



arcvoice

A Report from Australian Reforming Catholics
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GREETINGS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

A Matter of Conscience

The Inaugural Conference of ARC is just around the corner so do please get your applications in! Be part of the grassroots-driven revitalisation of the Australian and Universal Churches.

Who are we who strive to do this? We are people of conscience who see that we must.

What is conscience? It is our guide as we choose continually between alternative actions. These choices have a bearing on health, on our own health, on the health of our neighbours, of all humanity, of all creation and of the earth itself. They are moral decisions. It is interesting to realise that holiness, wholeness and health all derive from the same source but that of these three the word 'health' is the easiest to comprehend and so is the most cogent when talking about moral judgments.

We make these choices about a myriad of matters. We can decide to smile at, scowl at or ignore those we pass in the street. We can decide to talk down to, abuse, encourage and/or listen attentively to those to whom we are talking. We can decide to eradicate or live with cockroaches or spiders. We can decide to scatter DDT around with alacrity or refrain from doing so. And if we are employers we can be careful about the safety of our staff or cut corners. And so on and so on – moral

decisions all the time. Mostly we decide instinctively, functioning out of past experience but they are no less choices that we make. Sometimes society as a whole relieves us of the responsibility of deciding [DDT is banned] – however, then the choice is whether to break the law or not. Sometimes we may even have to choose between morality and legality and suffer the consequences. Over time our choices will change as we grow to understand more about what is personally and universally healthy. We can come to realise that we have made bad choices but that, having made them out of ignorance, must be kind to ourselves. We resolve to make better choices in the future.

It was to help in this area of morality that Jesus came to live among us, to circuit-break human beings heading down unhealthy roads, so to speak. To the extent that we converse with Jesus in our souls and participate in the Eucharist we are given the strength and ability to make good choices, or, having failed, to start over. The gifts of the Spirit can provide us with a clarity of vision about what is most healthy, and the Spirit of Jesus enables us to love ourselves in spite of all and to love others as ourselves and to act on our vision.

At our Conference we shall strive to increase our clarity of vision about what is most healthy, for the Church [and what is Church?] and for humanity and for all of creation. And then to act where it seems we should according to that vision.

The panel of speakers is very balanced. They form a unique whole both with respect to who they are and the topics which they are addressing. There is no doubt that the Conference will be best experienced in its entirety. It must be emphasised too that ritually we shall be further enriched. Fr David Orr OSB is preparing a liturgy for the Eucharistic Meal on the Saturday evening and will work with the other Christian faiths to develop the Ecumenical Service with which the Conference will end on the Sunday. And then Sydney-siders will take out-of-towners into their homes to continue the conversation!

SEE YOU AT THE CONFERENCE!

Barbara Campbell
Ted Lambert
Jim Taverne

In this issue

Page 1	Message from the Secretariat
Pages 2	Gideon Goosen: <i>Power Abuse and Structural Reform</i>
Page 3/4	Arthur Jones: <i>Celibacy's History of Power and Money</i>
Page 4	Jane Harty: Cartoon Have your say! Interim Secretariat
Page 5	Paul Denny: <i>Eucharist - Inpanation</i>
Page 6	Conference Advertisement <i>Rome Has Spoken</i> - advertisement ARC Membership Form Jim Taverne: International Observations

Power Abuse and Structural Reform

Gideon Goosen

There is a crying need for reform within the Catholic Church at present. The sexual abuse cases by clergy is one obvious thing that demands attention and reform. But this is only one symptom of deeper problems that the Catholic Church faces. The sexual abuse cases have shown that the abuse of power by people in positions of trust is at the heart of the matter. The abuse of power can also be manifest in other, non-sexual ways.

One is the abuse of power by the curial members and heads of curial departments ('dicasteries' is not a word that means much to us). One example of this was what happened during the Synod of Bishops in Oceania. From certain accounts by the bishops who attended the synod in Rome, the spirit of the synod was warm and supportive. Bishops were left free to 'tell it the way it is', face-to-face with the pope, unafraid of curial reprisals because they told the truth. They felt free to outline the good points and indicate the areas of concern. One area of concern was the need to ordain catechists and married men to make the sacraments more available, especially the Eucharist. In the middle of this good communication, the curial intervention which resulted in the 'Statements of Conclusions' swamped the synod and the media and, to the outside world, almost completely overshadowed the business of the synod. This is abuse of power. Synods themselves are not perfect, but who has the right to barge in and hijack the synod? Shades of the historic Robber Council here!

Abuse of power is also evident in the way the curial departments treat the local dioceses. When new bishops are appointed and others removed, the diocese is often treated with disdain. In Australia recently a bishop was removed in a high-handed fashion for no good reason. I am sure Cardinal Kasper – the German theologian recently appointed as head of the Ecumenical Portfolio in Rome – would be supportive when it comes to the rights and

dignity of the local church. That we have allowed the curia and hierarchs to treat the laity with such disdain is of course partly our fault. It is time the laity and their ordained leaders stood up for the local church and their rights as baptised Christians. Both the local and the universal church have their own parts to play in the church which is nowadays described as 'the church as communion', that is, stressing the equality of all believers in their Christian baptism. The official church documents use this language. Ordination is no longer the determining sacrament in the church.

Another area for reform is the composition of the various curial departments. Members appointed to the departments should have expertise in a particular area. It is absolutely necessary, for example, that the head of the department for Sacraments and Divine Worship should be well-informed in sacramental theology and liturgy. Hopefully that would prevent sub-standard statements emanating from that department.

The heads of departments should also not be allowed to be present or simultaneously chair several curial departments and thus exercise a controlling power. A system needs to be developed that will be functional and also limit the time curial members can work in their departments in Rome. A department head should return to his diocese and pastoral work after, say, five or ten years at the most. Needless to say the composition of departments should reflect the wider church, men and women, old and young, ordained and lay.

These are some of the structural reforms that need attention at central office (Rome). At the level of the local church, many structural reforms could be suggested (i.e., local synods). But from a pastoral viewpoint, the most needed reform is that the ordained leader be seen to be a holy person, a person of prayer. Bishop Walker of Broken Bay diocese, has repeatedly said this. People are hungry for spirituality, not more institutional religion, certainly not more of the old formula of building churches, clericalism, more rules and restrictions. But that is the agenda for another time. □

GIDEON GOOSEN teaches theology at Australian Catholic University and is the author of, [Bringing Churches Together: A Popular Introduction to Ecumenism.](#)

Celibacy's History of Power and Money

Arthur Jones

Whoa, slow down a minute on the celibacy talk and married priests. Let's remind ourselves how the Catholic church got into the celibacy mess.

It didn't have anything to do with sex, purity and holiness.

It was the money.

And when one mixes money and the Catholic church, there's usually a mess. That's how we got a Reformation. Selling indulgences – guarantees of time off in purgatory.

If the church tried selling indulgences today it would be prosecuted under the RICO law.

Indulgences were and are guarantees signed and sealed by folks in no position to deliver on the promise. Indulgences were sold by those who had invented the idea of purgatory in the first place (there is no biblical basis for purgatory).

Having created this terror – a sort of Universal Studios for the visiting soul – the church convinced the same people they could (for a modest beneficence in cold hard cash) ameliorate the terror's worst effects.

Martin Luther, a sort of one-man medieval equivalent of the Securities and Exchange Commission (indulgences division) blew the whistle. And signaled the fate of all future whistleblowers. Obloquy, and a formal apology 400 years too late.

Now celibacy.

Religions have always had a place for virgins. But it customarily meant women, as in pagan Rome's vestal virgins. Emperor Augustus, incidentally, frowned on celibacy. Celibate males weren't allowed to inherit property. (Hold that thought from Roman law. A thousand years later it gave us today's problems.)

Then came Jesus, and then came priests.

In the Jewish tradition, priests were the sons of priests — it was a local family firm. Jesus had no trouble with that. He chose Peter, a married man, to be his first pope.

The following isn't just an aside, it's a steppingstone to where we're headed. There's no evidence Jesus intended Peter to be the first ruler of an absolute monarchy. And there's every evidence that's what it became – giving rise to the Catholic Lord Acton's comment on the papacy: 'Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' (Acton was an

earnest man and a deep thinker who served the church by refusing to be bamboozled by it. Acton spoke for many of us – he loved the church deeply, it was 'dearer' to him 'than life itself.')

Onward. Jesus knew about men living abstemious lives for spiritual reasons. The desert-dwelling Essenes had been around for a couple of centuries. He'd been in the desert himself. There's every reason to think he admired their discipline – and he certainly never condemned them the way he did the Scribes and Pharisees.

St. Paul wasn't arguing for celibacy. Admittedly, he said it was easier to be a member of a missionary group if you weren't encumbered with a wife and children, but the CEO of many a corporation harbors the same feelings (though perhaps remains reluctant to voice them publicly).

When Paul dealt with qualifications for bishops, elders and deacons, his restriction was only that they be 'the husband of one wife.' By the third century, bishops were being denied the right to a second marriage.

The problem for Christianity was it started to become financially prosperous.

The rich, the thoughtful ones who understood that their earthly goods were barriers to heaven, were delighted to hand over chunks of wealth to the priests and bishops as a down payment on easier transmission from one place to the next. (The soul's equivalent, the wealthy presumed, of time-sharing a jet instead of having to stand in line at a purgatorial Southwest counter.)

Not only were priests and bishops becoming wealthier, they were becoming worldlier. Many were married, others just had 'open marriages' – concubines. Worse than that – in the church's eyes – the priests and bishops begetting sons regarded the endowments being made to the church as personal property. So the same rollicking clerics were setting themselves up as landed gentry and passing the fortunes along to their primogenitor sons and heirs.

In the 11th century, five popes in a row said: 'Enough already.' Then came tough Gregory VII. He overreacted. He told married priests they couldn't say Mass, and ordered the laity not to attend Masses said by married priests and naughty priests. The obvious happened. Members of the laity soon were complaining they had nowhere to go to Mass.

The edict was softened a bit to allow Mass-going. As usual, the women were blamed. Concubines were ordered scourged. Effectively though, the idea of priestly celibacy was in – though not universally welcomed among the clerics themselves. And handing over church money to sons of priests and bishops was out.

The early, reforming religious orders, Franciscans and Dominicans, were scandalized by the licentious priests. And that's the point – it was the concubinage scandal and money, not the marriage that was at issue.

Indeed, at two 15th-century church councils, serious proposals were made to reintroduce clerical marriage.

These proposals were fought back – how modern it all seems – by a group of ultra-orthodox church leaders (for whom marriage was probably too late a possibility anyway) because they'd come up with a better idea. They'd started to give out the impression that celibacy was of apostolic origin – that it had been built in at the beginning.

That's power. Reinvent history.

Naturally, this is all tied in with the notion of the pope as the supreme power. Like celibacy, supreme power was an 11th-century imposition, too.

The same Gregory VII declared himself the supreme power over all souls and bishops and priests and people. Let's face it, there wasn't much people could do about it, except nod their heads. Or shake them. (To illustrate how some things never change, Gregory

drafted a few ideas; his curia embellished them into a theocratic constitution. The more powerful the boss, the more powerful the minions.)

And then in the 19th century, supreme power was transformed into the ultimate big stick – infallibility. (Though at least two American bishops voted against the infallible idea, and some Europeans didn't go along either.)

So there we have it.

A thousand years, a millennial mindset on celibacy and papal supremacy, created out of chaos and ordained as if it were something God had enjoined on the world.

I mean it really is enough to make one ask not: WWJD? But: ITWJI? (Not: What would Jesus do? But: Is this what Jesus intended?) Enough to make one realize also that the whole issue of clerical celibacy is nothing more than a power play with incense for the smoke, as in smoke and mirrors.

Arthur Jones is NCR's editor at large. His e-mail is ajones96@aol.com

National Catholic Reporter, April 12, 2002

Contributed by Ted Lambert

PS: In giving permission for this article to be reproduced in **arcvoice**, Alan Jones pointed out that he was specifically dealing with celibacy and money and adds that there were other issues surrounding celibacy. A key one was the notion that hands that touched a woman's body (a priest's hands) should not also be touching the sacred eucharist etc.



Have your say!

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

Your contributions, letters, articles or comments are most welcome (maximum length: articles 700 words, letters 100 words)

The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Editor (Margaret Knowlden) nor of ARC

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Eucharist - Inpanation John 6:51-56

Paul Denny

I am uneasy about the traditional formula 'body, blood, soul and divinity' as a description of the eucharistic presence of Jesus. This formula seems to be an overelaborated way of saying 'Jesus in his entirety' – overelaborated in the sense that it defensively lists all the 'bits' of Jesus so that, as it were, we won't miss out on any. That's the way it evolved historically.

Yet the formula is restrictive in that it seems to list the 'bits' of the Son of God incarnate in the man Jesus *as he lived on this earth*. Why not the glorified Jesus? Isn't the second person of the Trinity, expressed as the man Jesus, once dead now risen and glorified, the one who is present as the consecrated bread? That's the only Christ that exists today. As the Eucharistic Acclamation says 'Christ has died, Christ IS risen, Christ will come again'.

So I revisited John, the most developed theologically of the evangelists, seeking inspiration. John chapter six has been seen traditionally as a discourse on the Eucharist. John probably had 'coming to' (4 references in this chapter) Jesus (the 'bread of life', 4 references) in faith (4 references) in daily life more in mind for his community.

Then there are six references to 'flesh' in six consecutive verses.

- I am the living bread which has come down from heaven.
- Anyone who eats this bread will live forever.
- And the bread that I shall give is my **flesh** [that I shall give], for the life of the world.'
- Then the Jews started arguing among themselves, 'How can this man give us his **flesh** to eat?' Jesus replied to them: In all truth I tell you, if you do not eat the **flesh** of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you.
- Anyone who eats my **flesh** and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I shall raise that person up on the last day.
- For my **flesh** is real food and my blood is real drink.
- Whoever eats my **flesh** and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person.' (Jn 6:51-56, New Jerusalem Bible, emphasis added)

PAUL DENNY was associated with the reform movement during the gestation period and was a founding member of ARC. He studied theology during his 30 years as a Christian Brother. He has been living with his wife and family in Traralgon, Vic. for twenty years.

Schooled in a literal interpretation of these very verses, I had missed until now – as John's fledgling community would not have missed – the strong hint of the en-**flesh**-ment, the incarnation, of God the Son in their daily lives.

The connection between the incarnation ('becoming flesh') and the living bread suggests the word 'inpanation' ('becoming bread', understood to include wine(?) for the Eucharist.

The analogy could perhaps be drawn out as follows. Just as God the Son was incarnated ('became flesh') in the man Jesus, so God the Son is inpanated ('becomes bread') in the eucharistic bread. The 'come-down' (John's metaphor, seven times in this chapter) is seen here as originating with God the Son in each case, into flesh in the one case, into bread in the other. If God the Son (essentially spirit) could 'make the come-down' into flesh in the incarnation, he can just as willingly 'make a come-down' into bread in the inpanation.

The Word, God the Son, 'became flesh and pitched his tent among us' (Jn 1:14), becoming a man to whom we can relate human-to-human, yet knowing with the eyes of faith that we are relating to God incarnate. Through the human-ness of Jesus we get access to his God-ness. Similarly, the Word becomes bread to which we can relate human-to-food, yet knowing with the eyes of faith that we are relating to God inpanate. Through the bread-ness of Jesus we get a more-focussed access to his God-ness. This access really includes the other access. Faith is essential: John/Jesus is at pains to expose the lack of faith of the Jewish rabble.

The more traditional mechanism, described in the word 'transubstantiation', has seen the 'movement' from the pre-existing (unconsecrated) bread to the later bread-become-Jesus by a change of substance. It has a 'jump up' quality about it. The analogue mechanism suggested above has 'movement' from the eternally-existing Word to Jesus inpanate (Jesus-become-this-bread). It has a 'jump down' quality about it, more in keeping with John's 'come-down' metaphor, and the general tenor of chapter six. To my mind it is a simpler mechanism.

Neither mechanism, of course, is an explanation of what happens: each is an attempt to describe a mystery, 'faith seeking understanding'.

[Note 1. It may seem a lot to draw out of six verses, but I am really looking at the whole of chapter six and John's approach.] □

ARC'S Inaugural Conference

4-6 October 2002

Theme: Conversations around Jesus Christ, our friend

(John 15, 14-17)

Abbotsleigh, Wahroonga (Sydney)

Keynote Speaker: Tissa Balasuriya OMI

Other Speakers: Sr Veronica Brady, Fr Brian Gore,

Therese Vassarotti, Mark Yettica-Paulson

Chairperson: John Buggy

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**Deadline for Applications:
Friday 13 September**

Rome Has Spoken

Editors: Maureen Fiedler and Linda Rabben

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International Observations

contributed by Jim Taverne

Contradictions in the Tradition

On the occasion of the translation of John Wijngaards book *Unmasking the Cuckoo's Egg Tradition* (see *arcvoice* Dec 2001) into Dutch, the Eighth May Movement will hold a symposium – on 1 November – about the way the Church deals with the problem of contradictions in her Tradition.

For instance: the historical evidence shows that women were gradually banished from their offices in the church. This contradicts the standpoint – even declared infallible! – that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women.

For other examples, read *Rome Has Spoken* (see every *arcvoice* so far).

A biblical painting

A chap gazes into a blank canvas in a modern art gallery in Tel Aviv. It is framed and entitled *Exodus*. 'But where are the children of Israel?' he exclaims.

'They have already crossed the Red Sea', replies the gallery proprietor helpfully.

'But where are the Egyptians?', asks the puzzled visitor.

'They haven't arrived yet but they're are on their way', says the owner smoothly.

'But at least where are the waters', the man demands triumphantly.

'Haven't you read your Bible?', answers the shocked owner, 'Don't you know they parted?'

Lionel Blue *The Tablet* 16.3.02

Quote from Chuan-tzu (C4 BC)

Governments* are obstacles to human happiness, which depends on individual freedom to express spontaneously the nature within them.

The highest happiness can be obtained only by transcending distinctions. The initial step in overcoming distinctions is to recognise the partiality and relativity of all viewpoints. If one really recognises that one's own point of view is limited, one will not defend it against the views of others. Eventually, one will stop identifying with any limited point of view. Instead, one will identify only with the Tao.

*or: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith?
(from: Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins *A Short History of Philosophy*, Oxford University Press: 1996, p.98).