

WATAC NEWS



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WATAC Administration Officer: Helen Coles 9520 9409

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Mailing address: Box 37/121 Anzac Avenue, Engadine, 2233

Website address: www.watac.net email: watac@people.net.au A.B.N. 48 406 052 808

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: MAREE KENNEDY

TYPESETTING/DESIGN: MARGARET KNOWLDEN

Email: mareekballet@bigpond.com.au

Greetings to all WATAC members and friends! I hope you find this edition of the WATAC newsletter interesting, informative, fun and challenging. These four adjectives describe my personal experience of trying to put the newsletter together! I am learning a lot as I go and am very grateful for the support of Margaret Knowlden whose calm and efficient skills, wisdom and patience continue to inspire me.

There have been many momentous events since our last Newsletter, including the *As It Is In Heaven* Weekend at Pennant Hills and the wonderful WATAC luncheon at Parliament House.

We are grateful to the many women who sent in reflections after the weekend and to those who worked to make the weekend the inspiring event that it was.

For those unable to be present at the luncheon at Parliament House, Ann Gilroy has generously allowed us to publish the moving speech she presented on the day. As many of you would recall from last year's Conference, Ann is a gifted speaker, whose personal stories add further depth to her amazing insights. Ann touched all present at the luncheon with her story of the arrival of the Bishop at her parent's small country parish celebrations in New Zealand and the events which followed.

It was wonderful to see the students from different Catholic Colleges represented at the luncheon, and the teachers who accompanied them. Congratulations and thank-you to the teachers for taking the time in an already full curriculum to allow the students to experience the wisdom, vision and passion of WATAC, and for providing our young people with opportunities:

- To act for justice in local and global issues
- To promote Christian feminism, and to celebrate multiple images of God

- To nurture growth and transformation so that the voice of women can be heard on global and social justice issues both on societal and church levels.

The action of WATAC has been very evident with a number of different initiatives undertaken to actively live our vision.

- WATAC was proud to sponsor Catherine Loy and Gabrielle Russell-Mundine to attend the October 2007 CCA Conference 'Challenges, Struggles and Strategies: Asian Women Building Communities of Peace'. A précis of a report given by the Australian delegates appeared in the November WATAC News - the full report is on page 11.
- The WATAC Interfaith Dialogue at Parliament House provided the opportunity for women of the Muslim, Jewish and Christian traditions to share part of their story and interact with students.
- WATAC also launched the fantastic new website which will promote WATAC and its vision to a wider audience and provide additional facilities to members. (see page 7)

The WATAC Inc Committee has been meeting regularly to work at supporting our membership in continuing to live the vision of WATAC. The Committee is always grateful for offers of assistance. Please contact Helen at the office if you are able to assist in any way, especially at some upcoming events outlined later in this issue.

To all WATACers, I extend the following blessing which Pam Williamson shared with us at the recent luncheon.

May the God who dances in creation,
Who embraces us with human love
Who shakes our lives like thunder,
Bless us and drive us out with power
To fill the world with justice and peace.

Maree Kennedy

“Women Celebrating The Vision”

WATAC at Parliament House

14th May 2008

It was a beautiful day, sunshine flooded the Domain and the Dining Room at Parliament House was joy-filled as 120 WATAC women, men and their friends made their way to the tables so they and their friends could enjoy food, friendship and some significant spiritual nourishment for the next few hours.

WATAC has organised twelve Luncheons in Parliament House over the years – it is such a worthwhile event, made possible by the behind-the-scenes work of many people such as Marg Keyes, Maureen Watterson, Anne Cooper and our super-energetic administrator, Helen Coles. We also acknowledge the generous sponsorship provided by Carroll & O’Dea (Lawyers) and WN Bull (Funerals).

It was a great blessing to have Ann Gilroy for our keynote speaker, and her reflections on some of the issues Bishop Geoffrey Robinson raised in his book encouraged, enriched and challenged us. Ann Gilroy is a New Zealander who spoke at the 2007 WATAC Conference, and she has recently been appointed to the Leadership Team of the Josephite Sisters which means she is now living in Sydney. The dialogue which followed her talk was quite inspiring and involved all.

Catherine Loy, a young woman who works for NSW Ecumenical Council, spoke briefly of her recent visit to Bangkok where she was involved in the Asian Church Women’s Conference. Catherine connected well with the Luncheon guests and her information about the planned visit of Ayra Inderyas from Pakistan in September 2008 aroused their interest. Ayra will speak in Parliament House on Thursday 25th September 6-8pm. Please put the date in your diary and support the event.

Another great feature of our WATAC Luncheon was the presence of the wonderful various schools who joined us and who were involved in many of the activities which contributed to the success of the gathering: Blessing the Meal; Acknowledging Land; Drawing the Raffle and participating in the dialogue after Ann’s talk. It was a great WATAC event, there is no doubt – a celebration to be remembered.

WATAC Inc. Annual General Meeting

The WATAC AGM Jubilee Room at Parliament took place after the luncheon in the spectacular and historic House. It was wonderful to see a good number of members stay for the meeting. As always, the WATAC Yearly Report was an opportunity for us to reflect, affirm and celebrate all that has been achieved in the past twelve months. The report highlighted the following areas: The co-ordination of events by WATAC Inc, the groups, the revamping of the website, the newsletter, the unforgettable conference, our young women’s events, *As it is in Heaven* Seminars, the Luncheon and our networking. Indeed it has been a very good year.



We are pleased to announce the WATAC Inc. Committee for the coming year: Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Kay Hodge, Maree Kennedy, Margaret Keyes, Margaret Knowlden, Bernice Moore, Judi Powe and Pam Williamson. We warmly welcome Judi who joins the committee for the first time and say a sincere thank-you to out-going committee member Joan Pavitt.

Women celebrating the Spirit

Ann L Gilroy

Guest Speaker at Parliament House Luncheon - 14.5.08

Welcome to you all – *Tena koutou katoa* – to our ‘little eucharist’, on this ground where for thousands of years before Christianity was ever thought of, the Aboriginal peoples lived, shared food, brought up new generations and dreamed their connections to this place as living with the Divine Spirit. We can give thanks that the political climate today encourages us to think of and engage with the Aboriginal peoples as people – and that we are not in the climate of even just a few decades ago which tolerated Australians despising, ignoring and robbing the Aboriginal peoples of their humanity and their place in this country. Think of that huge change of the heart in this country – from a blatantly racist heart to a more humble, relational heart. It is surely the Spirit who changes the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, the Spirit who turns bread and butter into this lovely meal, the Spirit who sits us all down and lets us get up from this lunch feeling more warm towards each other. This is the spirit of Jesus. This is why I call this lunch – little eucharist.

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson in his book, subtitled: *Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*, and the title, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*, writes about the **climate** in church today. By climate he means the structures and environment in which Church and church power and authority operate.

Let’s consider an everyday example of climate. I saw in Sunday’s paper where a 4-year-old girl was awarded a medal for bravery by the Ambulance Association for assisting them in saving her 2-year-old brother who had been burnt. The article told of the practical things that the little girl had done for her brother – even to packing some of his things for a stay in hospital. You have to ask how such a little girl could help out like that. What she did was astounding in one so young – but imagine the kind of support, praise, modelling, etc – the climate she had grown up in that allowed her to step up and take charge in an emergency. Her family climate had

promoted initiative, participation, helpfulness and care of family members.

So what might be the qualities of God – what Divine image could flourish in that kind of a climate? Maybe it’s a Divine who relishes participation, who accepts little efforts, who has a heart and an ear for the littlest ones – a generous God, a God who enjoys growth, who picks up the stumbler.....It’s not a God you have to tiptoe around, or a stern parental God.

Now in contrast we know some climates spawn negativity and tolerate evil more than they allow good to flourish. Just think of the situation in Burma where thousands of people are unnecessarily suffering the increasingly dire effects of a cyclone that ravaged the country two weeks ago because their own rulers – the military – are actively blocking the world’s aid from reaching those suffering.

The **climate** promoted in that country induces a profound disrespect, disregard and disempowerment of ordinary people. It’s a climate of fear. The power for decision-making is clutched in the hands of a few in the military junta. Historically the military was developed to protect the home people from invasion by enemies intent on enslaving them and stealing their land and resources. In Burma, the military is treating the home people as the enemy and the outcomes are those we see and hear about with horror.

Think of the image of God reflected by such a climate – a harsh, difficult-to-satisfy God, who is unpredictable, far above the lowly people, who



doesn't care if they live or die.... Who is unfeeling, miserly, and warlike ... and we could go on. Certainly people within the climate are not confined to those images but they do have to work their ways around them.

So the **climate** of families, of countries and of Church, is crucially important because it encapsulates 'the environmental smile' for some things to happen and the deep 'frown' which prevents others from happening. The environmental frown is a powerful deterrent in all kinds of ways, not least is its psychological effect to paralyse us and to create fear. The climate of smile or frown dramatically colours the kind of access and relationship we might have with God.

Geoffrey Robinson says that two very significant human drives operate within the climate of the Church - and within other climates - they are the drive to power and the drive of sex. Freud would say that the drives are in the unconscious so we have to bring them to consciousness in order to work with them. Robinson says much the same - and that the Church in this time is refusing to acknowledge that the drive to power - such as the preoccupation with Roman leadership, and the drive of sex - such as the preoccupation with obligatory celibacy, are distorting the climate of the Church and squashing out the spirit of Jesus. His book analyses the way that both of these drives left unacknowledged - either buried, silenced or spiritualised - damage us as people of the church. Of course I can't do justice to his book today but I do want to lay out a simple story to see if there is some merit in his analysis of power. Now just to agree with him is only part of the exercise. The other part is to decide what we - you and I - are going to do about it. And that's the really interesting bit!

So is the Church's use of power contributing to a flourishing of the spirit of Jesus in the Church climate? If you like - is it more like the 4-year-old's family or is it more like the military junta - or like neither?

Let me tell you a story...

My mum and dad, both Catholic, live in a country area which has a small town as the centre. Now, as



has happened in lots of country areas, the population has declined so that church-going people are few and mostly in their older years. In Mum and Dad's area there is a handful of regulars at each of the three churches - Catholics, Anglicans and combined Methodist Presbyterians. And none of the churches has a full-time priest or minister.

So gradually they started informally to pool their resources- the Anglican minister, who is also a small-holding farmer, invited everyone to a regular bible study group; they helped out at each other's church working bees; they combined for a Christmas service; and had a common prayer chain to pray for the sick, etc. Then came the time for the Catholic church to hold its centenary and, in solidarity, all the church people rolled up their sleeves to help in the preparations.

On the big day the Bishop arrived to preside at Mass and all those who had helped came along to take part - as singers in the choir, as caterers and as representative of their own Christian tradition. It was a big day for the district!

All went well until it came time for communion. The line formed in front of the Bishop and in the line was the Methodist leader who presented herself to the bishop for communion. "I'm sorry," said the Bishop, "this communion is only for Catholics - but let me give you a blessing". There was a community gasp! Maybe every other person on the line received communion from the Bishop because he didn't recognise them as Catholic or not - but that one refusal of a good friend of the church was unforgivable as far as the locals were concerned.

My Dad was truly infuriated at the lack of hospitality, of ingratitude, and of the disregard for the local people that he thought the Bishop's action indicated. "What kind of Jesus Christ and God does the Bishop believe in? Why did he use his authority to override the local people? Why use his authority to override the Methodist person's conscience?" he kept asking. Whatever else, the Bishop certainly provoked theological arguments that continued for months.



Remember, these country people had been reading, sharing and praying scripture together for several years before this incident, so that they had thought a lot about and articulated their experience and growing insight into the spirit of Jesus, and of the God of Jesus, in that time. This incident however, brought them face-to-face with the disempowerment of the clerical power in the Church which overrode their power as people of God and give them no standing in front of ordained power. It let them do everything to prepare for the centenary except invite the believing community to receive communion. Their apology to the Methodist leader could not make up for the insult given by the Bishop.

Now that's from my Dad and Mum's perspective. What might it have been like from the Bishop's perspective? What kind of climate was he operating in? The Bishop may have thought he was doing right by keeping the rules of the Church - namely that only Catholics in the state of grace can receive Catholic communion because of the Catholic belief in the real presence in the consecrated bread and wine. If that was his concern, might he not at least have considered the pastoral situation where Christians were coming to Catholic Eucharist because they don't have access to communion in their own churches? At such an ecumenical gathering, might he not have consulted the locals beforehand as to the best way forward?

Or the Bishop may have been worried about his own good standing in the hierarchy of the church. For example, if he had given communion to the Methodist leader, then some righteous Catholic might have written to the Holy Father in Rome to complain about the Bishop's lack of orthodoxy. Then the Bishop would have received a letter from Rome questioning his judgement and recommending that in future he not give scandal to those in his care. So the Bishop may have been feeling the burden of the constant surveillance and disapproving frown of parishioners and hierarchy which caused him to act circumspectly and 'by the book' but which wrings the life out of his leadership. Think of what it must be like to live in that kind of climate - he becomes a puppet to the invisible puppeteers. On the day of the centenary he may have felt that the consequences to



him were not worth the risk of giving the Methodist leader communion.

Whatever the Bishop's motivation, his actions portrayed a rigid church. A church lacking in hospitality, of not hesitating to polarise believers for the sake of a rule - even of a church lacking the spirit of Jesus. For how might we interpret the story of Jesus for example in Matthew and Mark's gospel accounts, when Jesus feeds the thousands - Jews like himself and gentiles as well - to show that God's vision is for all people? How does authority in the Church, as practiced by the bishop, justify ignoring the experience and wisdom of the people of God in decision-making in their local Church? Why would he even want to disregard the people? What are the drives, conscious and unconscious, that allow the clerical hierarchy to think that they can learn nothing about God from the people of God?

Now it seems to me and to Geoffrey Robinson, that neither the people alone - as my Dad and Mum's community, or the clerical leadership - as the Bishop in the story, can on their own have the whole understanding of God's vision for the world. It seems to me that we are church so that together - as people of God and leadership - we grow more and more into an understanding of and in relationship with God. This means that Bishop characters need to listen deeply to the people of God and the insights they have into God's will - just as they expect the people of God to listen to and to obey them.

What if we rewind the story?

On the day of the centenary celebrations the locals welcomed the Bishop and introduced him to all those who had helped prepare for the centenary celebrations and who now wanted to participate in Eucharist together. The Bishop was humbled by the group's attitude: "Your faithfulness to the spirit of Jesus in this country area where we as leaders have not been able to assist you much, inspires me! Thank you so much!" And when it came time for communion the line formed beginning with the Methodist leader.

The Bishop said - "Body of Christ, faithful one."

And she answered, "Amen".



The Power of One

'A very strong Catholic' grandmother, credited with saving the lives of 'countless' gays and lesbians, was farewelled with a requiem mass in Brisbane on April 14. Janet 'Louise' Moesbergen, 74, died peacefully on April 3.

Best known as a volunteer coordinator at the Queensland AIDS Council (now QAHC), Louise was also a founding figure and driving force behind Building Bridges, a Catholic group which aimed to reconcile families with their adult gay children.

'At the time (late 1990s) there were parish priests openly discriminating against family members as well as gay people themselves,' said Karyn Walsh, coordinator of the Micah Project which fostered Building Bridges in the late 1990s.

'There were hundreds of parents or siblings or even partners whose relationships ended because of sexuality issues, and I think a lot of people were able to come to closure when they had someone saying the church's teachings were not necessarily the truth,' Walsh said.

Activist Shayne Wilde said Moesbergen had saved many lives through her counselling and advocacy. 'She wasn't there for accolades, she just did it,' Wilde told Queensland Pride. 'She had scrupulous ethics and was very good at what she did - at both the policy level and personal level. Amongst other things, she met with government ministers, and got the Catholic Church to donate money for anti-homophobia workshops in the outback,' Wilde said. 'She was so effective in doing what she did she saved countless lives, put families back together and prevented suicides. She was unbelievably intuitive and extremely supportive. I don't think I've seen anybody give more to a cause - and she and her husband were involved in several organizations and causes. She's left a huge imprint and legacy. We've got no doubt that she's up there kicking butt and probably working on the popes right now. 'One of the last things she said before she died was that she'd see what she can do. She's got plans.'

Louise Moesbergen is survived by six children, twelve grandchildren and a very grateful gay community.

Full article available from
<http://qlp.e-p.net.au/news/lifesaver-louise-farewelled-1929.html>



Check Out The New WATAC Website!

We are thrilled to announce that the refurbished WATAC website is up and running!!! and we would welcome a visit from you www.watac.net

A huge thank you to Maureen Watterson! Maureen developed and maintained the original WATAC website from the late 90's and was instrumental in shaping the new website into its present form. She worked very closely with Jason Rhodes of JR Network Solutions to provide the content for the wonderful revamped site. Jason has been such a professional collaborator and so easy to work with - it is a pleasure to recommend JR Solutions for 'Your Total Computing Solution'.

You can now go online to

- Check out the photo gallery from events - look out for photos from the recent Luncheon at Parliament House coming soon. In the meantime you can view photos from the 2007 conference or the schools interfaith dialogue held in April this year.
- Find out about local groups
- Join a discussion on the Forum- (coming soon!)
- Check out links to other organisations
- Learn more about WATAC
- Make secure online payments or if you prefer you can download the forms to renew your subscription or book for events.

You can even do a little something for the environment by choosing to get your WATAC newsletters by email! Just visit the site and go to 'Newsletters'.

You will find a form to fill in and submit - we will verify your membership is current and send an email to confirm that in the future we will send your newsletter via email.

Of course newsletters will be sent by regular mail if you don't register on line.

Thanks again to Maureen for the 100s of hours spent working on the website, as well as Pam Williamson and Helen Coles for supporting Maureen to get the website up & running. Sincere thanks also to Margaret Knowlden for her wisdom and experience in recommending Jason to the WATAC website team.

JR Network Solutions
"Your Total Computing Solution"

Can You Help to Share the WATAC Vision with our Young??

WATAC has been contacted by two schools and invited to participate in a mini Expo afternoon/evening to promote the face and vision of WATAC. We will be setting up a small stall with WATAC information available. Also available will be specially-designed WATAC T-shirts, stickers and magnets with Graham English's cartoon figure "God is Not a Boy's Name".



It would be great if we could have some volunteers to assist with the set-up and selling of the T-shirts.

Details are as follows.

- **St Pat's Campbelltown - Wednesday 4th June 6 - 9.30 pm**
- **Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College North Sydney- Monday 14th July 8.30am - 5pm (Parking available)**

If people are able to volunteer for a couple of hours would be great. If you are able to help, please contact Helen Coles for further details.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to **Graham English** who has generously allowed us to use his creative genius on the WATAC 'merchandise' and in our WATAC Newsletters.

Thanks also to Joan Pavitt and Helen Coles who organised the purchase and printing of the T-shirts, stickers and magnets.

As it is in Heaven – feedback

Cathy Griffin: There are so many layers in this movie which came to light through discussion. As we looked at the key characters and symbols everyone could relate these to events in their lives and to aspects of our church. Daniel is the pivot on which the whole movie swings. As he slowly finds himself drawn into the hearts of the people he seeks ways to draw out the best in each person. Gradually the choir becomes true church for these people. This is where they can truly be themselves, reach out to others and achieve fulfilment. A particularly powerful moment occurs when Inger (the parson's wife) forcefully presents her views on sin, a speech directed at her husband. This was a beautifully constructed scene that makes so much sense. Lena's care for Tore, a young disabled man, is extremely moving – as many said, a real 'Magdalene moment'. The symbols of music, water, nature and seasons are very powerful throughout the movie, with every second carefully constructed.

Faye Lawrence: Some of the big picture explorations which helped me in my journey were: the Beauty of nature and our responsibility for the earth; the vital importance of community and communication for us all; anger and how it leads to failure; aspects of the use of Authority and the danger of leaving people out – Insiders vs Outsiders; the Fragility of life, death and the meaning of resurrection.

Marg Keyes: When I saw the movie for the first time I thought the story was so beautiful I hadn't seen anything like it before, but when watching it again and going through the process I realised there was so much more to experience. Listening to what other people said what they got from a particular part was so enlightening and you begin to realize that this movie has so much for you to appreciate. Truly magnificent. Just exploring the different characters and feeling their lives and struggles and what they bring to the story, you come to realise what is really happening.

Margaret Knowlden: This was my third viewing of the film and yet, like re-reading good books, I was continually reminded of how many details and subtle nuances had previously eluded my attention. This is where the group participation was so helpful, with each sharing their own observances and casting new light. Focusing – as Bernice suggested – on key characters and symbols, it was natural to see the Swedish village as a microcosm of any community, with all its stereotypes, prejudices, preoccupations, inactions and power to make or destroy individuals. Even the changing seasons and weather patterns reflected changing relationships as each faced a personal demon to bring about change. Ultimately I felt that the film was about empowerment. Just as Jesus gave his disciples the resources within themselves to carry on without him, so the choir found sufficient strength to be church without their parson, to perform without their conductor. The film is about the redemptive power of singing (as with our own 'Choir of Hard Knocks'). But Daniel could equally have fostered other creative strengths and talents in the community. We all need a Daniel to shake our complacency and to help each of us find within ourselves the resources to help make the world a better place.

Amber Boardman: The movie certainly was a reality check for me. It was a deeply moving and inspiring film. The music just captured my soul – I guess having been in a choir for over fifteen years may have had something to do with it. I just sat there transfixed with the music reverberating within me. The message in that movie was only too clear, and one sentence in particular hit me 'between the eyes' so to speak – "God does not condemn"!!! Why then are we riddled with guilt, when our loving God "always forgives! This was quite an eye opener for me; an epiphany; it felt so liberating, so uplifting! For the first time I felt I received confirmation that what I was doing was okay, as it was only in the past year or two I stopped attending Church every Sunday. In fact I was a daily church-goer!! I truly felt as though God intended me to be there to have this understanding.

Carmel Maguire: I thought that I had a good appreciation of the film a year or more ago when it was first shown at the Orpheum at Cremorne. To see it the second time was enjoyable, and to be able to take it apart (in postmodern speak, to 'deconstruct' it) was a revelation. Of course a great part of the experience was due to Bernice whose teaching skills and religious insights would attract most of us to her courses on any subject, with the possible exception of pole dancing. Bern offered plenty of 'meat' to chew on and the great thing was that everyone hopped in to nourish the discussions, which were always lively and often delicious. If WATAC offers another chance, grab it!

Gabriella's Song –
from *As It Is In Heaven*
Py Bäckman and Helen Sjöholm

It is now that my life is mine
I've got this short time on earth
And my longing has brought me here
All I lacked and all I gained

And yet it's the way that I chose
My trust was far beyond words
That has shown me a little bit
Of the heaven I never found

I want to feel I'm alive
All my living days
I will live as I desire
I want to feel I'm alive
Knowing I was good enough

I have never lost who I was
I have only left it sleeping
Maybe I never had a choice
Just the will to stay alive

All I want is to be happy
Being who I am
To be strong and to be free
To see day arise from night

I am here and my life is only mine
And the heaven I thought was there
I'll discover it there somewhere
I want to feel that I've lived my life!

Shirley Glover has sent us an eleven page, hand written, personal reflection on the film. Her insights are remarkable! Space does not permit us to print her reflection but it is obvious that Shirley and the other people who attended the weekend gained much from having the opportunity to watch, listen, discuss, reflect and share with other wise women and men. Many thanks to those who have shared their reflections and to Bernice and her team who so capably led the weekend.

Some Changes in the Celebration of Mass

The following information is available on the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference website. I would be interested in hearing WATAC members' response to these changes and the reasons for them. *Maree*

On Sunday May 11, this year, Catholics in Australia will be asked to make two changes in the way we celebrate Mass. The Holy See has approved an English translation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) which guides the way we celebrate the Eucharist and accompanies the third Latin edition of the *Missale Romanum*.

The First Change relates to a Posture

At present when the priest invites the people to pray at the Preparation of the Gifts we remain seated until we have responded 'May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands to the praise and glory of His name, for our good, and the good of all His Church.' And then we stand for the Prayer over the Gifts.

From Sunday May 11, 2008 you will be asked to STAND when the priest invites you to pray.

'Pray brethren that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father.'

(We STAND and respond) 'May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands to the praise and glory of His name, for our good, and the good of all His Church.' (GIRM 46)

Why stand? The posture for prayer whether it be standing or kneeling reflects something of our relationship with God and helps define that relationship. To stand in response to the priest's invitation is a sign of our readiness to enter into the great prayer which will follow ie: the Eucharistic Prayer which the priest prays on behalf of the gathered assembly. To stand is to make a formal recognition of the importance of that invitation.

The Second Change relates to a Gesture

The Communion Procession is a most important ritual act in the celebration of Mass. It is the time when those disposed to receiving Holy Communion come as the Body of Christ to receive the Body of Christ. We are individuals, yet we constitute something more in this procession. The Australian edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal says: "When approaching to receive Holy Communion, the faithful bow in reverence of the Mystery that they are to receive." (GIRM 160)

The Communicant might bow just before receiving Holy Communion or perhaps while the person in front of them is receiving Holy Communion. Such a bow can be done simply, without disrupting the flow of the Communion Procession. Above all the Communion Procession should be reverent, ordered and never rushed. The General Instruction also provides for a Communion hymn or song to be sung during the procession. Its purpose is to unify the assembly as it receives Holy Communion and to assist worshippers as they prepare to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. As with any change it will take some time to become accustomed to the change in posture and the new gesture. Some will be quicker than others in making the change, but with a little patience and quiet concentration there should be no confusion or disruption to the flow of the Mass.

Be ready now for these changes at Mass from **Sunday May 11, 2008**
Bishops Commission for the Liturgy 2008

Women-Priests

Since July 2006 in the United States more than 20 women with the organisation "Roman Catholic Womenpriests" have considered themselves ordained without church approval.

Bridget Mary Meehan is one of 24 Catholic women in the United States conducting Mass in defiance of church doctrine.

Meehan entered a convent at the age of 18 and became a Catholic nun with the Sisters of Christian Community. In July 2006, a woman bishop not recognized by the Vatican ordained Meehan with seven other women.

Meehan says 'I think the problem is they don't know how to integrate women into the present clerical hierarchical structure,' she said. 'And that is a problem because this hierarchical clerical structure needs to be changed.'

Meehan advertises her Mass in the local newspaper in the southern coastal community of Sarasota, Florida. Her home serves as her church.

Arne Panula in Washington is a member of Opus Dei, a conservative Catholic organization. Panula says Jesus chose not to ordain women. 'Jesus Christ could have ordained women,' he says. 'He could have named women to the presbyterate, in which case right now there would be women priests.'

'The church teaches that he [the priest] does this in what is called *in persona et nomine Christi*, that he does this in the name and the person of Jesus,' says Panula. 'Jesus was male. Jesus was a man. And to be able to do that as Jesus did requires that it be a man who does it.'

Meehan disagrees. 'A priest is suppose to be *in personi Christi*,' she says. 'That does not mean taking on male identity. It means breaking the bread and sharing the wine in the memory of Jesus as a Pascal meal.'

Meehan states that 'We know for the first 1,200 years women were ordained so therefore, the teaching on that does not reflect the practice of the church throughout its history.'

Meehan has conducted Mass since 2006 and says her congregation is growing. The local archdiocese has protested her actions, but the Vatican has not sanctioned or excommunicated her. Two women in St. Louis, Missouri have been excommunicated.

'I think it is very wise of the Vatican right now to take a wait and see attitude, watch the movement of the spirit in the Roman Catholic Womenpriests rather than condemning us,' Meehan said. 'Because, one day they just might have to undo their condemnation and canonize a few of the women in the movement. At least that is our hope and our prayer.'

Excerpts from
<http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-04-10-voa27.cfm>

Invalid Baptism???

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith recently (February 29th) released a statement in response to questions concerning the validity of Baptisms which used the terms 'I baptise you in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier', or 'I baptise you in the name of the Creator, and of the Liberator, and of the Sustainer'? The CDF response is as follows:

Baptism conferred in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit obeys Jesus' command as it appears at the end of the Gospel of St. Matthew. ... The baptismal formula must be an adequate expression of Trinitarian faith, approximate formulae are unacceptable.

Variations to the baptismal formula - using non-biblical designations of the Divine Persons - as considered in this reply, arise from so-called feminist theology', being an attempt 'to avoid using the words Father and Son which are held to be chauvinistic, substituting them with other names. Such variants, however, undermine faith in the Trinity.

'The response of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith constitutes an authentic doctrinal declaration, which has wide-ranging canonical and pastoral effects. Indeed, the reply implicitly affirms that people who have been baptised, or who will in the future be baptised, with the formulae in question have, in reality, not been baptised. Hence, they must then be treated for all canonical and pastoral purposes with the same juridical criteria as people whom the Code of Canon Law places in the general category of "non-baptised".'

CDF/BAPTISM FORMULAE/LEVADAVIS 080229 (420)

Father John Flader also wrote an article supporting the CDF's stance in *The Catholic Weekly* on 13 April. Some of his points include:

'Baptism is the first of the sacraments we receive and, in a sense, the most important. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, through Baptism 'we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God, we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission.' (CCC 1213) It is absolutely vital that the formula used be valid, since the effects of Baptism are so important for our Christian life.

'What distinguishes the divine persons from each other is precisely and only their relations with each other. They

are distinct from one another in their relations of origin: 'It is the Father who generates, the Son who is begotten, and the Holy Spirit who proceeds.' (Lateran Council IV (1215); CCC 254; cf. CCC 255) Apart from these relations, the three persons have everything in common: their substance, nature, eternity, omnipotence, wisdom, etc.

'Why would anyone want to make up their own formula? There can be any number of reasons, but one that has often been suggested is the feminist agenda of not wanting to call God Father and Son, which is considered sexist. But God has revealed himself to us as Father and Son, and who are we to reject his revelation?'

I wrote to Father Flader and agreed that language is very important. I also reminded him that, as a female, I can never be 'reborn as a son of God' so the language used here from the Catholic Catechism must also be invalid.

I also questioned his statement that 'Apart from these relations, the three persons have everything in common: their substance, nature, eternity, omnipotence, wisdom, etc'.

While I make no claim to understand the mystery of the Trinity, if the three persons of the trinity have everything in common apart from their relationship and Jesus is a male, then doesn't this also imply that God and the Holy Spirit are also essentially male?

I also reminded Father Flader that God revealed Himself to us as much more than a Father and Son and asked 'who are we then to reject the fullness of the revelation of God?'

Father Flader replied stating:

'I agree with you. Whereas in some Romance languages the equivalent of 'sons of God' is inclusive, in English it is not. This would have been better translated 'children of God'. Perhaps a future translation of the Catechism will be more inclusive.

'The general rule about the distinction of the divine persons refers to their being as eternal persons within the Trinity, not to whatever results from the incarnation of the Second Person. Within the Trinity, neither the Father nor the Son is male in the strict sense, although they reveal themselves in male terms as Father and Son.

'We must of course accept the fullness of God's own self revelation, but in speaking of God inevitably at times we will refer to his revelation as Father and Son, in addition to the other manifestations.'

At times???????

Maree

The Vatican has warned that Baptism is not valid when the celebrant uses a popular new formula
Vatican, Feb. 29, 2008 (CWNews.com)

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) released a statement on February 29 saying that a baptism "in the name of the Creator, and of the Redeemer, and of the Sanctifier," is not a valid Christian sacrament. The invalid formula, the Vatican statement points out, arises from feminist ideology, and an attempt "to avoid using the words Father and Son, which are held to be chauvinistic."

However, the revised formula can "undermine faith in the Trinity," the CDF says. Citing the Gospel of St. Matthew, the CDF notes that Jesus ordered his apostles to baptize "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." That formula is an "adequate expression of Trinitarian faith" and a response to Christ's command, the CDF notes; "approximate formulae are unacceptable."

Anyone who has been baptized using that formula should be re-baptized, the Vatican document states. For canonical purposes, the CDF states, people who were baptized with that new formula should be considered unbaptized.

The February 29 document was a response to questions from the English-speaking world. The Vatican notes that while the novel formula has been used mostly by English-language clerics, the same formula could be expressed in other languages.

The statement from the CDF was specifically approved by Pope Benedict XVI ([bio - news](#)), the Vatican notes. The document was signed by Cardinal William Levada and Archbishop Angelo Amato, the prefect and secretary, respectively, of the CDF.

Breaking the Silence – Sharing our Stories: Women Weaving Peace in South East Asia.

National Council of Churches in Australia Delegation

Graeme Mundine, NCCA Gender Commission member and Executive Secretary
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical
Catherine Loy – Program officer, NSW Ecumenical Council
Gabrielle Russell-Mundine – Program Officer NATSIEC



Acknowledgements:

We would like to acknowledge, and sincerely thank, WATAC
(Women and the Australian Church)
for their generous financial assistance which, together with funding from NATSIEC,
enabled us to participate in this meeting.

NOTE: This report was presented at the CAA conference in October 2007; it was written prior to the November change of federal government; a précis of the report was in *WATAC NEWS* November 2007

Violence against women in Australia

For the presentation from the NCCA, we have chosen to focus on three areas that are of particular concern to us in Australia. They are the violence and poverty experienced by our Indigenous women, trafficking of women to Australia and violence against refugee women.

Australian Indigenous Women, Violence and Poverty

“What is happening in Australia today is that we are building more prisons. We are re-creating this prison environment in which Australia was first invaded. And what we are also doing is creating cultures of poverty and cultures of violence. When people are in poverty they may articulate their distress by expressing their feelings through violent actions, we also know from research that when people are subjected to violence they will enter a socio-economic spiral which is very, very difficult for them to climb out of. So it is important that we understand that the cycles of poverty and violence are closely related, and that colonisation creates these cycles in the populations who are dispossessed.” *Professor Judy Atkinson, Gnibi College - Southern Cross University*

Indigenous Women and Poverty

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Indigenous peoples of Australia, live in poverty, despite living in a rich country. They have a life expectancy 17 years less than other Australians, and less than many so called developing countries. They are more likely to suffer from disease, such as heart disease, diabetes and many preventable diseases. Infants are twice as likely to die in their first year; mothers are more likely to die in childbirth and are also more likely to have low birth weight babies. Many do not receive proper education, and rates of unemployment are very high. They live in overcrowded conditions due to a lack of suitable housing in remote communities and live amongst a high level of violence and drug and alcohol abuse. Indigenous peoples in Australia also experience high levels of racism and discrimination.

Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to experience disadvantage and violence than any other group in Australia. Perhaps most alarming are the statistics which relate the dramatic increase in the number of women being imprisoned as well as the number of deaths, injuries, trauma and suicide occurring due to violence.

In 1990 The National Committee on Violence reported to the Australian Government that in Queensland Aboriginal ‘reserves’ “the homicide rate for the 17 Communities under review was 39.6 per 100,000 more than ten times the Australian national homicide rate”. In South Australia, Aborigines who “constitute approximately 1% of the population comprised at least 10 per cent of that State’s homicide victims”.

Since 1990, the situation has not changed, in fact it has worsened. For example, the leading cause of death amongst Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory is homicide. More Aboriginal women, in the Northern Territory, are being murdered than are being killed by illness or accident (Bell, 2005).

Another alarming fact is that Indigenous women are 19 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be imprisoned. Even worse is the fact that this is rapidly increasing. Between 2000 and 2004 there was a 25% increase in prison rates for women (HREOC, n.d., SCRGSP, 2005).

Yet another key indicator that the quality of life is diminished for Indigenous women is the fact that far more of them are suiciding than ever before. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner states that Indigenous women are twice as likely to suicide as non-Indigenous women and health professionals throughout the country tell stories that indicate this is on the increase (HREOC, n.d.).

Indigenous women are also disadvantaged when it comes to education and employment. For example, women are less likely than their male counterparts to have a post-school qualification, with less than 10% achieving

that level of education. Lack of education of course affects the ability of Indigenous women to obtain employment and they are the least likely to be in the labour force with a participation rate of only 43%. We also know that for every extra year of education that a young woman receives it can add four years to the life expectancy of her children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are less likely to participate in the Community Development Economic Program (CDEP) (a Government scheme where people receive welfare payments in exchange for working on community projects, instead of being on unemployment benefits). Of those women who are employed more than one half work in government administration, education or health and community services. The same industries accounted for only around one third of all female employment.

The causes of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait women and children are many. Of great importance is an understanding of the history of Australian colonisation and the ongoing legacy on Indigenous peoples. Violence is also linked to poverty and drug and alcohol abuse.

Current political situation in Australia

In June 2007, the Federal Government launched a dramatic course of action, which has been termed an "intervention" which was ostensibly in response to a recently released report on the high rate of child abuse in some Aboriginal communities. The intervention was broad and fitted a political agenda that the Howard coalition government had been pushing for some time. The intervention included such things as sending in the army to provide services, a police crackdown on abuse related crime, compulsory medical and sexual abuse checks for all children; banning alcohol and pornography in communities, the compulsory take over and administration of communities and eliminating the permit system which communities had instigated to control access to their lands. Interestingly despite linking the intervention to the report on child abuse the Government did not implement any of the recommendations in that report and in recent legislation that was passed in parliament child abuse was not mentioned at all. In addition the intervention fails to recognise the causes of the current levels of poverty and violence and abuse which has arisen due to many years of bad policy, insufficient funding, racism and neglect by Governments at all levels. The NCCA /NATSIEC has voiced its concerns about the intervention and is continuing to monitor the situation and raise concerns as they arise.

NATSIEC initiatives



NATSIEC initiated the Make *Indigenous* Poverty History Campaign in 2005. This was in response to the global campaign around the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which fails to address issues of poverty in a developed country such as Australia. In addition the MDGs fail to address issues of poverty specific to

Indigenous peoples. The aim of the campaign is to educate and activate people to lobby for an end to the extreme levels of poverty experienced by Indigenous peoples and to equity to other Australians. We have produced resources for schools, church groups and individuals which are all available on CD-Rom or via our website www.makeindigenouspovertyhistory.org. We have also been successful in highlighting the issues in the Churches through providing resources for example, for Social Justice Sunday 2006.

Womens' project

In the past the NATSIEC women's project held regular meetings and started work on producing bible studies, for example on the book of Esther. Due to staff changes this has not been finished, but we are hoping to complete in 2008.

We are also embarking on an exciting new project in 2007/2008 which will be a pilot project looking at women, development and anti violence programs. We are helping a group of women develop several projects. The women hold regular church gatherings of about 100 people as well as school holiday camps for children. The camps are diversionary camps designed to teach the children cultural practices. Future plans include developing a church and café as well as a catering business. We are also involved in a project which brings the women together with an expert in violence and intergenerational trauma. The women will do a course over the next year which they can choose to do for personal development, or if they wish they can complete assignments and obtain a certificate from the University and continue on to do a Masters course.

Indigenous Theology and women

NATSIEC has long been an advocate and facilitator of developing Indigenous theology. Last year we held a workshop which resulted in the publication of *Ker Ker*, which is available to delegates at this meeting. *Ker Ker* includes papers by Indigenous women.

We also held a very successful Indigenous theology conference in July 2007, which included many leading women thinkers. We will publish those papers shortly. We intend to hold another one in January 2009 and also are keen to hold one in conjunction with CCA in the future. Our next conference will include streams specifically for men, women and youth.

Trafficking of Women in Australia

Although trafficking in people – particularly trafficking in women – from countries in South-East Asia to Australia is a major issue, the Australian government's response tends to focus upon the criminal and border control aspects of the problem, rather than upon the protection and assistance of victims of trafficking. Victims of people trafficking are offered support by the Australian government only if they assist in a prosecution (Jensen, 2007). Whether or not victims are assisting in criminal prosecution, their long-term immigration status is uncertain.

Government figures indicate that 92.5% of people trafficking in Australia are connected with the sex industry

(Jensen, 2007). The majority of people trafficked for this purpose are women from South-East Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia and Vietnam (Debeljak, 2007). Estimates of the number of trafficked people living in Australia at any one time vary from 100 to 1, 000 (Debeljak, 2007). Australia's stable economy and geographical proximity to trafficking centres in Asia make it an attractive destination to people traffickers.

The Australian churches and civil society groups have sought to fill the gaps left by government policy in response to trafficked people by setting up the Anti-Slavery Project. The Project Committee is made up of Catholic Sisters, the Salvation Army, various Ecumenical representatives (including the National Council of Churches in Australia through the NSW Ecumenical Council) and civil society groups such as Trade Unions, Rotary Australia and the Law faculty of the University of Technology, Sydney. The Anti-Slavery Project seeks to assist and support victims of trafficking living in the Australian community through housing assistance (provided by the Salvation Army), counselling and legal services and advocacy and awareness-raising undertaken on behalf of these trafficked people.

The most recent major activity the Anti-Slavery Project engaged in was the launch of a new global research report on human trafficking, *Collateral Damage: The impact of anti-trafficking measures on human rights around the world*. This report, prepared by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), assesses the human rights repercussions of government policies and anti-trafficking initiatives on trafficked persons, migrant workers and sex workers. One of the major aspects of the Australian chapter of this report was its focus on the effects of linking victim assistance to co-operation with law enforcement, a policy which is currently preventing any broad-based assistance scheme for all victims of trafficking to be developed by the Australian government.

Although Australia is involved in a number of regional initiatives to address the issue of human trafficking, greater international co-operation is required at a number of levels in order to give this issue the attention and exposure required to adequately address the problem. The development of relationships between the Sydney-based Anti-Slavery Project and equivalent organizations in the South-East Asia region could build upon the positive international work undertaken by GAATW in the Asia-Pacific region.

On a global level, it is encouraging to note that over 110 countries have signed the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. This Protocol supplements the Palermo Convention against trans-national organised crime. UN.GIFT (the United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking) was launched in March 2007 with the objective of co-ordinating the global fight on human trafficking. Major UN agencies such as UNICEF, the IOM and UNHCHR are a part of this initiative. The inaugural conference of UN.GIFT was held at the Vienna offices of the United Nations in February 2008.

Gender-Based Violence in the Australian Refugee Community

According to UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), Gender-based violence is the most widespread and socially tolerated of human rights violations. (UNFPA, 2005) While domestic and family violence occurs in most societies, it has been identified that immigrant and refugee women are particularly vulnerable. (Pease and Rees, 2006) This violence occurs at every stage of the refugee journey – in the country of origin; in flight (particularly high incidence of Gender-based violence have been recorded in refugee camps); in passage to a third country; in detention; and, finally, when resettlement has taken place.

A number of factors have been identified as contributors to the extreme vulnerability of refugee women to gender-based violence. These factors include isolation from mainstream society, prior experiences of trauma which are often related to authority structures and lack of host-language skills. These factors serve to silence refugee women and therefore increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

The Australian government has made provision for women at particular risk in overseas refugee camps, by participating in the Women at Risk (WaR) resettlement scheme. The WaR is sponsored by UNHCR and aims to identify refugee women at extreme risk of violence who are living without family protection and to fast-track their removal to a resettlement country. Australia is one of a number of resettlement countries that have a quota of resettlement places within its offshore refugee program for women and children at risk. (CRR, 2005)

Counselling services are available to women arriving in Australia on the government humanitarian scheme, who have experienced gender-based violence throughout their refugee journey. However, those refugee women arriving onshore and seeking asylum in Australia are offered no such support. This occurs despite the fact that many of these women have experienced similar traumas to those of the women arriving on the humanitarian scheme. In cases where no counselling support is offered through government programs, churches and community organizations (such as the House of Welcome, a project of the NSW Ecumenical Council) attempt to fill the gap and offer counselling services to these women.

In addition to the gender-based violence experienced by refugee women on their journey to Australia, there is considerable evidence that certain forms of gender-based violence continue to occur within the refugee community settled in Australia. " 'Intimate partner violence' is commonly at its highest point when communities are in transition, when women assume non-traditional roles or enter the workforce, or when men are less able to fulfil their culturally expected roles as providers and protectors." (Pease and Rees, 2006)

The House of Welcome, the asylum-seeker assistance project of the NSW Ecumenical Council, has reported high levels of family breakdown among refugees settled in Australia, both through the offshore (humanitarian) program and among those refugees arriving in Australia and claiming asylum onshore. Domestic violence has been reported as an element in such family breakdown. It is common for long periods of family separation to be

experienced during the refugee journey, as males seek asylum in a third country before bringing other family members to be reunited once asylum has been granted. These periods of separation can extend to five or six years and, in that period, the female becomes the head of the family in the absence of the male. This can cause conflict upon the family being reunited.

Through the House of Welcome project, the NSW Ecumenical Council (and thereby the churches of NSW) seeks to assist the process of settlement in Australia for refugees by providing housing, education and counselling services to newly arrived asylum seekers, thereby mitigating the effects of and breaking down the causes of gender-based violence as experienced by refugee women in Australia.

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Anything you can do, I can do better!

Four Catholic ladies were having coffee one afternoon.

The first Catholic woman tells her friends, "My son is a priest. When he walks into a room, everyone calls him 'father'".

The second Catholic woman chirps, "My son is a bishop. Whenever he walks into a room, people call him 'your grace.'"

The third Catholic lady says, "My son is a Cardinal. Whenever he walks into a room, he's called 'Your Eminence.'"

The fourth Catholic woman sips her coffee in silence. The first three women prod her with a subtle, "Well??"

So she replies, "My son is 6'2". He has broad, square shoulders. Terribly handsome. Tight muscular body. He is also a male dancer and whenever he walks into a room...women gasp, 'OH MY LORD!'"

Again..... Women Create the Problem

Mark Brolly writes in this month's *The Tablet* about Bishop Michael Putney's advice to his Anglican Church of Australia counterparts that the ordination of their first women bishops will increase obstacles to reconciliation between the two Churches. Archdeacon Kay Goldsworthy is to be consecrated as Australia's first female assistant bishop on 22 May in St George's Anglican Cathedral in Perth. Nine days later, Canon Barbara Darling will be consecrated as an assistant bishop of Melbourne.

'We can't see how we can ordain women as priests from a doctrinal point of view,' Bishop Michael Putney, of Townsville in Queensland, told *The Catholic Weekly*. 'It's not a question of us choosing not to, it's a question of us being seen that we're unable to.'

Bishop Putney, who is chairman of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations, said that the ordination of women bishops increased the obstacles to reconciliation between Catholics and Anglicans because bishops were the leaders of the Church, and even within the Anglican Communion, that leadership would be received ambiguously.

The Tablet 3/5/08

<http://www.thetablet.co.uk/articles/11401/>

International Women's Day

Queensland Women: Shaping the Future

Therese Flynn-Clark

IWD Guidelines

This year the Queensland Government encouraged all women to challenge the media and society's fixation on the 'ideal' body. The theme 'Queensland Women: Shaping the Future' aimed to inspire women and girls to look beyond appearance. To look into themselves rather than at themselves. By remembering that actions speak louder than looks, Queensland women will truly embrace the spirit of International Women's Day 2008.

- Choose an object that represents the real you. What makes you special?
- Podcast from *Life Matters* Monday 3rd March, interview with author Emily McGuire who has written *Princesses and Porn Stars: Sex, Power and Identity* (Text Publishing)
- Discussion Questions:
- What are your thoughts/feelings on the words Feminist and Feminism?
- Have you experienced sexism?
- How do you see your gender role in 2008?
- What are your thoughts/feelings on the role of women as represented in the Bible and the Church today?
- Inner Beauty – Meditation and creative response.
- Liturgy – A candle is lit.

We remember today, all women who have struggled to find their role in life – our Indigenous sisters, women in history who have struggled for peace and justice, our own mothers and friends and family including our daughters...all women in our lives.

Please think of your intention, a person or issue you wish to remember and pray for today. Choose a pebble or shell to place in the bowl. (The bowl is passed around the circle. These intentions may be shared aloud or held quietly in your heart.)

Your intentions are now held here. Let us pray together:

ALL: Loving God we entrust our intentions to your loving care. In the meanwhile we will act in trust that all things work together for our good and the good of all, among whom we live and work.

Final Prayer from *Prayers to She Who is* by William Cleary.

Afternoon Tea.

The WATAC Way

The theme for International Women's day in sunny Qld this year was 'Queensland Women: Shaping the Future'. Our meeting began with a quick look at the history of International Women's Day and the traditional colours for women and their meaning. We then listened to a Radio National Podcast interview (from *Life Matters*) with Emily McGuire who has written a book entitled *Princesses and Porn Stars: Sex, Power and Identity*.

After listening we discussed our thoughts and feelings on the words 'Feminist' and 'Feminism'. We looked at issues such as self-image/body image and how we see ourselves as women. We discussed sexism and if we'd ever experienced it either in the community or in the Church. We looked at gender roles for men and women in 2008 and where we fit as women today; and, finally, our thoughts and feelings on the role of women as represented in the Bible and the Church today.

We finished with a visual meditation (you had to draw something!) which 'symbolised a trait, capacity or attitude in yourself which you consider beautiful'. This became a very powerful conclusion to our meeting which finished with a prayer.

The sharing based on our varying ages and religious backgrounds made the discussion and conclusion especially meaningful, and a privilege to be part of. I look forward to more of the same at our next meeting to be held on 25 May at 2pm in my home.

Therese Flynn-Clarke



Your address

Date:

The Honourable Christopher Evans MP
Minister for Immigration and Citizenship &
Leader of the Government in the Senate
48 Ventnor Avenue
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Will You Help To Break the Silence??

You can get involved right now to help change the situation for women trafficked to Australia, using this sample letter provided by Graeme Mundine, Catherine Loy and Gabrielle Russell-Mundine.

Dear Mr Evans,

Through the Religious Congregations' Anti-Trafficking Working Group and the Anti-Slavery Project I have heard about the issue of trafficking in persons.

This is to ask you to review the visa trafficking system for those people who have been trafficked into Australia and treated as slaves.

I am aware of the new visas that were introduced on 1 January 2004 setting up the 4-stage visa framework and I understand that this visa system is linked to the criminal justice process. The trafficking framework allows visas to be available where witnesses assist the police and prosecutors in investigating crime and prosecuting criminal offences. The trafficking visa system is currently:

Step 1 - Bridging visa F. This visa lasts for a maximum of 30 days and is available for those 'of interest' to the police.

Step 2 - Criminal Justice Visa. This visa permits the trafficked person to stay lawfully in Australia for the duration of the criminal justice process.

Step 3 - Witness Protection (Trafficking) (Temporary) visa. This visa is available to people who have made a significant contribution to a police investigation or criminal prosecution. The Australian Attorney-General and the Minister for Immigration must agree that the visa should be granted. One of the rules for the visa is that the victim of trafficking would face danger if they returned to their home country. The Witness Protection (Trafficking) (Temporary) visa lasts for 3 years.

Step 4 - Witness Protection (Trafficking) (Permanent) visa. After 2 years of holding the Witness Protection (Trafficking) (Temporary) visa, the trafficked person may be offered a permanent Witness Protection (Trafficking) (Permanent) visa.

There is no guarantee that either the Temporary or the Permanent Witness Protection Visa will be granted.

I wish to make the following recommendations.

Bridging Visa F

That the period of visa validity of the Bridging Visa F visa be extended from 30 days to 3 months giving the victim of trafficking time to recover and reflect about their experiences and make a decision about their participation in the criminal justice process.

Witness Protection (Temporary)

I recommend that this visa be granted early in the investigation and prosecution process, rather than waiting until the end of a potentially lengthy trial. Granting the visa earlier will give more certainty to the victim of trafficking.

Reunification of children with their mothers

Currently the Witness Protection visa doesn't allow the victim to be reunited with their children in Australia. This is very detrimental and harsh and has had serious impacts on the well-being of some of the mothers and the children. If children are forced to remain in their home country, they are then vulnerable to being trafficked too.

New visa for some trafficked people

Sometimes a victim of trafficking doesn't fit the requirements for granting a trafficking visa. I ask that the Minister consider introducing a new complementary protection/humanitarian visa for those victims who have been trafficked and who are unable to participate in a criminal investigation or prosecution, where there are factors of a compassionate or compelling nature.

Please use your authority to extend the current trafficking visa system that is compassionate and will help trafficked women be protected and be more certain about the future.

Yours sincerely

ABC Compass

Maree Kennedy

Every Sunday night, **ABCTV** screens **Compass**, a program reflecting and exploring faith, belief and values in Australia and around the globe.

Presented by Geraldine Doogue, **Compass** explores the interface between religion and life as experienced by individuals and communities – including ordinary Australians, public leaders, religious thinkers, ethicists and philosophers. **Compass** avoids restricting itself to religious institutions only; also illustrating the liveliness of public debate encouraged by religious issues.

In February, Bernice was contacted by **Compass** researcher Kim Ackhurst. Kim asked Bernice for names of some Catholic women who may be able to assist with research for a **Compass** Programme to be screened in July/August about Catholic women in Australia.

Whilst the exact format of the program was yet to be determined, Kim was interested in speaking to some **WATAC** women and listening to their experiences of being Catholic in Australia. After sharing some of her own wisdom, and seeking permission, Bernice provided Kim with contact details for some of our **WATAC** members. Kim was anxious to speak to Catholic women of different ages, geographical areas, of different experiences. Many of our wonderful **WATAC** women were involved in sharing their own stories with the **ABC**.

Kim rang me in early March and asked about my experiences of growing up in a Catholic family in Sydney in the 1960s. After a few phone calls Kim arranged for the producer of **Compass**, Mark Edmondson to meet me at home. At this meeting, Kim and Mark asked permission to video me sharing my personal story about my experiences of being a Catholic woman to assist with their research.

I was contacted later in March to see if I would agree to be interviewed as one of the four women for the program. I didn't make this decision lightly as I was aware that by truthfully telling my story, there could be repercussions for myself and for my family. I decided if I was going to agree to be interviewed, it was important to be honest and do my best to share both the positive and negative aspects of my experience as a female Catholic.

For me, this seemed like a wonderful opportunity for female Catholic voices to be heard, when there are few other opportunities. With the support of my

family, a couple of very special friends, including Bernice, I decided to take the risk!

On 24th March, the **ABC** film crew descended on our home. They turned the room downstairs into a television studio complete with lights, cameras, camera tracks, microphones and producer! For almost two hours, I responded to questions from the producer, Mark. I shared my experiences of growing up in a Catholic family, what role the church played in my childhood, experiences at uni, what it was that prompted my questioning of church teachings that I once had accepted, my ideas about perceived expectations of a Catholic female, motherhood, painful parish experiences, the discovery of **WATAC** and its influence on me, my personal faith journey. There were a few curly questions thrown in, but I did my best to respond honestly! It was disappointing that after receiving some advice, I was unable to identify on air with one of the occupations I am currently employed in, because of a possibility that I could lose my job.

The film crew also took footage of our family interacting over a meal and just being us! The following day, at St Patrick's Church at Sutherland, Mark interviewed Father John Sullivan, who has been journeying with me as my spiritual director for the past three years. There was also some further filming at my home.

In all there was probably about seven hours of filming time for my small part in a 30-minute program. It will be interesting to see which parts are cut and which are highlighted when the show goes to air!

I was very impressed with the professionalism and courtesy of the **ABC** crew. Kim and Mark's knowledge and research about the Catholic Church, its history, its people and its challenges were extensive as was their ability to be very supportive. It is obvious that they are eager to present a well balanced yet challenging program.

I don't have a date yet when the program will go to air, but Mark is anticipating July to coincide with the Pope's visit.

I am very grateful for this opportunity and express sincere gratitude to Bernice and the whole **WATAC** family who have given me the confidence to find my voice and share my story. □

Women and girls need not apply

Phyllis Zagano

Until a New York City police officer took up her station, I was the closest woman to Pope John Paul II at the Mass he celebrated in New York's Central Park in 1995. I was several hundred yards away, atop a tower built for still photographers.

Things have not changed. When Pope Benedict XVI celebrates Mass at Washington's Nationals Park stadium and at Yankee Stadium in New York, everything will be in place to keep women at a distance. Despite church rules allowing women altar servers, it won't happen here. Only cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and a few hand-picked seminarians and deacons will be in liturgical vestments and near the altar and the pope.

The symbolism is unmistakable: Women and girls need not apply. Oh, there will be a few women in the offertory processions, or serving as readers or cantors. But make no mistake, at the highest levels these events are all male, all the time.

The rules are the rules, and make sense within their own framework. Different people do different things during a Catholic Mass. There is always one 'principal celebrant,' in this case, the pope. Then there are 'concelebrants,' the cardinals and bishops who stand near him. There are deacons, typically a 'deacon of the word,' who reads the Gospel, and a 'deacon of the altar,' who assists during the second part of the Mass. And there are acolytes, or altar servers, who help in various ways, such as with incense, and with the ritual hand-washing following the offering of the bread and wine.

Women can serve as acolytes, but none of the planners has had the nerve to argue for women servers at a papal Mass. The Vatican has reserved the altar server spots for (male) seminarians. There's also no need for lay Communion ministers, they say, because there are more than enough clergy present to do the job.

But has no one told the pope about the negative symbolism of a nationally televised all-male event? The Catholic Church has two main reasons for not including women as clergy, effectively eliminating them from more than token presence during formal ceremonies: Jesus was male; Jesus chose only male apostles.

The first point is uncontested. Jesus Christ was male. But Jesus was human, and Catholicism teaches that all persons are made in the 'image and likeness of God.'

The second point Jesus chose only male apostles is arguable. Did Jesus consider his women followers as apostles? After all, Mary Magdalene was the first to announce the Resurrection.

Ancient traditions of women heading 'house churches,' of women heading double male-female monasteries, of women ordained at least as deacons, fell away as the Catholic Church gradually developed a mostly celibate male clergy. When the energy of the 20th-century women's movement approached the Catholic Church, arguments and documents from the hierarchy

began to fly about. There are two modern Catholic statements about women priests, one from 1976 and another from 1994.

The first came from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (which Benedict headed for nearly 25 years before his 2005 election as pope). It emphasized that Jesus was male and chose only male apostles. The second, much leaner statement is a letter from

John Paul in 1994 that emphasizes Jesus' choice of men. The unavoidable conclusion is that the church does not believe it can digress from Jesus' choice. Can all this change? Will the next pope or the next, or the next be greeted by women seminarians, or deacons, or priests, or even bishops?

Despite protestations to the contrary, neither 1976 nor 1994 produced an infallible 'ex cathedra' declaration by the pope, or an infallible teaching of an ecumenical council. Catholic canon law holds nothing is infallible unless it is clearly stated as such.

As far as where Catholicism is, and where it may be going, a picture of a papal Mass will say more than millions of words about the equality and the dignity of women.



Phyllis Zagano is senior research associate-in-residence at Hofstra University and author of several books in Catholic Studies. This article is from Religion News Service, April 9, 2008

Cartoon by Graham English
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Inter-Faith Dialogue in NSW Parliament House

Bernice Moore

On 18th April 2008, nearly two hundred people gathered in the Theatrette of NSW Parliament House to talk of World Peace. The venue was perfect, the participants and speakers were enthusiastic and highly involved, and the topic vitally relevant to us all, so how could it not have been a wonderful afternoon?

The Year 11 and 12 students, girls and boys, were from various Catholic Schools from Wollongong, Campbelltown and other local Sydney areas. The women speakers represented three faith traditions: Jewish, Muslim and Christian. They had been asked to explore the concept of Women and World Peace in terms of their faith tradition, looking at the concept from both a personal perspective as well as a global level.

The speakers were:

- Ilona Lee AM is President of the Shalom Institute and an Executive Member of NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. Her background is teaching and her field of expertise is in multiculturalism. She was Director of Health Promotion and Multicultural Health for Eastern Sydney Area Health Service and is a Board Member of OzHarvest.
- Makiz Ansari is Research Assistant at the Faculty of Political Economy, Sydney Uni. Born in Afghanistan. Makiz is a young Muslim woman who grew up in Australia and is socially active in the area of inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue. She is one of the directors of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation.
- Jan Barnett is a Josephite nun who is also a member of the WATAC Inc. Committee. Jan is a teacher who has been very involved in secondary and tertiary education. Currently, Jan is the national chaplain for the Australian Young Christian Workers and also works as a facilitator and consultant particularly with social justice groups.

Marie Andrews, member for Peats, was our Parliamentary Host who spoke briefly welcoming us to Parliament House. Both Marie and her staff have supported WATAC for many years, in enabling us to hold functions in Parliament House.

Helen Coles facilitated the session, inviting each speaker to address the topic "Women, Religion and Peace" for about ten minutes followed by a short question and answer forum to enable dialogue with students and speakers. This was a very effective process which kept all involved.

The second section of the session was an Open Forum where students were invited to ask questions of any or all of the speakers with the aim of encouraging real inter-faith thinking and questioning. Both students and speakers entered wholeheartedly into this process, with fascinating outcomes. There is little doubt that understanding and knowledge were truly developed through this precious moment of honest dialogue. Everyone in the room was exposed to "the challenge of possibility".

In 1960 Dag Hammarskjold wrote of world peace:

"Never, for the 'sake of peace and quiet' deny your own experience or convictions...The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned.... Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was."

Almost fifty years later, listening to the amazing and insightful questions of young women and men, and the honest and heartfelt responses of dedicated, passionate women steeped in their various religious tradition, I found myself in total agreement with Dag Hammarskjold. The "mountain" of world peace can and must be climbed and extraordinary and ordinary people are doing it together.

The last student question of the afternoon provoked intense speaker response, "What is one thing that your religious tradition could change to help move our world towards Peace?" How would you answer that?

It was a great session, the only limit to it was time, and as usual we ran out of it. We are planning another one on 23rd September, 2008. WATAC thanks everyone involved in this wonderful event.





Men speak out

Two husbands of members of the Broken Bay Group have been very impressed by Michael Morwood's book *From Sand to Solid Ground* which, like for many groups, has been the subject of our recent meetings. Other groups may like to encourage their members' partners and sons to share the book's wisdom.

Reading *From Sand to Solid Ground* by Michael Morwood gave me a bit of a boost. Here is a writer who is clearing up many of the worries I have had about God – a God who is three-in-one (who made it so complicated?). I can understand Jesus was a lovely man and a great communicator, a Jew (he never changed) who gave us many examples of how to lead a good and loving life. A lot of us try hard to follow at least some of his teachings. But sadly a lot of us do not give it a go. I find it hard to tune into what happened to him after his crucifixion.

Then along came the storytellers who started the Christian church and put God out of reach of the ordinary people unless they abided by the rules and regulations of the Popes and their wise men. Michael Morwood makes a lot of the 'Faraway God' or the God you can't get to unless you have passed your test and have a valid licence. I have decided to think that there might be a friend who will look after me when the lights go out.

It is hard to believe that the Catholic Church gets away with the side-lining of women – half the population of the world don't sit in on the making of rules and the general running of things (I thought there were no Glass Ceilings in the Vatican!). Women have always been presented as second to men, not to be trusted in church affairs. Mary is depicted as neither male nor female, a person of sorrow. My goodness! She was the mother of Jesus, but she was a woman.

This is how Michael Morwood's book moved me and cleared my thoughts a little as to what is happening in the church today. Why not encourage people to think about God – or the Divine or whatever you choose – as a friend always with us, and have a talk to him whenever you feel like it. Maybe if we were more loving to the family next door when our time comes we may just meet a nice guy and his name could be you-know-who!

Joe Baillie

This most challenging book is a must for those seeking spiritual truths. Not being a Catholic and currently worshipping in a non-orthodox church I had already reached agreement on many of the issues raised in the book.

It has always posed a dilemma for me, with my previous mainstream church teachings that entrance to heaven was only available through salvation, especially when considering the sincerity and deep spirituality shown by many adherents of other religions.

Michael Morwood's book from *Sand to Solid Ground* clearly explains that spiritual progress is not dependant on blindly following church dogma, but on a sincere attempt to cultivate the essence of ones faith.

Roy Haigh

Marriage Encounter – Re-encountered!

Margaret Knowlden

‘Margaret, do you remember me?’ Patricia’s was a familiar, friendly face at our church but I couldn’t recall knowing her from my previous life. Jogging my memory, she said: ‘You were involved with Marriage Encounter and you minded our three young boys when we went on our weekend.’ That was in 1974 – 34 years ago! I remembered ME so clearly but the three boys escaped my recall at this moment.

Driving home from church, I relived the experience of our own magical weekend. After twenty years of married life, we had to admit that, like many couples, the glow of romance had given way to the stresses of coping with life, family and work. To quote ME jargon, ‘Married singles’ aptly described our situation. So when I first heard of ME – and its promises of better communication between couples – it seemed like a wake-up call, a chance to really look at ourselves for once. Although my husband was not overly enthusiastic, he generally did things to please me. So we found ourselves amongst the first 100 couples in Australia to take on the imported wisdom from the USA. We had been told that ME was for couples who genuinely wanted to stay together. But, arriving late at the conference centre – having got completely lost on the way – the air was pretty blue and we weren’t then so sure of our ongoing commitment!

However, the weekend proved to be an extraordinary experience, providing just the right environment for total honesty and rediscovery of each other. ‘Walking on air’ was a commonly described post-ME experience – and ‘like a second honeymoon’! Ours was no exception. One of our daughters, no longer living at home, commented on ‘the difference in the atmosphere around here these days!’ Another friend was amazed at the absence of tension between us, and a third from Brisbane asked outright: ‘What has happened to you two – you both look ten years younger!’ As I said, it had been a magical weekend!

Then suddenly the memory of the three little boys all came back to me. It was about eight months after our experience when we were asked at short notice if we could help a young couple by looking after their children so as to let them go on their ME weekend. Of course we were delighted to help (as ‘ME graduates’, we wanted everyone to share our joy!) and the children were duly delivered late on Friday afternoon. The parents seemed stressed and were understandably anxious about parting from their young offspring. We tried to allay their doubts and encouraged them to enjoy the weekend.

If I remember right, the three boys were no trouble as our 10-year-old son took them under his wing and

the weekend passed happily. Then Sunday evening arrived, and the parents returned. What a transformation – with all their tension and anxieties gone, they (like us) seemed to be walking on air! It was truly a wonder to behold and we felt very happy to have been a small part in making that happen.

In talking with Patricia, she told me they had added a fourth son to their family. Then one of the older three developed a disability – an event which has notoriously broken up many a marriage. But Patricia is convinced that the very firm foundation laid at their ME weekend helped their marriage survive! For us, it has been heartening to know that such a small gesture of goodwill has been so appreciatively remembered so many years later.

But there is more. In preparing a tribute to read out on the occasion of my husband’s 80th birthday this month, I wanted it to be a bit more than a litany of all the practical help and support he has given me over the years. So this chance encounter with Patricia inspired me to fossick through our ME exercise books for something my husband had written to me at the time. His book was indeed a treasure trove of beautiful expressions of his love for me. The one I chose was:

‘You have been such an inner strength to me over the years in many ways – while it was your loveliness that originally attracted me to you, there has always been that inner radiance that seems to shine out. I can never be grateful enough to you for saying YES. Life could never have been life without you.’

Pretty romantic for a hard-headed engineer!

I was reading out my tribute to Eric at our celebratory luncheon until I got to this spot, but then I broke down. Our daughter, Penny, took over and she wrote afterwards to her Dad: ‘I was so pleased to read out Mum’s words, and her quote of your letter to her – I hope you weren’t too embarrassed by this, but it was the most moving thing for me in a long time.’

Maybe my meeting with Patricia could have another outcome? As we face the reality of increasing age, frailty, deafness and general slowing down, perhaps this is a second wake-up call, a time for review. It was easy to make promises about ‘for better or worse’ nearly 54 years ago, but now becomes the testing time when negative feelings can so easily arise. This is surely one of those opportunities to remind myself to recall and live out the ME adage: ‘Love is not a feeling – it is a decision’.

I can (and must) decide to be more tolerant and loving! □

Group Reports

Inverell

Strangely enough, without any formal invitation, a Thursday group has started as a direct result of our weekend around the video *As it is in Heaven*. Some of the women were mentioning that they would like a follow-up so it was decided to meet on the first Thursday on each month from 1-3 pm. In reality, they have been coming every week and at present we are thinking of making a 'Cosmic Walk' through the paddocks and along the riverbank, with reflections at various stopping points. We'll see how it develops!

Last Saturday we had our annual fund-raiser for Sanctuary Inverell, the local group which settles refugee families who are given Australian visas but no means of getting here. The speaker on the night was Elke Kroeger-Radcliffe, a woman I had met in a remote part of Zambia when I went as a volunteer during the International Year of Fresh Water; we stayed at the community centre which Elke had built up from nothing and which now provides education for primary children, adult literacy and for AIDS education. As well, she has developed an orchard, a vegetable garden and the provision of protein through the breeding of doves, rabbits and goats. I am going out for six weeks in mid-June, first to Nairobi where there are a number of girls receiving education through donations from people in Australia and the USA, then on to St Jude's in Tanzania to meet up with a past student from the school here in Inverell (look up the web-site) and finally to Tikondane (look up the web-site there too). To my great joy, four young people have asked to come with me. One is a fine young woman who came as a small girl from a refugee camp in the early 1980s, another is a niece from the UK and their respective boy-friends. I'm beginning to feel like the Pied Piper! We will all work on whatever projects are going at the time and just spend time listening and learning.

Apart from this, I'm fitting in some gardening when I can and am promising myself to join the Bridge Club 'when I'm old'! What a joke!

Rosemary Breen

Engadine

On the third Monday of each month WATAC women gather in Engadine for wonderful and animated discussion on a huge variety of topics. This year our energies have been focused on Bishop Geoffrey Robinson's book *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*, and the dialogue has been not only life-giving but lots of fun too.

In April we met at Kathy LeGras' home. Maree Kennedy led the discussion of Chapter 12: "The Prison of the Past" and the sharing was wide-ranging and seemingly endless. There is no doubt that Geoffrey's book provides nourishment for the spirit and the mind as well as hope for faltering hearts. If any group out there hasn't given time to this book yet, do think about it.

As well as our Monday evening gathering, some WATAC-ers and their friends meet on the 2nd Sunday morning at Alma Madden's home to reflect and pray together. This too is a beautiful moment of truly being who we are – the body of Christ – and Christ is truly alive among and between us.

Margaret Keyes

Penshurst

Michael Morwood's words have inspired our three meetings this year. His questions are our questions and his reflections have inspired our on-going discussions and prayer. It is time, as he writes that 'we are living through the greatest shift ever in Christian thought' and we, as a vital interested group, are enjoying this part of the process. Our group meets on the fourth Monday of the month and we combine reflection, discussion sharing stories and supper – it's a very enjoyable, informative outcome. Since we include an Irish member in our group, our meetings are never complete without an Irish joke or two. We recommend it to all WATAC groups; the world is happier because of laughter!

Bernice Moore

Parramatta

Parramatta WATAC has met three times this year. In February we shared our thoughts and feelings on the momentous occasion of the Prime Minister's apology to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We agreed that it seems as if there is a new spirit of generosity abroad in the nation.

In March, Maria Maguire shared with us some of her insights and learnings following her recent trip to Bangladesh. The photos and materials brought home to us very vividly the poverty and struggle the people face every day.

The meeting for April coincided with GetUp's Reconciliation Get-Togethers across the country. So, because Parramatta WATAC has a strong commitment and interest in social justice issues especially affecting Indigenous people, we followed the process suggested by GetUp. Reconciliation is an issue that can't be solved from the Prime Minister's desk – it requires change from the grassroots up. It will take not only a change of policy, or an apology, but a change of culture.

So on Tuesday April 29 at 7:00pm we joined with thousands of Australians holding Get-Togethers across the country. The aim was simple: to share our stories and our hopes for reconciliation and meet some new friends from our local community. Our Get-Together was part of a huge national movement and on the night we included a new song – a special 'apology' version of Paul Kelly's 'from little things big things grow' featuring leading Aussie artists and Kevin Rudd!

Margaret Hinchey

Broken Bay

Every time we get together is so enjoyable and stimulating that it is hard to remember what we actually talked about! Why don't I feel so energised after Sunday Mass?! We continue to be challenged by Michael Morwood, and already his book *From Sand to Solid Ground* has been seized on by two husbands who both said they could not put it down, finding that it answered so many of their own doubts. It made me think there may be many other men with the same concerns as ours and they should be encouraged to read the book, speak out – and write for our newsletter. Our next meeting is on Sunday 1 June.

Margaret Knowlden

Milton/Ulladulla

It was a beautiful day in Milton/Ulladulla as we gathered at Kath Prendergast's house for our WATAC Day. We welcomed Bernice, Janet and Kaye from Sydney. There were ten of us altogether including two members who have been on the sick list for some time, and they received a big welcome from us all.

Our subject for the day was Chapter 7 entitled 'Repression of Thought' of Michael Morwood's book: *From Sand to Solid Ground*. We began with a Meditation entitled 'Who Is God For Me Now?' taken from Bishop Robinson's book *Reclaiming The Spirit of Jesus*, after which we slowly went through the various points raised in Michael Morwood's book. We especially pondered long and hard on the key questions put to Schillebeeckx by the CDF after the 1979 protest by 83 English theologians regarding the CDF's methods. The key questions were:

- the sacrificial value of the death of Jesus
- Jesus' awareness that he was the Messiah and the Son of God
- Jesus as founder of the Church
- the virginal conception of Jesus
- the bodily nature of the resurrection
- the institution of the Eucharist by Jesus.

The discussion and sharing created by the questions was amazing and, as always, we ran out of time. We all agreed we have all come such a long way in matters of faith and beliefs.

After a scrumptious lunch we gathered for a very meaningful liturgy prepared by Judi which complimented so well our earlier discussion. A big thank-you to Kath for having us all at her place as well as organising our lunch.

Our next meeting day will be on Saturday 14 June and we will be discussing Chapters 2 and 8 of Michael Morwood's book.

Anna Flynn

Eastern Suburbs

February and March meetings were well attended and the Group is lively and never lost for an interesting word or thought! In February, Hazel Mezger presented a reflection based on the gospels of the three previous Sundays. The Woman at the Well resonated strongly with us WATAC women and brought back memories of the beauty of the liturgy with this theme presented at last year's Conference. Hazel pointed out that this was longest recorded conversation in which Jesus was involved. In March, Fay Lawrence gave us a reflection on St Paul with her own insights and others from Bishop Geoffrey Robinson's writing about the archetypal missionary. The Group is working slowly and fruitfully through Bishop Robinson's much more famous work, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*. Some of us had the pleasure of attending Bernice's *As it is in Heaven* workshop at Pennant Hills and others are waiting for the opportunity to attend any repeat performance, and to hear Sister Ann Gilroy on 14 May at the WATAC luncheon. Our next meeting will be on Sunday 25 May at 2 pm at Carmel Maguire's place, 8 Dudley Street, Randwick (near the Coogee Bay Road end) and we have lots of room for more members – short-term and long-term. Just call Carmel on 9398 1004 if you would like to come, or just come along.

Carmel Maguire

Inner City Group

The group met on the third Monday of April per usual, and continued with Joan Chittister's book *In the Heart of the Temple* – the chapter on 'Prophecy'. Although some of us have read the chapter in advance, we usually read it again during the meeting, aloud, and then contribute our ideas, eg about prophecy and our prophets today. We rotate leadership of prayer and provision of supper, and often bring news-cuttings or items of interest to discuss about women in church and public affairs. Our regular membership is around 6-7 people, with a few others who come occasionally. Suzy Kane was a visitor a couple of months back and we hope she will come again. Most of us will be at the WATAC lunch.

Margaret Cody

BANNOCKBURN (South Brisbane): This is still a tentative group which hopes to meet every two months on a Saturday at 2 pm at Therese Flynn-Clarke's home, 18 Thwaites St. Bannockburn 4207 (07)3804 0636 dctfc@optusnet.com.au

BROKEN BAY Group (Upper North Shore): Group meets on a Sunday about every two months starting at 12.30 pm with lunch. Venue: 32 Awatea Road, St Ives Chase. Contact: Margaret Knowlden 02 9449 7275 Email: knowlden1@bigpond.com

EASTERN SUBURBS Group. This group usually meets on a Sunday 2pm-4.30pm monthly. Meetings in 2008: 25th May, 29th June, 31st August, 28th September, 26th October, 30th November. Venue: 8 Dudley Street, Randwick. Contact: Carmel Maguire 02 9398 1004 Email: c.maguire@unsw.edu.au

ENGADINE Group meets on the third Monday of the month in a member's home at 7.30pm. Contact: Margaret Keyes: 02 9520 4240 Email: keyes888@bigpond.com Engadine group members also meet every 2nd Sunday of the month at 10am for Prayer and Reflection: for more information contact Alma Madden 02 9520 8684 Email: admin@watac.net

INNER CITY Group meets at 62 Boyce St, Glebe at 7pm on third Monday of each month. Contact: Margaret Cody 02 9692 9384 Email: margaretcody@mountainretreats.org

LISMORE HEIGHTS Group meets irregularly. Contact: Mary Bruggy 02 6624 6530 Email: marytbruggy@optusnet.com.au

MANLY Group usually meet on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm at 2/36 Upper Fairfax Road, Mosman. Contact: Camille Paul 02 9969 2125 Email: camken@bigpond.com

MILTON/ULLADULLA Group usually have meetings on Saturday from 10 - 4. The dates for 2008 are as follows: 14th June, 23rd August, 11th October, 22nd November. Venue: Varies each meeting. For further information 02 4456 4445 Email: powe@zip.com.au

MOUNT CLAREMONT (W.A.) Contact: Margaret Finlay (08) 9384 9114 Email: finlaymarg@hotmail.com

PARRAMATTA Group meets on the last Monday of the month from Feb to November at the Convent Parramatta from 7.30 – 9.30. Contact: Margaret Hinchey 02 9890 7903 Email: mhinchey@lifequestoz.net

PENSHURST Group meets at 7.30 on the fourth Monday of every month at 5/30-32 Grove Avenue, Narwee. Contact: Bernice Moore Email: bernice@watac.net or Maureen Hager 02 9580 5384: maureen_hager@optusnet.com.au

WAGGA WAGGA Group meet at Wagga Wagga on the second Monday of the month 7.30pm at Ros Bennett's, 14 Tarakan Avenue. Contact: Rosslyn Bennett. Email: rosbennett@ozemail.com.au

WOLLONGONG Group meets on the 4th Saturday of every month February to November at Thirroul, 2pm - 4.30pm. Contact: Jan Ryan 02 4268 5965 Email: jjryan@iprimus.com.au Mary Medley: mbmedley@bigpond.net.au

YOUNG: This Group has recently started. For information contact Pat Cudmore 02 6383 3205 Email: pat.cudmore@cg.catholic.org.au or Kerry Ray 02 6382 5460

POSTSCRIPT FROM CHINA

Judith Shand is a member of the Wollongong Watac group and she went to China last year to Chengdu University of Technology to teach English. She was 60 miles from the epicentre of the recent earthquake in China and has sent us news from there.

Yes I'm fine! Wow, what a few days we have had. Where to start...

Monday class from 8:10 to 11:50 then a staff meeting back to my apartment on 5th floor for lunch and a rest, shoes and socks were off as it was hot. Decided to phone Kay and then come to office. Chair started to shake. Thought about going downstairs but too hard to get shoes on so lay down carefully in safest spot for what I thought would be a few moments. It was a very long earthquake, like riding a horse that was about to buck you off. (As i write there is another aftershock. The computer screen wobbles!)

Then suddenly Nathan and Mr. Tang and Mrs. Yee were banging on our doors, they had master keys and checked every apartment and insisted that we go downstairs....

Most everybody spent the evening outside on the playing field; students could not go back to the dormitories so we took them what spare blankets we had. At Nathan's suggestion Grace Chen, the AITH Chinese supervisor of girls and her 18-year-old son stayed at my place.

Next day dining halls were still operating and the students built lean to tents on the tennis courts but it rained, so that night I had Grace, Gordon her son in the study on a mattress and six girls from my class on the floor, and later two boys fully dressed with shoes still on fast asleep in the armchairs. We had dumplings for breakfast!

Last night was better. I suggested students could watch a video at my place. Because it was Vitas's 19th birthday, eight different students from my class came at 3:30pm and spent hours cooking the grandest feast, exactly thirteen different dishes, and the biggest birthday cake I have ever seen! The party lasted until 9:30pm, we took some happy photos.

The atmosphere was quite festive last night, as it was not wet. The students were still sleeping in their class groups in tents but lots of them were just sitting on the artificial turf in groups, playing cards or snoozing or chatting. I went down at 11pm and found another group of girls from my class. Incredibly we played 'I went shopping and I bought' and Simon Says... then I took a photo of them outside their tent and strolled around looking at these incredible people, at their giant slumber party.

We have also seen the news, in Chinese of course! And at one stage Nathan found me to take a student to use my landline (all the mobile networks were down for a while on the second night. She was from DarJiang Yang (I cant spell it, but I have been there. The phone call was full of tears, but that was just with relief that her family was indeed okay.

So despite a scare yesterday that the water would be cut off (we filled the bath and started boiling water - I am being very careful about water, believe me!) things are good. And it has been announced that classes resume on Monday. One of the students said. That's great!! It proves that the earthquake is OVER.

We'll keep on teaching as usual. I'LL be flying back on 13 July.

Much love to all. Judy

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