



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics
March 2002
Issue No. 3

Greetings from the Secretariat

Greetings to all ARC Members and to others interested in reforming the Church.

First of all we welcome our Editor of *ARCvoice*, Margaret Knowlden, who has had a long association with various aspects of the reforming of the Catholic Church and, in particular, with the publications associated with it. Margaret is singularly prepared to develop *ARCvoice* into a vehicle of intelligent debate and thoughtful reflection of Jesus Christ and the Church. And we wish to thank Bill Welsh who, in spite of his commitment to all the Epiphany publications, found time to produce the first two issues of *ARCvoice*, getting us up and running and pointing us in the right direction. While anticipating that ARC and Epiphany and many other organisations will usefully cooperate in the future we do thank you, Bill, for this particular personal assistance at this moment of time!

ARC has started low key but we will raise the key somewhat when we hold our INAUGURAL CONFERENCE, 4-6 October 2002, at ABBOTSLEIGH, WAHROONGA, an Anglican boarding school on Sydney's North Shore. A brochure will be available shortly with full details.

Some time during the Conference (but not so that it bogs us down) we shall discuss the structure of ARC. To this end we invite people to ask for copies of the current *Trial Structure* so as to think about it beforehand (and hopefully to have some meetings about it beforehand). Even at the conference, however, we do not yet wish to incorporate, preferring instead to leave the matter flexible to see what system will be most workable. We do encourage members to get together to organise regional groups in a way best suited to their particular region, also to form *Think Tanks* and to either request or to offer *Roving Ambassadors* to stimulate discussion. What we must do at the Conference, however, is to elect an *Interim Committee* according to the *Trial Structure* (as it is now or changed if that is what members wish).

Again, we strongly recommend members acquiring the book, *Rome Has Spoken* (see advertisement - p.5). It is an excellent springboard for discussion.

Peace to all!

Barbara Campbell, Ted Lambert, Jim Taverne

ARC'S Inaugural Conference

4-6 October 2002

Theme: CONVERSATIONS AROUND JESUS, OUR FRIEND

(John 15, 14-17)

at

Abbotsleigh, Wahroonga (Sydney)

Chair: Paul Collins

Keynote Speaker: Tissa Balasuriya OMI

Speakers include Veronica Brady IBVM and others to be confirmed. Workshops will be arranged according to interests. Events will include a Eucharistic Meal and Ecumenical Service

Mark this on your calendar

This Conference is not to be missed!

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Confessions of a Conversation-Killer

When I was about 28 and living in New York, an Egyptian friend (with an Italian mother) had the temerity to tell me that I was a conversation-killer! Since I was conscious of the goodwill that accompanied the advice I took it seriously and began to examine it. If it were true then I had better reform.

I had been brought up in an atmosphere of scoffing and scorning, not of gracious conversation. Any statement had to be an end in itself and definitive. There had to be winners and losers. I myself didn't scoff and scorn (I think) but I certainly was inclined to raise my voice and slam bam. Then as a young adult I became an officer at the United Nations and began to have some of the rough edges taken off me in my conscientious determination to mix well with people of many different backgrounds.

I ceased (mostly) raising my voice but still did not become a true conversationalist because I was still imbued with the necessity to 'win'. Whatever was under discussion had to be sorted out then and there. So I would listen intently and make the odd intelligent remark and all the while be drawing the threads together. Finally I would come forth with the only possible conclusion and the discussion would come to an abrupt end. A group of people who until then had been happily tossing ideas about enjoying themselves were suddenly rendered speechless. What a party pooper I was! Thank you, Rinaldo Daoud, wherever you are, for pointing it out to me.

Having had my eyes opened to this murderous practice I did attempt to reform but have never become a great conversationalist – it was too late for that. But I did begin to consider the art of conversation and how, if perfected, it could improve the human condition. On a trip to Ireland once I was privileged to be introduced to Dublin by people who belong to that most democratic of institutions, the Irish intelligentsia. To hear them converse was one of my most memorable experiences. Of course, there is an element of the slam bam in Catholic Ireland but not nearly to the extent that it exists in Ulster from whence my killing instincts sprang.

The present regime in the Catholic Church is a conversation killer as it blocks the involvement of the Holy Spirit in ordinary people. The ARC advocates free and easy conversation in the Church in a spirit of goodwill. Australians today are, on the whole, formally well-educated and, if they have been using television, computers and books judiciously, remarkably well informed about our universe, its history and its elements. We should be able to toss ideas about, have our own scrutinised by others, gently scrutinise theirs. There should be no winners and losers. Gradually some things will crystallise but can always be reflected on. Mysteries will remain which we will never plumb. By delving into them, though, and by talking around them we will most enthrallingly pass the time of day.

Barbara Campbell

Out of the mouths of babes..

Children at a Catholic elementary school have given some unorthodox answers to Bible questions. Among them were:

- ◆ St. Paul preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage.
- ◆ Samson slayed the Philistines with the axe of the apostles.
- ◆ The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
- ◆ The seventh commandment is you shall not admit adultery.
- ◆ The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
- ◆ Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
- ◆ The epistles were wives of the apostles.
- ◆ Christians have only one spouse. This is called monotony.

The Tablet of 16 February 2002, page 12



THE FORGOTTEN DISCIPLES OF JESUS

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What Is A Human Being?

Has the human being yet been adequately explained? Is it naturally subject to authority, or does it have its own authority within? Should gender complicate the question and, therefore, the answer? How does the human being relate to God? This is not an exhaustive list of questions. They are not idle questions today.

* * * * *

It may be thought that the human being is well known to itself and has been from the beginning. But here lies the conundrum. When, and what, was the beginning? In my lifetime, as a Catholic growing up in the Church and later as a seminarian, our origin was in the not-too-distant past. The Church had terrible difficulty coming to terms with Charles Darwin and the Theory of Evolution and, in the first flush of denial and a later phase of hedging its bets, it left the ordinary Catholic in the limbo of Genesis chapters 1 and 2, taken rather literally. Our 'first parents' just 'appeared' one day, the male first and then the female, who derived from the male and was a follower from the very start. After this somewhat magical beginning came a spell cast by the Devil – this time the female was first, giving in to temptation and then tempting the male. 'Body' and 'soul' were put into irreconcilable conflict. The pictures here are all incurably sexist. Finally Jesus, God made human, entered our world as the Reconciler. But, even after receiving Jesus into our midst by faith, hope and love, the Church could not rid itself, nor us Christians, of the notion that the 'original sin' of our 'first parents' had somehow split our nature. While condemning in theory the worst instances of this 'dualism' or splitting into two, the Church left the people to live in it. Perhaps purely male authority keeping women in subjection could not have had any other result.

* * * * *

The (still sexist) language of the Catechism of the Catholic Church does not clarify the teaching for me. No.362 states: *'The human person, created in the image of God, is a being at once corporeal and spiritual.'* No.364 quotes Gaudium et Spes: *'Man (sic), though made of body and soul, is a unity.'* The human person then, image of the divine, is one in itself, but made up of body and soul ... Two whats? No.363 says the 'soul' signifies the 'spiritual principle' in man (sic). No.365 says: *'The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the form of the body'*, referring to the Council of Viennes (1312). What is this 'form'? No.366 states: *'The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God – it is not 'produced' by the parents – and also that it is immortal; it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body in the final Resurrection'*. No.365 speaks of *'the body made of matter'*.

Those who wrote the Catechism have left me confused. In this core section of the Catechism, PART

ONE: THE PROFESSION OF FAITH, their 'teaching' is not clear to me. They appear to have defined nothing which is easy to understand (much less certain) except that the human being is a unity, which we already know simply by looking into ourselves, and that the 'soul' is immediately created by God. But *A Body made of Matter, A Spiritual Soul, A Form, A Spiritual Principle, A Separation from the Body at Death?* Do the teachers know what their words mean? If they do, their communication skills are not good. They have failed to enlighten me about their 'teaching'. To me the human being knows its unity, also knows its call to greatness in God, knows it is crippled by its sin, yet is still a mystery. Part of that mystery is in the Origin of Species, the science of how life (and we) got here, of which the Catechism says not a word.

I suggest that in No's 362-366 of the Catechism the traditional clergy had a go and were merely unclear. It seems clarity must come from elsewhere, from the church community, relying on the Spirit who reveals within them and among them.

This is why Australian Reforming Catholics has, it seems to me, such an important role to play in urging the ordinary Catholic to express the indwelling Spirit and say what the church and its belief is. This may well be a somewhat new role, which comes from the new facts that everyone can now read and write and that things such as talk-back and the internet puts everyone in touch with the world. No longer is the ordinary Catholic 'female and voiceless', as it were, made from the clerical male rib. The ordinary Catholic may speak up and announce the Spirit within.

* * * * *

Archbishop Pell was recently quoted in the National Catholic Reporter (Nov.2nd, 2001) as stating: 'The notion of subsidiarity is radically incompatible with the hierarchical and communitarian nature of the church.' Without explaining how a hierarchy and a communitarian church hang together (they may well do so!), he goes on: 'Its fundamental flaw' (the notion of subsidiarity) 'is the assumption that power comes from the people, which is not the case in the church.'

The Archbishop is entitled to his opinion, and ARC cherishes, as one of its source inspirations, the May 1997 Mt Eliza Draft Charter which envisages a Church committed 'to freedom of enquiry and scholarship'. As regards the Principle of Subsidiarity, too many Popes in the past century have given it favourable mention to permit its dismissal with a word. Moreover, the statement that People of God power is not the case in the church speaks to a historical fact, but is it an essential fact, or even theological? Slavery is also a historical fact – the Church got that wrong too.

This further raises the question 'What is a Human Being?' The Archbishop is taking it for granted that human beings are naturally subject to hierarchical rule. Whatever the past history of male clerical supremacy over the 'lay' under-class, the Principle of Subsidiarity has emerged as significant for present and future history. The Catechism gives it a run in No's 1883 ff. It is worth quoting No.1884 in full:

'God has not willed to reserve to himself (sic) all exercise of power. He (sic) entrusts to every creature the functions it is capable of performing, according to the capacities of its nature. This mode of governance ought to be followed in social life. The way God acts in governing the world, which bears witness to such great regard for human freedom, should inspire the wisdom of those who govern human communities. They should behave as ministers of divine providence.'

In case it should be thought that the Church is exempt from practising this wisdom, there is a quote from John XXIII in No.1886 which should cause discomfort to anyone thinking that. One cannot read that statement as defending a hierarchy. Its bent is clearly communitarian. We humans benefit each other and our Social Institutions (of which I say the Church is one) clearly exist to benefit each of us in the full exercise of our human potential. Under God, we all believe in and live in the Spirit. Communitarian structures are there to support us, not to subject us.

The human being, with a place in the universe under God, is an individual and personal life-form naturally forming communities by which to guarantee its freedom and prosper its personal and social well-being. It seems to me the human being is still finding its way in the community we call church.

* * * * *

I cannot ask the question 'What is a Human Being?' without overwhelming sadness. However men and women may have thought and behaved in pre-recorded times, the history of written times, including biblical times and since, shows a gender bias of immense proportions in the way 'man' answered the question. Silverback gorillas could not have been more certain of male superiority. Women have been oppressed, deprived, impoverished and, in reality, denied equal humanity. Whatever spurious arguments have been used to label women with innate inferiority, only baboon-type men would continue to make use of them. Only muscle and testosterone could ever have led men to such an outrageous parody of the human being, made as it is, female and male, in God's image and likeness. The evolving human brain should surely have intuited the error, and the horror, of male chauvenism long before scientific studies, as recently as the 19th century, identified the female ovum as being as essential to human reproduction as the male sperm. But baboon-type humans are still out there! In the name of our divine

humanity, we men must find contrition at last, and then compassion, a 'suffering with', and learn to say 'Sorry'. The 1990's was not a good period for this essential male conversion in the clerical Church. It was an era of recalcitrance.

* * * * *

The Late Bishop Jim Cuskelly was a celebrated author in Spiritual Theology. After twelve years as Superior General of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart he finished his days as an Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane. Prior to all that, he taught Theology in the MSC Seminary at Croydon, Victoria. The text book started with the sections 'De Deo Uno' and 'De Deo Trino' covering God as One and God as Trinity. While not denying these are important topics, Jim thought it was more important for us to take a psychological approach. Understand ourselves first the better to study the God who is the other pole of the relationship. There can be no useful theology 'out there'. The only God who is of use to us human beings is the God who meets our needs. This is not to say we should wholly create our God, but that we should first seek to understand what and whom God has created, for better focus on the Creator. This is clearly the more humble approach. I am sure it is also the healthier one. All the mystics agree that God cannot be grasped by knowledge, but only by love. It is when we appreciate the love in created things, ourselves in particular, that we more truly appreciate the Love in Creation, our God who relates to us as Parent, Child and Spirit.

This revelation might seem to have its main source in the Sacred Scriptures. While not wishing to deny this, the true riches in this revelation can be better mined by following Jim's insight, as recent scripture scholarship is beginning to do. Making a god of the Scriptures has given us 'De Deo Uno' and 'De Deo Trino', very distant theses. I believe it has also caused the distance between Rome and the people of God. Whereas, plumbing the human depths within those stories, told and retold, thought and rethought, described and embellished in true human fashion would perhaps indicate where the true authorship, the authority, lies. With the people, in the Spirit. What is a human being? A personal being on whose heart-strings God plays a tune. Any human lover understands the impact of such a revelation. Wayward it might sometimes be, but this revelation is direct, intuitive and primal. It cries out to be shared, transmitted to community in the true sense of 'diakonia' or ministry that John Collins expounded in the last issue of ARC VOICE. This sense of revelation has been banned (or at least severely limited) in the past by the ruling males who claim exclusive right to proclaim a doctrine. Which is why Australian Reforming Catholics has a real role to play in encouraging ordinary Catholics to have a say. 'What is a Human Being?' is a vital question, talking to a real life situation in the Catholic church today.

Ted Lambert

Have your say!

ARCvoice is a report of news, opinion and reflection on the renewal and reform currently experienced in the Catholic church.

Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome (succinctness appreciated!)

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor nor of ARC

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Deposit of Faith

“Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God”. (Catechism 97)

“We guard with care the faith that we have received from the Church, for without ceasing, under the action of God’s Spirit, this deposit of great price, as if in an excellent vessel, is constantly being renewed and causes the very vessel that contains it to be renewed”. (Catechism 175)

For stories about deposits and withdrawals read *Rome Has Spoken*, the recommended reference book for all ARC members.

Jim Taverne

ROME HAS SPOKEN

is the recommended reference book for all
ARC MEMBERS

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International Observations

We are Church

Wir sind Kirche (We are Church) is the German movement for the renewal of the Roman-Catholic Church, formed in 1995 as the result of more than 1.8 million signatures of Catholics who wanted a reformed Church.

Inter-communion

At the general meeting held in Berlin on 9 to 11 November 2001 it was decided that the practice of complete inter-communion – which is already practised in many places – should be fully accepted and encouraged: Jesus invited all believers to his table. Signatures for a statement are being collected. An Ecumenical Convention is planned for 2003. The next general meeting will be in March 2002 in Nürnberg

(translation out of press release 12-11-01)

We are not alone

“The reluctance to openly testify your reforming views leads to a phenomenon that sociologists call ‘pluralistic ignorance’. That is when members of a group or organisation think that they are the only ones with certain opinions or practices. They don’t know that others have similar views. This happens in the church, which is divided in parishes with limited contact with each other.

There is also the possibilities of sanctions which restricts open discussion of reforming views. However, greater publicity of the many deviations from the official doctrines would reduce the chance of sanctions. The hierarchy can dismiss one offender, perhaps five, but not a quarter or more of its personnel.”

Prof. L. Laeyendecker in *The Last Monopoly of the RC Church*
(my paraphrasing translation)

Saints elections

On 24 December 2001 the KRO (Catholic Broadcaster) in The Netherlands began a programme for the election of saints. By the end of 2002 the election of new saints will take place via the Internet. To advertise this the KRO has produced a poster on which 365 squares with portraits of “old” saints. A poster with 365 empty squares was distributed, especially to Catholic schools, which can use them for their own election of inspiring persons – living or dead – from anywhere in the world. There are no restrictions.

de Bazuin 11 Jan.2002

Jim Taverne

Democratize the Church!

Andrew M. Greeley

The year is 374. The place is the city of Milan, Italy. The occasion is the election of a new bishop. Restless crowds are gathering around the cathedral. There is tension in the air. Two fiercely contending parties have chosen candidates. The outcome is in doubt. The Priests will choose one or the other, then the lay crowd will reject or ratify the clergy vote. There may well be a riot.

Then the local prefect (mayor, more or less) arrives on the scene with a small group of soldiers. So great is the respect of the people of Milan for the young man (middle 30s) that the very sight of Ambrose and his aides calms everyone. The prefect is a catechumen, not yet a baptized Christian. The crowd settles down. Then a young boy in the crowd raises the cry, '*Ambrosius Episcopus!*' – 'Ambrose for Bishop!' The whole crowd takes up the cry. By acclamation, Ambrose is elected bishop. So he is baptized, confirmed, makes his first communion, is ordained a priest and a bishop – all in one day.

Now, perhaps because I am a Chicagoan, I wonder whether the boy was a plant, perhaps the original 'voice from the sewers'. Yet Ambrose was duly and properly elected and served for most of the rest of the century and is one of the greats of Catholic antiquity.

The Holy Spirit can work through any governmental form, but I'd like to think that democracy gives the Spirit more room.

I remember that story every time some babbling idiot informs me that the Catholic Church is not a democracy. That mantra shows either abysmal ignorance of history or serious intellectual dishonesty. There is no question that the church at the present is hardly democratic. But it was once and could be again. And would be much better off if it were.

Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the first millennium of Catholic history knows that not only religious superiors were elected (as many of them still are), but so too were bishops, the latter by the priests and people of their dioceses (including, incidentally, the bishop of Rome!). St Leo the Great in the third century and St. Gregory the Great at the end of the sixth century [the only two popes ever favored with that title] both insisted that the only proper way to select a bishop was by election – *Qui presidet super omnes, ab omnibus eligatur!* (For those who have forgotten the mother tongue, that means, 'Who presides over all must be chosen by all'.)

This right was gradually wrested away from the townsfolk by medieval lords and from them (in the name of

protecting the people) by the pope. However, until well into the 20th century, clergy in many countries still had the right to submit three nominees to Rome.

Moreover, when Major doctrinal decisions were made, the note was usually added, '*cum assensu totus populi Christiani?*' (which means 'with the assent of the whole Christian people'), implying that the decision-makers had consulted with the Christian people.

How we got from there to here is a long and sad history. Far from being undemocratic in its essence, the church introduced democracy into the West. Then when democracy became the standard form of government, we were still busy playing the renaissance monarchy game. No wonder we have troubles.

Democracy has its faults. This great republic of ours is now governed by a warhawk who lost in the popular vote and won his office by a single (corrupt) vote in the United States Supreme Court. As Winston Churchill once remarked, 'Democracy is a terrible way of running a country until you consider the alternatives.'

Still, it is said trippingly on the tongue that because the church is not a democracy, Cardinal Law does not have to resign as archbishop of Boston because he has lost the confidence of the majority of his people. I think that such an argument is nonsense. His own argument that he is the father of the Catholics of Boston and can't resign is equally absurd, not to say paternalistic and patriarchal. However, he has canon law on his side. The truth is that canon law says he is accountable only to the pope – who won't fire him. So I conclude it is time to change canon law and go back to the St. Ambrose style of church government, the old and, hence, conservative style.

Do I think that the pedophile mess would not have occurred if the church were once again an Ambrosian democracy, if the bishop were really accountable to his people, as well as to God and the pope? Well, it couldn't be any worse, that's for sure.

Oh, yes, it would be a much better church if the people could choose and reject their own pastors, too.

Andrew M Greeley is a Roman Catholic priest, author and sociologist. He teaches at the University of Chicago and the University of Arizona. His column on political, church and social issues appears each Sunday in the Daily Southtown. Father Greeley's e-mail address is Agreee@aol.com and his home page, which includes homilies for every Sunday, is www.wagreeley.com.

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