and we wonder why it doesn't always work. So peacekeeping or active non-violence is a specialised thing and people will say, it won't work because we don't put the resources there. Do governments have a Department of Peace? Do we have an Institute for Peace-Building supported by the government with billions of dollars? No, it is totally under-funded, under-personnelled because the dominant ideology is that we fight violence with violence. And of course the arms industry claps its hands and says 'Oh, what a wonderful war!' – making billions. Think of this: there is a thing in the States called the Carlyle Group and on the Carlyle Group is George Bush Snr and all sorts of other important people from around the world (you will find them on the web). They are one of the biggest investment companies and the vast amount of the investment is in arms. So I think this is where we have to be realistic, what we are up against in terms of trying to use non-violence because violence is a very profitable and important industry for many countries. In Great Britain, United States, China, Russia, Israel, arms is big business. So that is something we have to contend with. So when we say, why don't we give peace a chance? Well, we are up against a lot if we are going to get it off the ground. We need to put money in it. We need to understand. We need to practice it now, as we do it in our schools, in our homes, in our communities, as ways of solving our problems so we can bring that to the international arena in dealing with other people. But there has to be a conviction in ourselves that this is the way to go. This is the ideology of the new millennium.

War, given the weapons of mass destruction which at least eight countries have got, is not an option. And the 'just war' theory is a paradigm that has gone. In fact the 'just war' theory was began by Augustine and developed by St Thomas. The main purpose of the 'just war' theory was to stop war, not to

justify it. In other words, the conditions were so rigid that it has never been possible – certainly not in the light of today's situation – to have a war, because the first thing of the 'just war' theory is that it must be a defensive war, not a pre-emptive strike, because somebody might do something. There has to be a real imminent danger of actually being invaded. So the 'just war' theory is almost impossible to fulfil. In fact the Catholic Catechism has got some very good stuff on that and it just says it is impossible to fulfil the conditions of 'just war' theory, if that is what we are using as our barometer for war. It says: 'the fifth commandment forbids the intentional destruction of human life. Because of the evils and injustice that accompany all war, the Church insistently urges everyone to prayer and to action so that the divine goodness may free us from the ancient bondage of war. All citizens, all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war. However, as long as the danger of war persists and there is no intentional international authority with the necessary competence and power, governments cannot be denied the right of lawful self-defence once all peace efforts have failed. The strict conditions of legitimate defence by military forces require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions or moral legitimacy.

So if the 'just war' theory is obsolete, we have to go through a new paradigm. The only paradigm and the only I suppose Christian response to violence is an act of non-violence and it does work. But it can only work if the majority of citizens espouse it. In our parish in the mountains, we had 56 communities spread over a whole area. And each community was well organised so that if the military came up into the area and started stealing, we were ready for them.

On one occasion we had over 10,000 people against 30 military. As we said jokingly, even if we'd peed on them we could have drowned them, non-violently. It was people power. The one thing about it was that the people, when they saw it working, said 'it works' and that is why we were hated. They had to get rid of us. Nothing happened in the parish. The military couldn't smear us without us saying 'hey, wipe your nose properly'. And they knew that and they hated us because anywhere else they went they could do as they liked. We got some of the clergy – including my friend, Father Nile, across the river – to join up and we helped each other. We were going to take over the whole mountain so that we could haul the corn and other stuff – people power, non-violence. One thing the military thought, this has to go. We can't allow this kind of a church to continue. That is why the accusations of violence – we were violent people, we intended to overthrow the government. We killed the mayor of the town. We were asked during the trial about the accusation that we killed the mayor and then we were going to overtake the town. This is a city of 125,000 and there

were only seven of us. And when the judge said to the young man, 'well, why didn't you overtake the town after you killed the mayor' (this was the witness against us) he said: 'because Father Gore went on vacation'. So in the serious business of revolution, I decided to take a holiday! Pretty inopportune. With the desire to overtake the town you don't usually decide to take a holiday. After the revolution you take a holiday. That is the stupidity of the whole thing.

But the point I am trying to get across is the act of non-violence, it does work but it needs effort, it needs commitment, both people and finance. It will work. It will work in our communities. I remember on one occasion I was giving a talk at a Catholic parish and a Catholic dinner, and I was sitting next to the mayor of the town. So I was having a good old chat and I said – because they had been talking about the problem of drugs in the town – 'You could easily solve that. Well, if I was mayor this is what I would do. I would call all the sporting, church and clubs together and have a conference and say, what are we going to do? How are we going to stop drugs in this town?' 'Do you mean to tell me that you couldn't do that? How many drug pushers are there compared with the thousands of people in all these organisations who want to have a non-violent, good town with lack of drugs and all these things' She looked at me as though I had two heads. I said, 'It's simple; just the will to get out there and cooperate with people, people in positions who can do that and sit down and come up with strategies. And if the next town does it, and the next town does it, bingo! They are gone.' The same with the Church. If we had done that through the whole island, the new people's army would have lost out because the people, if they had the choice, would rather not go to the hills and join something that was actually stopping the violence.

So, I don't have to be convinced, but a lot of people do have to be convinced, that the only answer especially in today's world to the solutions of violence, of poverty, is for people to be working together and participating in transformation. Now you talk to people in churches and they look as much as to say, 'Well I don't want to be political, Father'. And I tell them that sitting on your ass and doing nothing is being political because you are making a political option in favour of the status quo, which is a violent status quo. Morris West in his book *Eminence* wrote about the Church in Argentina: While all the torture of students and union people was going on, Morris West described that institutional church: 'Silence bloats evil.' I think that is something we have to do. Sitting on your backside and doing nothing is not a solution. That is not active non-violence. That is actively cooperating with the oppressor. When you can get it into our skull that when good people work together evil will not prevail. The vast majority in our communities and in our schools are good people – people who want to

have a life that is peaceful, with absence of violence, good relationships, all this, most people want this. The people who don't want this are very few.

So I think we have to make those personal options in our own lives, modelled on the life of Christ as a person of non-violence, but not wishy washy, doing nothing. It is being in there, taking the risks of putting your life on the line. They are the risks you have to take. But that is minimised when you know that there are a lot of you. That was my style because I said I am not going to be right out the front with you with all the people two kilometres behind. 'We are behind you, Father!' I said, 'Like ruddy hell! You are going to be right up there with me. I am not going to fight your fight. It is your land that has been stolen. It is your families that have been taken away and tortured and disappearing. It is not mine. So we are here together or I am off.' So the people were really terrific. When they saw in those early days that when we did stick together, when they did have confidence in themselves that they were capable of doing something very, very important, then it will work. So education is very important. Organisation is very important. It becomes kind of second nature after a while. In fact it got to the stage, which was terrific, when they said, 'We don't want you to come, Father'. I knew that I had reached. Believe it or not, I don't like confrontation. But when I am confronted, watch out – I won't back off. So when the people had reached that stage, then they were able to do it on their own. They had reached a stage of maturity. Then after the action they would immediately evaluate and say 'Well, did it work? Yes, it worked. Why did it work? If it didn't work, why didn't it work?' So next time we have a different tactic. So it became second nature within the communities to be able to sort of work together, knowing that, if they stayed together, they could achieve something. But trying to convince the vast majority is the hard part. One thing the poor have is numbers. It is the only thing they have. But if we can get those numbers together, and that is what they were worried about. Slowly all the parishes right around the island could be brought together. When the Pope came in 1981 he said to us priests and the bishop 'the Church must never hesitate to be the voice of those who have no voice – not when they ask for charity but when they demand justice'. And that was the seal on our fate because then it became an all-out war between the government and ourselves. But the response we made to them is hard work so that is one of the reasons why it doesn't often work. It is hard work. It takes commitment. It takes resources. But it takes a change of thinking about bringing solutions to violence in our world, in our families, in our schools, in our communities and in the international community. So it is the way to go. But we have to convince ourselves and convince others that this is the way to go – not what we are seeing now on the world stage. It is

great to see the Church people speaking out but we have got to be there with them. I think that may be something this conference could do because of the Uniting Church, the Anglican Church and Archbishop Carroll was on last night on the news – all working together to say ‘We do not want war’. This is no way to solve our problems and I think our young people certainly don’t want war. So maybe this is a burgeoning issue which can bring us together and come up with a new paradigm for the new century. Thank you.



Jesus, Our Cousin-Brother

Mark Yettica-Paulson

Thank you for the opportunity to come here to share something with you and to share some of your time and for your commitment to being here at this hour on a Sunday morning. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land at this place and to acknowledge that their ancestors continue to give life and to give wellspring to this area of the country. I would like to acknowledge the group, Australian Reforming Catholics, for their invitation to me to be here, and also to reiterate my acknowledgment of your commitment not only to the agenda of the immense task which you have set your commitment to, but also to being here this morning.

Now I guess that, even with my biographical information, you still might be wondering why Mark? Why have we got him here? Why is he here? I will give you a bit of a story about how I came to be here. I work for the Lingjari Foundation and my boss really is Patrick Dobson. The place where I have my desk, because I am based in Sydney and he is based up in Broome, where I have my office here in Sydney is with the Edmund Rice Centre and the Director of the Edmund Rice Centre is Phil Glendenning. Some of you are beginning to nod, saying Yes, I know him. In the conversations with how the organisers of this conference might be able to include either Patrick or somebody from within

Phil Glendenning's broad network that could begin to speak about some of the agendas of reforming, particularly from an indigenous perspective. Initially Patrick was unable and Phil in his – I won't say – wisdom suggested Mark. He said, why don't you get Mark to come along. The reason why it is confusing is because I come to you as a Baptist and the son of a Baptist preacher would mean that I would spend twenty minutes here and I would have three points. But I also come to you as somebody who is committed to much more beyond what even the Baptist agenda can achieve. And that leads me into broader circles than just the Baptist churches. It led me to work in the National Council of Churches of Australia and it has ultimately led me to work with the Edmund Rice Centre and the very broad agendas within the Catholic Social Justice circles. I sit with Cyril Hally on the ACLRI NSW Committee. So as part of my introduction and acknowledgment, I acknowledge that I come to you not as a Catholic. But as somebody who knows even particularly how the religious operate and the systems and the levels and the layers of power within the Catholic Church, I don't know them and I admit that freely. I also come to you as one of those young whippersnappers if you like. I was born in 1971 and am yet to turn 31, so I am quite young. To you I am still a baby. You heard from the introduction of my involvement with young people and, as far as they are concerned, I am an old person because I have a little bit of grey hair on the side and on the top of my head. But it is like I am operating as the elder of these young people because it leads to how I am to approach this morning. It is clearly part of my commitment to put into place the sorts of reform if you like which I didn't have as I began to develop in terms of young leadership. Young leadership. When you are able to identify someone in their late teens and you say: they've got something, that young person, they've got something, and you see how they develop and you encourage them to develop through their early twenties. And to really give them the sorts of stuff to build on their conviction and stretch and learn through their late twenties and early thirties so they start to really grow and develop and blossom. You know that sort of dynamic. It is certainly not the dynamic that I had received. I had received more of the dynamic which was: oh, here's a young person – particularly within the Church structures – here's a young person who can do all that stuff. Let's dump a lot of work on them. Let's overburden them with too much work and too much commitment and see if they will survive to 25. And you get a lot of exit from the Church of quite talented and committed young people who have experienced that burden of over-commitment. But somewhere in that system I had caught on to the idea that that would be a dynamic that I would not do to the people five and ten years younger than myself. Within the indigenous structures, even within the Church structures in the indigenous peoples in the Churches, we do not have the system

of graduation points. We don't have a succession plan. We don't have a point of bringing people to move them through certain stages in terms of their leadership development. So I, as a 22-year old, had no voices from 27, 29, 32, 35-year olds flowing back to me. I was very much caught in that 30-year gap within our Churches and within our leadership – a 30-year gap of where these leaders have come from and where they are going to. You have these emerging young people and quite a lot of them have exited because of the lack of support systems, the local structures that allow them to graduate and move through. So I have been firmly committed to ensuring that I contribute back, if you like, that I pass back – and that's from the wisdom of a 31-year old which you all know is quite small. I have still got much to learn but the dynamic and the commitment to actually pass this 31-year old knowledge back to a 25-year old means that a 25-year old will maintain a sense of commitment. Then the 22-year old will find ways and find mechanisms to support their own development so that they don't exit by the time they are 25.

I realise that I have been speaking about young people, and for many of you it is like yes, that's back in the good old days, but what about now? What about the challenges that we have now? But I would just like to remind you that 70% of the indigenous population is actually 25 years or under. 40% of the indigenous population is 15 years and under. We have an incredibly young population among the indigenous peoples and yet we as a nation, Australia, are moving towards in 20 years' time having one in four people being 65 or over. My father is only 61 this year and for him, as an indigenous man, he exists as one of 50% of indigenous men that live to be over 50. The indigenous perspective, the way we perceive the world, the location that I come from, means that I stand before you as a young man, but also as a middle-aged Aboriginal man and it is really difficult for me to conceptualise it but it is part of my location.

What we are talking about this morning in terms of the title 'Jesus our cousin/brother', I have actually taken an approach that is more like conversation-style. But for the life of me, I have never had such a conversation in such a big theatre! The conversation style is very much how we, as indigenous people, seek to find a way to relate to this Jesus story, the Story of Jesus Christ. The story of this Jesus of Nazareth – how we relate to that story, the sort of baggage that we bring when people want to have a conversation about Jesus. In that sense it is looking at religious relationships to Jesus and positive on-going challenges for contextualisation for indigenous peoples here.

When you read the title, if you were looking for a way to make your own chart through the indigenous kinship system, why is it cousin/brother? What is that relationship? I will touch on that but it is certainly not the central point

in the presentation today. Cousin/brother is a kind of kindred relationship and it comes from the sorts of articulation that I will be focussing a bit on. That is the articulation by practitioners, if you like, by lay church workers but also by priests and by people who are pastors in the church who are actually engaged in how they might communicate to their own indigenous brothers and sisters, how they relate to the Jesus story, their relationships with Jesus. It is certainly not a lesson on the Christological titles of Jesus. Any conversation that has to do with indigenous peoples here and a conversation that has to do with Christianity must touch on the points of the history of missions and of colonisation. If you are starting to get concerned about my perspective on this, clearly my perspective on the history of mission and colonisation is that you must see both sides of the story. That becomes more and more evident in a few minutes. It is like being able to say that the history of missions, if we paint a picture of a mission compound, people will talk about that mission compound as being 'that was a place that took away everything that makes me Aboriginal: language, culture, ceremony, family, everything like that'. That Christian mission, that mission compound in another location, was the safe haven, was the place that actually recorded language and then taught language, was a place that enabled people to meet, to live in safe havens away from the destructive forces of, say, pastoral expansion or just the removal of Aboriginal people from land. And so my perspective on the history of mission and colonisation is within those two perspectives on the mission compound. Yes, undoubtedly the history of missions has taught us that they have taken away from the Aboriginal people. But equally the history of missions has taught us that those same mission compounds in other locations and sometimes other perspectives in the changing of history, have been places of safe haven, the places that have actually restored the Aboriginal culture. But undoubtedly the history of missions is important because even my affiliation with the Baptist Church and other people's affiliations with other churches have somehow been determined by their location. We have a situation in Australia where they were able to divide up the sorts of areas that they wanted to proselytise if they wanted to bring out their mission to the Aboriginal people. Catholics, you are allowed over there; Lutherans, you are allowed over there; Anglicans, you are allowed over there; and Baptists you are allowed over there. And my father quite often makes the joke that they put the sprinklers on the coast in the Northern Territory and they put the Baptists (the dunkers) in the central desert. He was sort of wondering the sorts of success rate that they wanted to achieve in that. But it is not just about the stuff in terms of our affiliation or membership to the church. Even in the earliest days in the colonies of Melbourne, the Collins Street Baptist Church said we want to have an outreach and we will start a little school for the Aboriginal people. And

those of you who have read the book by John Harris, *One Blood*, will remember some of the stories about the work of early pioneering missionaries with the Aboriginal people. They were the only voices declaring the humanity of the indigenous peoples. They were the only voices saying that these 'wretched people' are still human beings, still worthy souls to be saved. They are still human beings that need the light and the life of Christ to be shone upon their lives. And some missions were instrumental in being able to say: 'We believe that these people need the education and the opportunities that we would want for any children around us.' Now depending on which side or which perspective you want a colonisation critique on this, you may say that the link between colonisation and Christianity is one of a firm marriage with the end goal of making those native peoples subject to the colonial power. Quite often the indigenous people would respond in that way, saying when they couldn't send the army with the guns, they sent the missionaries with the bibles and they achieved the same outcome. And that was that the native peoples would then bow to the colonial power. Some people perceived the relationship between Christianity and colonisation as one of a firm marriage with dual and considered intent. Other people see that relationship between colonisation and Christianity as something as an ad hoc, they somehow fell around each other at the same period in history. Nevertheless, we are looking at a situation where the two dynamics of how Europe went around and colonised the known world and how Christianity was part of it. There is an undoubted relationship and I am not arguing here on this platform whether it was a firm marriage or whether it was just something of a coincidental ad hoc relationship. Nevertheless, there is a clear relationship. Anyone who has travelled through Central and South America knows that clearly the Catholic Church is the dominant religion. And now we are looking at another form of colonisation or imperialisation between the relationship between the Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches and the culture of the North Americans. There is clearly a relationship but I am not arguing for either one.

One of the clear dynamics or the clear legacies that comes out of the process of colonisation though is the dynamic of the natives people, the oppressed and colonised peoples are being told constantly that they are a harsh people; that they are not full humanity; that they can only be half a man, half a woman; that the way that they experience their culture and they build their families or organise their societies is not as superior or is not as well developed as the dominating society. The history of churches, even from the very earliest churches, have had to deal with that tension, that dynamic. The churches in Acts have had to deal with how they bring the message of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and

the dynamic is how they Christianise, bringing the message of the gospel, without Judaising, bringing all their culture of the history of Moses and that sort of the way that they operated in terms of their Judaistic history and the Judaism in terms of their cultural expression. And they imposed that on the Gentiles and said 'you must act as we do'. They struggled with that in Acts 15. You can read the struggle of how they ended up coming to the point where 'these are the sorts of things you will need to do to demonstrate that Jesus has worked that transformation in your life. But you won't have to act the same way that I do as a Jew.' That dynamic of how they Christianised and not Judaised has been the dynamic of the history of missions, how they Christianised without Westernising. And so we have had to face that challenge of how the gospel message is brought, how the relationship to Jesus is brought to the peoples without making those peoples becoming less human and having to adopt to the external culture. Because undoubtedly the external culture is related to the history of colonisation. I speak English because my indigenous language was taken away from my grandfather on my father's side and was taken away from my grandmother on my mother's side. And there are just a few native speakers left and so we are engaged as a family in the process of re-learning our language from a few words, to a few sentences, to a few systems of the vocab.

Now what is at stake here is that the legacy of colonisation gets married in the minds of the indigenous peoples to the point where they completely reject any notion of Christianity because that is the religion of the colonising power and all that has done is make me feel like a half person. And it is the legacies of negativity and the legacies of opposition that brings about any agent for Christianity. You and I, as believers, no matter what church we may come from, no matter what tradition we come from, if we are truly agents of Christianity in the sense that we represent a relationship with Jesus Christ that we would want you to enter into, for many indigenous peoples it stops right there. I have heard about a relationship with Jesus that takes so much away from my culture and identity. I don't want that. Undoubtedly we have to deal with that sort of relationship. But in the exploration of that negativity in terms of that relationship, we end up in terms of the church, in terms of the indigenous peoples, in terms of offering a relationship to Jesus, with a range of complexities. I would like to offer you three relationships that would seem more negative and then focus a bit more on the two that are a bit more positive in terms of the relationship to Jesus. I refer to it as the Jesus story.

The first one in terms of the negative legacies is a bit related to what I had just spoken about before: that for many people the Jesus story and an invitation to relationship to Jesus is one seen as 'this is an oppressive force against me, that

takes from me. There is nothing positive in this Jesus story because I have seen what they have done to my people.' And in our own relationship with Jesus we have to acknowledge that. That there have been missionaries and there have been systems and structures that have taken away peoples' language, taken away their ceremonies, taken away their culture and even taken away their families. We have to acknowledge that. But I hope that you hear in this presentation that we have to acknowledge that, but we can't stop there. We continue to move on from that.

The second negative type of relationship, and these are all interrelated, is that the Jesus story is one of making us dull to the systems and structures that are not based on our indigenous values. This is where the indigenous peoples may provide some people think a more sophisticated critique, other people just say look, they can see it. When they are asked to engage with the church, they are to leave the peculiar and the particular indigenous cultures at the door. 'Come in and share with us the Jesus story, but we kindly ask you not to bring your traditional dress, your traditional culture, your traditional way of seeing things and your indigenous reality into the mixture of this.' The indigenous peoples are saying you are making us dull to that so that we are beginning to think there is a Christian culture which all of a sudden sounds like the culture of English-speaking, Western dressing and it looks like the Christian culture where we adopt the sorts of value systems that belong to the dominant Western society. So the indigenous peoples become, in playing the game within the churches in relation with Jesus then, like well there is only one way to follow through to Jesus and that's not the one way that Jesus spoke about in the Bible. It is the one way that is clearly evident in the Western-dominated church. Now I remind you that I speak not as a Catholic so you might be able to berate me afterwards and say well that is not the case in the Catholic Church. But there is a dynamic that I am very aware of, particularly within the reflections that come from my own work within the churches and my own work with the National Council of Churches that indigenous peoples right across the world struggle with this. They say. OK, they want our indigenous culture; they want our indigenous stuff to inform and to bring colour. But the only time it is allowed to come out is when the churches say 'we are going to have a multi-cultural day' and everyone comes in all different dresses and everyone brings all different food and we have a procession either of prayers or contributions from every culture within the congregation, or within the parish or within the broader group. It is like a procession of colour and then after the procession of colour is finished here in this land they will bring out the didgeridoo and they will have a smoking ceremony and then they will say, thank you. Let's go back to the

other church. The Uniting Church in Australia has taught us all a lesson by their declaration of saying 'We are a multi-cultural church. We are not a church that has a multi-cultural ministry, we are a multi-cultural church'. Now I am not sure how the Uniting Church deal with these struggles as well and the reason why I am uncertain is that we as Australians struggle with it. We are a multi-cultural country. We only value that expression on multi-cultural events and multi-cultural days. We still struggle with that and it is a very real tension. But that is the second of the negative relationships that indigenous peoples have with their relationship to Jesus – and that is the fact that they have to leave their traditional ways at the door when they come to share a relationship with Jesus. We do that when we say, 'oh no! it's not like that. We have a Christian culture.' I remember challenging a fellow brother-in-Christ about this dynamic. I said, 'Without Christianity I as an indigenous person can embrace something of my indigenous spirituality that will give me a certain amount of spiritual sustenance. Without Christianity, what spirituality do you embrace?' He was unable to answer that one. But that to me remains the profound question that deals with that point of negativity there that we all have to de-robe ourselves, we have to remove our cultural clothing in order to engage in a relationship to Jesus.

The third negative relationship with Jesus in the range of these complexities I would like to bring to you is that the representation of the indigenous story at a very superficial level remains one that reminds us that we are not part of the story. It reminds us that even when we are engaged in the story that we are marginalised. Remember I said that these were interrelated. I had to try and separate them a little bit to try and tease out their implications because, on the superficial and on the up-front and on the initial sort of resistance level, it is like "You want me to have a relationship with Jesus? White, blonde, blue-eyed Jesus.' And you say, well that's just an image of Jesus that appears somewhere. And you hear that criticism that that image of Jesus appears everywhere. Show me the image of Jesus that looks like the Palestinians. Show me the Jesus that looks dark-skinned. Show me the Jesus that is able to relate to me in my dark skin. Then we are faced with this challenge then. We are looking at a church that is dominated by the figures of white maleness. The Father looks white. Jesus the Son looks white. And we have to challenge and find a way to meet that challenge – all of us Christians and people around the world and particularly for people like yourselves who are engaged in the commitment of reforming the Catholic Church as it sits here in this continent will have to meet the challenge of whether the imagery of the Jesus that we follow, the Jesus that we have relationship with, is the sort of image that is able to have other people open up into

relationship with him. And you can see how the legacies of colonisation, of having the white people as the oppressors, you can see how that relationship will keep people at a distance from that. But then they begin to ask questions like: Is this a white man's religion? If the white men are the ones that are being in charge, being the heads of the churches, being the ones who make all the powerful decisions and that. Then you give me imagery that reminds me that the angels are white, and Jesus is white and everyone is white. Then you ask me to sing the hymns that wash me white as snow and how can I be a dark person and be a Christian. Now on one level it is superficial, but we all know that imagery carries so much in terms of our identification. You and I as Australians have always this problem with our own imagery, the ocker Aussie, the crocodile hunter, you can't get more ocker than the crocodile hunter at the moment. But we have these long-lasting images of Greg Norman, Paul Hogan and it goes on and on. The Sydney Olympics was a good illustration of that when they had the floats with the shark and the big hat. We continue to wrestle with those images and people, I think rightly so, say why are we so hung up on who we are as Australians. We should just be Australians. Why are we obsessed with our image. If you are asking me as an indigenous person, we are obsessed with our image because we are not at home with it yet. We are like the adolescent still struggling to say, 'Well I am not this but I am that'. We will mature most certainly but part of that maturity will be when the churches are able to have the sorts of imagery that will lead to belonging in this land and not the sort of imagery that says we are an outpost of an European church. We are a representation of an European and an American-dominated church reality. It is like the main office is either in Europe or North America and we are like the post office box that lives in the Southern Hemisphere.

My response particularly to the last of the negative relationships with Jesus but also in implication to the other two is that in Australia we do have a white male-dominated church but Christianity and our relationship to Jesus is not based on that. Christianity is the religion of the people from all over the world and anyone who is more knowledgeable in terms of the statistics of how many people, who belongs to what church will know that more of the church is actually existing in Africa and Asia and Latin America and in South America, and the percentage of people who are church adherents or people who belong or locally confess their Christianity is much larger in the countries which would be considered to be 'coloured' than in countries like Australia, North America or Europe. So we have this oscillating, this tension between these lasting images of a relationship to Jesus that is based on how the church mediates that relationship to Jesus. And you have indigenous people struggling beneath that

relationship, saying 'Well, in some ways I find the church helpful but in other ways I find myself maintaining my marginalised position in society when I come to the church. I come to the church because the church says there is an offering, an opening of a relationship to Jesus, but when I arrive at the church I have to be 2% of the population of the church. I have to see the power relationships in the church where the men are in control and the women do a lot of work and have a little bit of control. But we have a relationship where the indigenous people are still sitting at the edge. It makes the messages of the preferential option for the poor; it makes the messages where Jesus seeks to transform society; it makes the messages where we seek to love one another as we love ourselves – difficult to hear. Because the church which has emerged in Australia has not been able to offer any significant structural difference to my participation in society in general. When I walk out on the street, as an indigenous person – I am not talking about how I look particularly – I am marginalised in the mainstream Australia. The statistics on education, health, the statistics on incarceration, the statistics that show that I have such a poor income and home ownership and poor access to housing, all of those statistics say that 2% of the population of this country have got a really difficult time in terms of the Australian society. And in terms of how the church has grown in this country has been one that has not been able to significantly address that. Within the Baptist churches, we have tremendous struggles on how we can build leadership within the Baptist churches that can deal with the churches among the indigenous peoples. The churches among the indigenous peoples are the impoverished ones. The churches that exist in the Baptist Church that are in the poor suburbs are the impoverished ones. The churches that exist in the wealthy suburbs are the extremely wealthy ones. We have not been able to demonstrate how our relationship with Jesus can transform even structurally our society. Why this relates particularly to the indigenous peoples is because they sit there and they say, 'You want me to enter into a relationship where you and I are brothers and sisters, then you and I are entering into a relationship with Jesus. But you are demonstrating to me that even in a relationship with Jesus with you, I am marginalised and you are empowered.' That presents a tremendous challenge for us as Christians, a tremendous challenge for us to demonstrate something different – to demonstrate that our relationship with Jesus means that we transform holistically our reality. Now I hope you don't hear that as me belting you because I am engaged in the challenge as well. Most certainly, I am engaged in that challenge. It is like one of those unanswered questions, those never-ending challenges. It won't get resolved this weekend or in a month's time when you have an evaluation or a reflection on this weekend. It won't be addressed by then. But it remains as a never-ending challenge to us how we can demonstrate

that our relationship to Jesus, with Jesus, transforms the whole of our society and all of us.

Let me wind up my time then with the two positives - in terms of the positive relationships that indigenous peoples embrace with the Jesus story. The Jesus story is one that brings healing with all of the pain and the suffering, with all of the displacement, dispersion, the taking away from indigenous land, culture, religion, spirituality, language etc. etc. Indigenous peoples in the church continually testify to the healing that is in this Jesus relationship. When they talk about their own relationship, their own conversations with Jesus, they always talk about how healing this relationship is, how they have been able to find a sense of peace; how they have been able to find the sorts of forgiveness and the ability to love. They truly testify to being part of the family of God and you undoubtedly know of some of your own Catholic heroes who have been able to demonstrate that feeling that Jesus has brought them. Undoubtedly that is most certainly one of the corner-stones, foundation stones, in terms of why we even continue to speak to people about the relationship to Jesus and that is because of the life of healing.

The other very positive dynamic is that the Jesus story is one of liberation. People are finding the strength and the courage to live and to stand up in solidarity with other peoples who are fighting for liberation. Indigenous peoples here have been able to find in the story of Jesus and in relationship with Jesus the possibility to stand through the suffering, to continue to stand up and say the Jesus story is about liberation. Identifying with that suffering but also identifying with the suffering that appears with other peoples in our society. If there is a connecting bridge here it is the fact that liberation and contextual theologies that have arisen out of Asia, South America, Africa and the Pacific are beginning to be read and understood and comprehended and then started to work out in the context of indigenous peoples here. I noticed on the table as I walked in that there is one of the books that was the beginning of that attempt and it is *Rainbow Spirit Theology*. It is beginning to bring those theologies of liberation to how the indigenous peoples here will see we exist as a liberated people: liberated from the mental shackles that tell us we are half people; liberated from looking at the church and saying we are marginalised; liberated to the point where we say we can enter into this relationship; and then seek to bring challenge, reform, renewal to the whole of this church and to the whole of Australian society. Now for me my perspective is that the liberation theologies as they exist for indigenous peoples are not as much about the political theologies that you would find, say, in Central America or Latin America. They are more like the indigenous theologies, say, of Africa that say: this is who we are as peoples. We can sing

about Jesus in this way. We can speak about our relationship to God in this way. We can begin to build an ecclesiology, a church community and to perceive ourselves as part of our own structures of kinship relationships: elders, senior people, bosses, cousin/brothers, uncles – the uncle relationship that is my mother's brother. We put them into the context of how we live out our church reality. It just doesn't fit with the church structure that has been offered to us – the hierarchy of the priest or the pastor and then the long rungs of people who are involved in the churches. A designated pastor, being paid by the church, may exist in that part of the structure, but still the leaders (the boss people in the churches) are not even the diaconate, they are actually the eldership of our community, bringing all their wisdom of Jesus story and traditional stories. The pastor is the one to bring the theology then and all that sort of stuff. The roles of men and women in the church are not just on the lines that we are given the division of labour in churches, where the women cook and bake and provide the flowers and do all of this other stuff, and the men do this other in terms of the division of labour within the church. But the church work, the work of the community, exists on the lines of the division of labour as they exist in the traditional ways. You have the system of reciprocity as it exists within the church. But you have a system of right relationships and you allow that to be in the church. You also have systems where you actually pray through the pay-back relationships rather than act on those pay-back relationships because you are able to see the church in your own context. So the liberation theologies here are more about how we develop our contextual theologies and it is like being able to do this: the contextual articulations are like the ones that have been set by the people on the ground, participating in church life.

The first quote: *'God is my father, and the earth is my mother.'* – being able to bring through all that tradition, instinctive knowledge with the knowledge of who God is and how God relates to my indigenous personality, my indigenous culture, my indigenous reality.

Another quote is *'God is my Father and Jesus is my Brother'*, connecting the relationships there rather than speaking about God is the sovereign, almighty creator and Jesus is the Lord of Lords. While that is the language of the church, for this particular practitioner on the ground she chose to express *'God is my Father and Jesus is my Brother'*. I have a very close and intimate relationship here.

Finally, one that is in line with the title of today and that was from a person in the context of the Nungalinga College (Darwin). In one of his articulations, he says: *'Jesus is like my cousin/brother'*. The relationship that Jesus has with me is like that of a cousin/brother. Because if I say *'Jesus is my brother'* I am not

actually close to my brother. We exist in relationship alongside of each other, almost in parallel. But my cousin/brother is the one that I have greater intimacy with and if I call Jesus my cousin/brother, naming him as my elder cousin/brother, leading me, guiding me, being very intimate with me but helping to grow me up. Now what that is the sort of contextual theology that put the Jesus story in roots in this land. If ever there is a task I believe for Reforming Catholics, as well as anyone who wants to be involved in reform, renewal, revival, it must be how we put roots down in this land, in this continent, that allow the Jesus story to open up and have relationship to all of us.

Finally, the image I want to leave you with is the image somebody asked me for at a Baptist Conference; ‘Give us an image of how you believe Australia is at the moment and what you think we can do as Christians, as Baptists’.

I said, ‘Well, if you are asking me – Australia at the moment is like an orchard with poisonous fruit. We have planted this orchard in unclean soil and it has borne the fruit that has poisoned us. We can take from this fruit and we can sustain our own living off this fruit. But you and I over time get used to that poison, it will always be in us, it will be part of our blood. The task for any reform, renewal, revival of the Christians in this land has got to till that soil. We have got to get to the roots and bring the wellspring of living water that is the heart of this Christian story. We have to bring it to the root system of this orchard because as long as we stand as Christians trying to spray the fruit, we will never get to the root of it. The roots of the unclean soil in this land is that we haven’t been able to address the unfinished business. We haven’t been able to bring peace, justice, righteousness to this country and we haven’t been able to see the fruit of this country honourable.’

So I’d like to leave you with that image as a lasting image and I acknowledge that you are in a great and wonderful commitment to see the Catholic Church, like all other Churches, true and righteous and honourable in its expression here in this land.



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