

WATAC NEWS



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Welcome to the Spring Edition of *WATAC News*. As you can see it is a bumper issue, one that reflects WATAC women are alive and well and making their presence felt in all sorts of areas. I am hoping that you will share some of my feelings of excitement as you read through this issue. WATAC has been very involved in lots of different things and this is what makes WATAC so much a "members" organisation. No matter where you are or what you do, you can choose to get involved in something, as many of you have over the past couple of months. We have had some fantastic "moments in time".

- The response to our initiative to write to the Bishops in regard to the censuring of Bishop Geoff Robinson by the Episcopal Conference has been overwhelming. So many of us have been touched by Bishop Geoff's book that it sparked us to action.
- I hope that many of you would have seen two WATAC members, Maree Kennedy and Noelene Bangel, featured on *Compass* in July and/or listened to Bernice Moore in *The Spirit of Things* in August, offering personal observations about church and the Catholic celebration of the Feast of the Assumption over time. If you missed them, please contact Helen Coles who will be happy to send you a copy of the pod cast or DVD. Technology is so wonderful!
- WATAC did not let World Youth Day pass it by either. We were invited to attend two events which were well staffed by WATACers and there were very good interactions with young people.

- *As it is in Heaven* days and weekends, you will read, have been proliferating in WATAC circles. These have been uplifting and informative; they have stretched us in new directions and generally made for happy times spent with like-minded people. Watch for a new film *Suddenly* starring Michael Nyqvist (Daniel) which will be in selected cinemas within the next few weeks.

Thank-you to the Group Coordinators who took up the challenge of a different way of reporting on their activities. We suggested that they ask one or two of their members to reflect on what stayed with them after a meeting or what challenged them etc, and then to write a short response. This gives a different 'feel' to the reports and certainly makes for a more personal reading. Its always interesting to see what the groups are up to!

WATAC Inc has also been busy and is very happy to announce the 2009 Conference dates and Keynote Speaker. You will notice a different format for the Conference which we hope might make it more accessible for more people.

As the weather gets warmer, may our lives be touched by God again and again especially through our gatherings and interactions with one another.

*May the blessing of God go before you.
May her grace and peace abound.
May her spirit live within you
May her love wrap you round.
May her blessing remain with you always.
May you walk on holy ground*

(From *Celebrating Women* edited by Hannah ward, Jennifer wild and Janet Morely)

Pam Williamson

Admin Corner

Helen Coles

It's now a little over a year since I took on the job of Administration Officer for WATAC and I've been asked to write a little something about it for the Newsletter. I've been a member of WATAC for about 10 years and been a volunteer on the last couple of Conference Committees so I came to the job with an affinity for WATAC and its aims. Initially I kept a detailed log of the time spent on WATAC work and what I'd done, as much out of interest for those on the WATAC Inc committee as anything else. It so clearly illustrated just how much time has been spent in the past by volunteers to keep the organisation ticking along. Of course there is still much that is done by many generous volunteers.

I do the job from my home, often in the wee small hours of the morning as I am quite an insomniac! The top of my dining room sideboard has become a de-facto office with WATAC paraphernalia stacked high. One of the first tasks I worked on was helping Maureen Watterson to

get the revamped website up and running and I continue to liaise with Network Solutions to add new things to the site such as the photos from the Parliament House Luncheon. I help Margaret Knowlden and Maree Kennedy with the final stages of the Newsletter – proofreading then arranging for its printing and mail -out. If mini newsletters go out I work on those with Bernice as well as such things as the recent letter writing campaign in support of Bishop Robinson. I do much of the organisation leading up to events such as the 'As It Is in Heaven' reflection night and day at Pennant Hills and the Luncheon at Parliament House. I am currently in the early stages of planning for another of our Inter-Faith Dialogues for students – this will be the third since I started. I deal with phone calls and mail to WATAC – both the conventional and 'e' type, including sending out the Newsletter by email to those who've taken up that option.

When I first started, Maureen Watterson was a very patient mentor; she spent much time downloading files to my computer and sharing her vast I.T. knowledge with me. Lots of people use computers easily though they don't always manage to impart what they know to others. Maureen is a wonderful teacher and in the early days we exchanged many emails and had some long phone calls as she guided me through certain tasks to be done. Maureen continues to look after the subscriptions as well as the work she does as Treasurer for WATAC and is always a very willing mentor to me when new things cross my desk.

I work closest with Bernice and we get on very well. Amongst other things Bernice is an ideas woman and her energy and the time she gives to WATAC sometimes seems boundless to me. To use one of Bernice's sayings – she and I are mostly 'singing from the same song sheet' though occasionally we disagree and will have a robust discussion that move neither of us much closer to agreement. But that's ok because our respect for each other is undiminished by any differences we may have.

It's been a full year and I am proud of the work I do for WATAC just as I am appreciative of a job that fits in around the needs I have from employment. I'm aware that the members of the WATAC Inc committee are happy with the work I do and hope the wider membership feel likewise. □

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“Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus”

WATAC Action to Support Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

In June '08 WATAC undertook to express its wholehearted support of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson and his book *Confronting Sex and Power in the Catholic Church; Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*.

This WATAC action was inspired by the statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference in which Bishop Robinson was condemned because of the very issues he had addressed in his book. Many WATAC groups have been discussing Bishop Geoff's book and have been inspired and given hope by its contents, so it seemed both essential and honest to raise our voices and ask our questions of the Catholic Bishops regarding their statement.

As you all know, we mailed out information to all WATAC members and asked you to write to our Bishops seeking an explanation as to why they objected to Bishop Geoff's book and to what issues in particular they objected. As far as we can calculate there was a massive response from you, and many WATAC-ers have indicated that they have had received a response from some of our Bishops. A small number of Bishops have responded positively, several have been quite dismissive, and a few others have left it to their secretary to answer our honest concerns, while quite a few did not respond at all. Personally I received thirteen responses, two of which were wonderfully honest and supportive. Bishop Robinson wrote indicating that WATAC's support had given him 'great consolation, heart and courage' for which he thanked us most sincerely. (His letter to you is included in this newsletter.)

Bishop Pat Power also wrote of his personal gratitude for 'all that WATAC has contributed to the life of the Australian Church'.

Bishop Peter Connors indicated his willingness to meet with parishioners in Ballarat Diocese to dialogue with them, which I appreciated. Bishops Bill Morris and Michael Malone responded very openly, honestly and with gratitude for our concern. Cardinal Pell responded with some detail.

It is difficult to maintain energy and enthusiasm but if you are able I think it could be worthwhile answering, even briefly, such statements as "I believe you misinterpreted the circumstances" indicating how clearly we understand 'political speak'; and that the book 'has certain theological difficulties' with 'please name these theological difficulties' etc. However, it is up to you at this stage.

Thank you so much to everyone who took the time to write to whatever number of Bishops you were able. The indications are that our voices were heard, that our response caused concern, and while there is no forum for the laity, especially women, with this action we created one; plus Bishop Geoff knows that many of us are there for him and are enlivened by his thinking. We the People are the Church and 'we will not sit in silence'.

Bernice Moore



4-7-08

Dear *Bernice,*

The last few months in my life have had their drama, but all in all they have been positive. I have met many wonderful people and I have seen how deep and widespread is the need within our church to ask questions and to long for change. The people I have met are not wild-eyed radicals, but good and serious people who love the church and want to see it become all it is capable of being.

I have received so many messages of support and encouragement that it is not possible for me to write a personal response to each one, so please accept this circular letter.

Your support is important to me and I am grateful. I do not know where all of this will lead, and I do not have any illusions about what a book like mine could achieve. What we need is conversation and we must keep asking, and even demanding, that this take place.

In my talks I have quoted the sentence of John Henry Newman, "There is nothing on this earth so ugly as the Catholic Church, and nothing so beautiful." Hate the ugliness, love the beauty, and don't give up.

With every good wish,

Geoff Robinson

Thanks for the support.

Robinson brands US Church incompetent

AUSTRALIAN BISHOP Geoffrey Robinson, whose criticisms of the Church's response to sexual abuse have prompted rebukes from the Vatican and American and Australian bishops, says he is "overwhelmed with evidence of incompetence and far worse" in the US Church, writes Mark Brolly.

The former auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, who has returned to Australia from his five-week, 15-venue tour of the US promoting his bestselling book *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church: reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*, warns that the American Church has some massive problems before it. He says he returned to Sydney to find 13 letters from US bishops asking him not to go on the tour and accuses the Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, of orchestrating the bishops' letters and a May statement by the Australian bishops criticising his [Bishop Robinson's] views.

Bishop Robinson, in a report about his trip published on the independent website *Catholica Australia*, wrote that Cardinal Re's statement that the invitation to tour the US was by some organisations not in communion with the Catholic Church "is the exact opposite of my experience".

A picture paints a thousand words....

or does it?

Those of us in Sydney saw it splashed across the front page of the Sydney Morning Herald. The new image Our Lady of The Southern Cross by Paul Newton is what I am talking about. I took a particular interest in it because a relative (by marriage) was the teenage model for the artist. She is a beautiful looking girl so I was interested to see what the artist would do with her to present a model of Mary for the 21st Century Australian church. To say I was disappointed is an understatement. My first impression of the image was that of a picture so literal and clichéd in its cultural images; and of going back in time to something I remembered of my childhood image of Mary. I do not pretend to be an art expert but surely such a representation, especially when it is for the whole church, is not meant to be so literal. I would like to share some of my musings about the image in the hope that it might encourage some collective musings about images generally and how we view them.

Having been disappointed with my initial look at the image, I went researching to try and find out what was in the mind of the artist and of Cardinal Pell who commissioned the piece. Thanks to *Catholic Church Resources* and *The Hills News* I learnt that Cardinal Pell wanted to capture the "intimate relationship between Mary and her son". He wanted the picture to be Christo-centric. Mr Newton wanted to suggest in Mary's demeanour "serenity and great humility, not drawing attention to herself but to her Son". I think we got what both the artist and the Cardinal wanted. But is this the image we need? I remain disappointed. What could have been?

A portrait is meant to convey more than likeness. The way the information is presented will influence the way it is viewed I believe. The props, the colours, the pose all give the viewer information. So what do we see here? We see a

picture of a young girl holding a baby with some cultural images as props. The portrait however tells us very little of who this young girl is, other than

that she is a mother. Her eyes are downcast..... humility.... submission..... the information given to me, the viewer, is that of "handmaiden" that I grew up with. I see little of the Mary of the New Testament. What kind of woman weathers unmarried pregnancy, a journey at nine months pregnant, childbirth in a stable, refugee status with a young baby, having her son accused of being mad, telling him what to do at the Wedding at Cana, STANDING at the foot of the cross, accompanying the scared apostles in the upper room? Is this someone who can't look us in the eye even when we know and she knows that it is her son who takes precedence? What qualities would Mary have needed to have had to live those aspects of her life just mentioned? Does the portrait give us any clue to these?

For me the outback landscape, the Southern Cross, the wattle headband help us to identify Mary as "ours" - nothing more. And I am not going to comment further on these because I find them so inadequate.

The image is now hanging permanently in the Cathedral in Sydney. It will be there for posterity. Is this the image that reflects our beliefs about the mother of God towards the end of the first decade of the 21st century or is it the image of one or two men? Dare I say, is it the image that our church wants us to have because after all Mary is a model for all women? Let's remember this when we look at the images our church presents to us, especially when they are meant to be images of devotion.



Pam Williamson

A Conversation 'The Spirit of Things'

In late July I received a phone call from Rachael Kohn (Radio National) indicating she wished to talk about 'Religious Festivities' with people from different religious traditions on her up-coming programme 'The Spirit of Things'. I immediately began to think of people I could suggest she might contact who would be willing to discuss that topic. Rachael went on to say she wanted to talk with a Catholic woman about how we celebrate the feast of 'Mary's Assumption into Heaven' - 15th August.

My response to this was to suggest she would be better to maybe contact someone connected with Opus Dei, thinking they would probably be celebrating that feast as we used to when I was young. However, Rachael assured me she was keen to talk about the Assumption of Mary into Heaven as today's grass-roots and thinking Catholic women understand that feast. That was a challenge for me to think about!

The radio dialogue between Rachael and me took place on Wednesday 30th July and went to air on Radio National the next week. It was a very interesting experience preparing for the interview. It led me to do some serious thinking about my growth in understanding of Mariology from my childhood to now.

Some of Rachael's questions included:

- Why did Pope Pius XII declare the feast of the Assumption an infallible doctrine in the 1950's and what does that mean?
- How do Catholics celebrate this feast?
- What does the Assumption of Mary into Heaven actually mean?

- Did the Catholic understanding of Mary's role change as a result of Vatican II?
- If WATAC women were to formally celebrate the feast of Mary's Assumption today, how would they do it?

In our conversation Rachael and I talked of the end of World War II being declared on 15th August and of how significant that was for us as Catholics at that time. I recalled that 15th August was always a school holiday and was often First Communion Day and so it was a family celebration. Being a 'holy day of obligation' also meant we all went to Mass. It meant processions, beautiful flowers and singing in the choir as well as rosary beads and holy cards!

Rachael was interested in how our understanding has changed and I indicated that the Second Vatican Council opened the way to seeing Mary in other ways, for example as the Mother of the Church, and so leading us to become aware of her role as the woman who nurtured Jesus, her son, and who was part of the life of the early community of disciples and so on.

It was a very interesting dialogue with Rachael who, as you know, is a Jewish woman - her questions are always intelligent, searching and thought-provoking. After the radio interview we went down to the ABC coffee shop where we talked and talked endlessly about things religious and spiritual well into the afternoon. A great experience!

Bernice Moore

You will find a transcript of the program at the ABC Radio National Website:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/spiritofthings/stories/2008/2317833.htm>

If you don't have access to the internet and would like a copy of the transcript contact the WATAC office and leave a clear message with your name and phone number, (please repeat your phone number slowly) and Helen will contact you to arrange it.

Reflecting on Mary

Some interesting Quotes

Hans Kung in his autobiography records the fact that he was actually present when Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Assumption of Mary into Heaven to be an infallible doctrine of faith on 1st November 1950. Pius XII used these words: "Mary (Mother of God and a perpetual virgin) was taken up after the completion of her earthly career, body and soul into heavenly glory". Kung adds that this 'ex cathedra' statement was made, though there was no historical basis for the belief in the first centuries of the early Church. It became a legend in the fifth century, and from there on it developed slowly, 'organically', implicitly contained in such statements as 'Mary full of grace'.

Elizabeth Johnson in *Things New and Old*:

- "..... I spent an entire year reading through the extensive tradition of theology about Mary. To be honest I became more bewildered with every passing century. Whence came this luxuriant growth of metaphor culminating in the view that all of God's grace was bestowed through the mediation of Mary? Wrestling with these questions led me to this interpretation: the more outrageous the formulations of the Marian tradition the more it is seeking to redress the balance of an overly patriarchal view of God and the benefits of salvation. The merciful mother compensates for a harsh, demanding father and uses her influence to soften him up towards her children, as in a patriarchal household" (p119-120)
- Johnson goes on to write that many theologians say that Mary functions "effectively in the devotional life of many Catholic Christians" as the "feminine or maternal face of God", but Johnson says "this is a compensatory thing" and she quotes Andolsea who writes: "The Church is no longer served well by talk of Mary as the feminine face of God" (p120)
- Summarising the task of growing in understanding of Mary's role, Johnson writes: "Insofar as the story of Mary continues to be told in the community, then it should be told

with the hermeneutics of a feminist liberation theology. Then this woman emerges as a beloved figure in the communion of saints, one who is blessed among 'blessed women'". (p 121)

In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen Gentium" (Vatican II) we read:

- "Mary is like us in the most fundamental aspects of her nature Jesus depended on Mary for the things of this earth Mary is a member of the Church and an excellent example of faith and charity. We Catholics therefore honour her" (p 55)
- "Since Mary is the mother of Jesus, we can call her our mother as well. How appropriate this is, and how privileged we are to have such a mother" (p 64)
- "We encourage Catholics to foster a loving devotion for Mary as our custom has been for so many centuries. But at the same time, this council urges theologians and pastors to abstain both from gross exaggeration and neglectful omission in considering the dignity of Mary" (p 67)

Michael Morwood in *From Sand to Solid Ground* makes these points about Mary (pp 230 ff):

- Mary models a reality that adult faith has to be open to new possibilities and new ways of doing things.
- Mary did not cling to the old.
- Mary's experience of death was profound – as an adult she experienced the death of both Jesus and Joseph.
- Mary aged in a community – in a Post Pentecost community.
- Consider Mary's influence on that community – the wisdom she brought.

(It is very worthwhile to read this section of Michael's book – quite thought provoking.)

A WYD 'Miracle'?

My sister, Pauline, is a member of the Loreto Order and works at a school in Tanzania, East Africa. A few weeks ago she emailed me and also a mutual Loreto friend, Sr Jan Barlow at Normanhurst, telling us that one of their students – Anna Maria Rutasitara – would be attending the World Youth Day meeting as part of a Jesuit group and that she had given her our names and contact numbers. However, the thought of tracking one Tanzanian girl down amongst all those thousands of pilgrims seemed to Jan and me to be well nigh impossible.

Jan had been invited to assist with some work with an Irish group at Riverview College on the Sunday before WYD. Dressed with a light scarf, she decided to put a warmer one in her bag, just in case. Arriving early at Riverview, the first pilgrims she met were two African girls and, on shaking hands with them, she commented on how cold the first girl's hands were. Indeed, her light cardigan could have been no protection from the winter morning chill. On an impulse, Jan dug into her bag and pulled out the spare warm scarf and gave it to the girl, who accepted it most gratefully.

During a picnic lunch, Jan remembered the name Anna Maria Rutasitara and asked if there was a group from Tanzania. Yes, they were sitting on the grass near by. Approaching their circle, she enquired whether Anna Maria was with them. To her amazement a familiar girl stood up, wearing – you've guessed it – Jan's scarf! Out of all those thousands, the one Jan most wanted to meet was in fact the very first pilgrim she had unknowingly already encountered.

As a sequel to this story, I received a phone call from Riverview College inviting me to meet Anna Maria before they returned to Tanzania the next day. It was such a pleasure for me to meet this charming young woman of whom the Loreto Order, and my sister Pauline, have every reason to feel very proud. Likewise, her admiration for my sister, who has dedicated over 50 years to teaching in East African Loreto schools, was heart-warmingly touching. It was also good to hear of her enthusiasm for WYD and the varied experiences they had during the week before which included visits to the faith centres of many different faiths – Muslim, Seikh, Jewish and Bahai – a harbour cruise and the zoo!

Margaret Knowlden

Dawn Service

One Sunday morning I was wondrously entertained on my morning walk around our local sports oval by a large flock of white, yellow-crested cockatoos.

Assembling like church-goers in preparation for the Dawn Service, they greeted each other, squawking raucously. Tardy risers swooped noisily down from roosts in nearby gum trees, alighting singly or in pairs to join the already large congregation of 70 or 80 on the ground. On cue, a select troupe of about 20 (the male hierarchy?) rose to their allocated spots along the goal post, far above and out-of-touch with the milling crowd below.

My imagination went into overdrive and it seemed to me that what happened next could so well be a metaphor for our church. It was as though some of the females on the ground started to mutter amongst themselves about what was going on (why is it that only males are running the show, taking all the best seats?!.) So they decided to form a splinter group. One by one they turned away from the group and took up positions on the nearby fence – perhaps to test for themselves what the view was like from there. The news spread fast that the pastures were, in fact, greener over the other side. Gradually the rest of the congregation observed how happy, liberated, enlightened and guilt-free the fence-sitters were and decided to unite with them. Soon there were no worshippers left on the ground. Deserted by their flock, the 'hierarchy' had no choice but to quit their lofty position and take their place with the lapsers and defectors along the fence!

For me, the experience was sheer magic in the sparkling sunrise – but the sadness was that there was no-one else around to enjoy the fun and the symbolism too!

Margaret Knowlden

WATAC and WYD – Is There Any Connection?

Bernice Moore

On the evening of 4th June, Pam Williamson and I went to St Pat's College, Campbelltown to 'woman' a WATAC Information stall at a celebration of Social Justice and Inter-Faith Dialogue. It was an inspiring evening organised by a group of dedicated Year 11 and 12 students of St Pat's College.

We were welcomed enthusiastically by the students who helped us to organise our stall in the College hall. Parents and students arrived in numbers and came to talk with Pam and me re the 'why', the 'who' and the 'how' of WATAC. We gave away many copies of WATAC News and lots of stickers, sold magnets and a few T-shirts – the latter all with the Graeme English cartoon "God is Not a Boy's Name". The best part was the conversation with students and their parents and teachers.

The program which followed was wonderful: an inter-faith conversation between a Muslim woman, and men of other faith traditions as well as an Indigenous woman. We were enlightened, entertained and challenged to the limit. What an amazing event it was, organised by the Students' Social Justice Committee. Pam and I felt privileged to be part of this great moment of life! "The future enters into us,

and transforms itself in us, long before it happen" (Rilke)

On Monday 14th July, WATAC organised another Information Stall at the Mercy Social Justice day at Monte Sant' Angelo College, North Sydney. We were one of about twenty stalls representing many aspects of the struggle for social justice in our community and church. We gave away to WYD 'Pilgrims' endless numbers of WATAC News as well as 'God is Not a Boy's Name' stickers and we sold lots of magnets and some T-shirts. However, the best part of the day was the conversation between the wonderful WATAC women who were part of our stall and the multitudinous young women and their teachers who visited us. It was fun and joy, shared conversation and life-giving communication. How good it was that WATAC put up our hand to be part of this event which preceded the formal WYD programme. It was a meaningful WATAC contribution. Sincere thanks to each of the WATAC women who contributed to the day's activities.

Over 1,000 young people were involved in these events and the inter-action with them was unarguably beneficial. "The path is made by walking" – how good it was to be part of the path!



Left to right – Maureen Hager, Cathy Griffin and Maree Kennedy



Left to right: Cathy Griffin, Maureen Hager, Joan Pavitt, Margaret Keyes, Maree Kennedy, Bernice Moore and Pam Bryce



INSTITUTE OF SISTERS OF MERCY AUSTRALIA
WORLD YOUTH DAY COORDINATOR
ANN-MARIE HERD



***Mercy be the name
Mercy be the path
Mercy at the heart***

July 2008

Dear Bernice,

On behalf of the Sisters of Mercy Australia and the Sydney Mercy Schools I would like to thank you and your staff for their generous support of the Mercy World Youth Day Conference. Your support helped to make our day a major success.

It was a wonderful day that brought together over 900 Mercy minded people from around the world. They shared what it meant to be Mercy, saw that they can do more for those around them and made some new friends as well.

Having representation from WATAC was inspiring for our young people and provided them with an opportunity to see, first hand, where they can make a difference in the world around them. To share some of their reflections with you:

I didn't know I could do anything until I spoke to those people at the fair.

Those people are just ordinary people doing stuff that matters...they are so inspiring.

I realise I can do more and it doesn't take much to care....what awesome people

Thank you again for your assistance, we wish you and your organisation continued success in the future.

Regards,

Ann-Marie Herd
World Youth Day Coordinator
Institute of the Sisters of Mercy Australia



Images of church from World Youth Day.... and the Olympics

The words of the song "It's raining men" just kept on racing through my mind. The image that will remain with me for a long time as well as the commentary is that of the final mass where I was told repeatedly that there were 300 and something Cardinals, 400 and something bishops and 3000 and something priests and that was all I could see. The cameras just kept panning for me to be impressed. They also panned an enormous distance between the "faithful" and them. The image of our church was disturbing to say the least and that this was the image that was wanted to be projected was **very** disturbing.

..... and now to the Olympics. Think about the placement and use of women in the opening and closing ceremonies. What do you notice? No answers in the back of the newsletter, but worth thinking about as well. What image of women do we want projected. What do we watch? What do we refuse to watch? What do we notice? What just washes over us?

Pam Williamson

Catholic Press of America Awards - June 2008 Third Place (Education)

From Sand to Solid Ground
by Michael Morwood
The Crossroad Publishing Co.,
New York, N.Y.

Michael Morwood is a former Catholic priest from Australia with more than 30 years experience in adult faith formation. Morwood gently challenges adult Christians (and especially Catholics) to re-imagine their understanding of God from an 'elsewhere' God to an 'everywhere' God. This shift of paradigm leads to a rethinking of many traditional beliefs including the atoning purpose of Christ's death and resurrection, the uniqueness (or exclusiveness) of Christianity among other faiths and other controversial topics, which have often gotten theologians into trouble. The work responds to the need of contemporary Christians to understand their faith in a new way which respects their secular world-view and enables them to believe in Christ and believe in themselves and our place in the universe.

Morwood's style is direct and challenging yet compassionate and reassuring. Christians who are looking for a 21st century handle for their faith will be rewarded by their effort to read this important work.

Dates for your diary WATAC Conference 2009

Sydney Turf Club, Canterbury

Conference Dinner at venue – Friday 1st May

Guest speaker to be advised

One-Day Conference – Saturday 2nd May

Keynote speaker:

Bishop Geoffrey Robinson

Currently the committee for the 2009 onference comprises: Bernice Moore, Margaret Keyes, Judi Powe, Janet Cain & Helen Coles. If you would like to put your hand up to be part of the conference committee please call and leave a message on the WATAC answer phone and Helen will call you back to talk with you and give you details of when the next Conference Committee meeting is.

Ph: 02 9520 9409

Good Shepherd Trading Circle

Change of address

from 78 VICTORIA ST, ASHFIELD to a
shop-front at

27 LACKEY ST, SUMMER HILL

Trading is from Tuesdays - Saturdays.
Transport is good: Summer Hill Railway
Station is only meters away and there is a
bus service.

Kelly is the new Coordinator of the
Sydney Trading Circle.

Telephone number: 9798 0373

You can still reach Sr Helen for now on
9799 6301.

Please let your friends know of this move.



'God is not a Boy's Name' Merchandise

We have been asked many times if the 'God is not a boy's name' T-Shirts come in larger sizes - not yet! However before placing an order we need to gauge interest - The cost would be \$20 including postage. If you would like to buy one let us know by **October 31st** and if there is enough interest to meet the minimum

requirements for an order we will place one.

Contact Helen by email or regular mail with the details required below for 'expression of interest' - helen@watac.net or WATAC, 37/121 Anzac Avenue, Engadine.

FOR SALE NOW: T-Shirts with Graeme English's wonderful cartoon, as seen in the photos on the adjoining page. We have a small number of T-shirts still available from our original order. Please note these are women's T-shirts that are more fitted than regular uni-sex T-shirts. Sizes 10, 12 & 14 in black with white print or sage green with purple print. First in Best Dressed as the saying goes. \$20 includes postage.

Also available - Fridge magnets - two for \$5, includes postage

Expression of Interest

Regular Uni-Sex Style

Black T-shirt with white print / White T-Shirt with purple print / Serene' green with purple print

Colour option: Please circle your preference:

Sizes - measurements are for 'half chest' (that is from underarm to underarm when laid flat)

Size option: Please circle your preference:

X-small 49.5cm / Small 52cm / Medium 55cm / Large 58cm / X-Large 61cm / 2X-Large 64cm / 3X-Large 67cm / 4X-Large 71.5

Buy now: Fitted T-Shirts from original order

Size 10 Green Size 12 Green Size 14 Green (\$20 incl. postage/handling)

Size 10 Black Size 12 Black Size 14 Black (\$20 incl. postage/handling)

Fridge magnets: 2 magnets for \$5 includes postage

Name:

Address:

Suburb:

Postcode: Phone:

Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc.

Credit Card payments - complete the following details.

MasterCard Visa AMOUNT: \$

Card Number: ____ / ____ / ____ / ____

EXPIRY DATE: ____ / ____

Cardholder's Name:..... [Please print]

Cardholder's Signature:.....

Fax orders to 9520 9409 or email all relevant details to helen@watac.net
or post to: WATAC, 37/121 Anzac Avenue, Engadine, NSW 2233

WATAC thanks Graham English and Erin White

Inspired by the invitation to organise a stall for the WYD event at Monte Sant Angelo, the WATAC Inc Committee thought up the possibility of producing T-Shirts, fridge magnets and stickers to advertise WATAC and somehow briefly indicate what we stand for.

Deeply, deeply grateful we are to Graham English for the use of his cartoon (one of hundreds) "God is not a Boy's Name" because it captured our imagination and fulfilled our need at that moment. Now it has gone far and wide on T-shirts, magnets and stickers with WATAC's name and purpose attached.

Graham, husband of Erin White (a WATAC-er from the earliest days!!!) has been long associated with us and our journey and on many occasions has creatively turned angst into laughter. Graham freely donates the use of his amazingly creative drawings seemingly without a second thought and for that we are deeply grateful. The joy and laughter of people when they connect with the joke (which is also alarmingly true) is always infectious, we've laughed a lot over it, and Graham you are 100% responsible for this serious fun moment. "Thank you" hardly says it all. However it is gratitude most sincerely expressed.

Merle Redmond

1919 – 2008

Lived Life to the Full

On Thursday, 28th August, at St Francis Xavier Church, Lavender Bay we gathered to celebrate Merle Redmond's long and wonderful life. Her farewell Mass captured the beauty of this admirable and dedicated life, full of love and care for people and with a great passion for justice. But none of this could diminish our sadness at her death.

It was no accident that the congregation included many WATAC women because Merle has long been a committed WATAC-er and has been responsible for organising an active WATAC group which met regularly for years.

Merle's family participation in the Mass beautifully symbolised the gift that she was to all of us – the words they spoke, the prayers and symbols they shared, and the heart-touching music, including Luke Redmond's singing made this a most precious moment of life. Thank you Merle for all you were and are; our thanks also to the whole Redmond Family.

"Death is not extinguishing the light, but putting out the lamp because the dawn has come" - Rabindranath Tagore

WATAC owes a long term debt of gratitude to Merle's son, Paul Redmond, who was responsible for arranging the incorporation of WATAC in our early organisational days.



Bernice Moore

Congratulations to Trish Madigan OP

WATAC congratulates Trish on her achievement of gaining her Doctorate after much dedicated study with Sydney University. This triumph is shared by women who were the focus of Trish's research. Her central theme was the study of Muslim and Catholic women and how they relate in terms of their religious traditions. We look forward to very soon seeing her work in print. Well done Trish!

I was sorry to hear of Merle Redmond's death. She was a great lady. I especially remember her at one of our Watac Conferences. She said something I have never forgotten: "Unless children have an encounter with nature before the age of 10, they will never become passionate about the environment. It doesn't have to be a huge deal, even just a roll down a grassy hill is enough to get the passion started." It's a lovely memory of Merle which I will treasure.

Anna Flynn

Celebrating on earth

'As It Is in Heaven'!

Without a doubt the movie *As It Is in Heaven* has un-ending and widespread appeal which continues to involve and intrigue people whatever their age or interests, WATAC-ers and non-WATAC-ers alike! Over the last few months we have organised a variety of seminar days and weekends, all of which have been unique, deeply enriching and truly awe-some (in the real sense of that word!)

Sunday, 13th July at Engadine

Sunday 13th July was a day to remember at my home at Engadine. We had a day exploring the film 'As It Is in Heaven' led by Bernice.

The film was very ably shown by Ken Griffin, Cathy's husband, using a data projector and it worked a treat.

There were about 20 WATAC women and friends present and all had watched the DVD beforehand. We all agreed that there is something new to be seen in this fascinating story each time you watch it.

Daniel Darius, a famous musician, returns to his birthplace. It is a microcosm of society and under his influence becomes a 'born again' community. It is easy to draw comparisons with the Christian story - but "who was who"?

We broke for lunch and at the end of the day had a most enjoyable liturgy to finish with.

Alma Madden

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th August at Kerever Park, Bowral

This is a wonderful venue and the group of married couples gathered there for this weekend have been meeting over many years, so they were ready for open, honest sharing and reflection. Some had seen the film before, but more hadn't, hence there was a sense of excitement in the air.

Gabriella's song was the highpoint of our discussion and, for the first time in my many experiences of sharing this movie, we managed to sing the English words to the music - truly beautiful!

The discussion of Fundamentalism, incited by the Pastor and his wife, Inger's exchange re: "There is no such thing as sin ..." was passionate and heartfelt. Vatican II and the urgency of maintaining and growing its influence dominated our thinking and dialogue.

There is no doubt that 'As It Is in Heaven' provides a graced moment of life when hearts and minds are ready for it. How wonderful that we at WATAC discovered it, and even more wonderful that human creativity has made it happen!

Bernice Moore

Friday, 15th August at The Entrance

The Religious Education staff of St Peter's Catholic College, Tuggerah, organised by Paul Bowe, held a reflection day based on 'As It Is in Heaven'.

"Viewing the film 'As It Is in Heaven', provided the staff of St Peter's Catholic College with a feast of images, metaphors, quotes and analogies in exploring spirituality.

When over 80 people gather together for a day there is a vast array of understandings of and viewpoints on God, community and relationships. The film provided common ground in tilling over these issues.

In the film, developing a church choir, provides a catalyst for exploring the elements that enable a community to grow and paradoxically an examination of the elements that contribute to a community being stifling and repressive. In the words of one participant this film does examine "all that is the best and worst of religion". The film studies theological issues in concrete situations, and through believable and identifiable characters evokes a smorgasbord of discussion and comments.

Facilitating and guiding the discussion and response was Bernice Moore - a prophet for our times. Bernice with her extensive background in education had strong credibility with fellow educators who appreciated her skilful guidance and input. As one member of staff stated, "I could have listened to Bernice all day". It was illuminating for her and made sense of "what I had felt subconsciously about religion. Bernice gave me words to say what I have felt but not yet expressed - and that was great".

Bernice in her input drew from the film, from an article by Diarmuid O'Murchu 'The Kingdom of God'; an article by Joan Chittister; Vatican II quotes and a moving meditation 'The Song of Jesus' by Geoffrey Robinson. The staff were enriched, encouraged and challenged by the input.

Following the day, discussions have continued over recess and lunches and many members of staff have borrowed copies of the DVD 'As It Is in Heaven' to show their partners and other family members. In the words of Paul Keating "sometimes you throw a rock into a pond and it rearranges everything". The day has had this shifting effect and for the prophetic word and presence of Bernice we are grateful."

Paul Bowe

God isn't a Catholic

Maree Lyndon

I want to share with you my family's amazing journey, following many spiritual paths, all leading to the same loving God.

When my generous husband complied with my desire to have our children involved in my faith practices, rather than his - even though there were very few differences - we never imagined the journeys that would be embarked upon.

I had embraced Vatican II and rejoiced that my children would not be exposed to the distorted, legalistic presentation of divine truths that I was burdened with in my Catholic upbringing in the 1940s and 50s. We monitored their growth through the sacraments, education and participation in their mostly enlightened experience.

I was on a path of great spiritual growth through Ignatian Spirituality, WATAC and Australian Reforming Catholics that was equipping me, more than I realised, for their adult decisions through different life experiences.

It is appropriate to say at this point, even though I have remained a regular Mass attendant, none of this enlightenment came from the pulpit but from the groups I am involved with, whose members love the Church and seek its relevance in the modern world. It is our great pleasure that our children have retained basic values and keep us close to them and their partners and children.

Our eldest daughter, in her professional life as a social worker and as a wife and mother, fills us with pride and we support her expressions of her Catholicism in her different ways. Again, with a generous husband of different beliefs, her children

are undergoing the experience, participation and education in an enlightened environment. As a family, they receive great support from their long-time Catholic friends and share their practice of community, home masses, retreats and family experiences, as well as Catholic schools and Church.

Our second daughter practices her skills as a registered nurse, wife and mother, and has met life's challenges with great courage. She has found support, community and enlightenment through the Baptist Church she shares with her husband and sons. She calls herself a Catho/Bappo! We support and share, with pride, as she educates us from different perspectives.

Our son's path through all his creative energies, has taken us on a great journey, opening our eyes to an amazing world. Through him we practice meditation twice daily and through this I have achieved the 'letting go and letting God' goal that I was not able to do through my religious practice.

Our recent experience is what prompted me to write this article. It involved our son and his wife celebrating the naming and dedication of their one-year-old son in their Ayurvedic values that have brought them both, from their Catholic origins, to enlightenment and connection with God. They take great care of their minds and bodies by nurturing them to the fullest.

We gathered as a family with total comfort and loving support and we reflected, as parents, on these amazing individuals who were sent to us, 41, 39 and 36 years ago, as our most treasured gifts from a loving God. □

Twice a year WATAC organises for school students to have an interfaith dialogue with women from different faith traditions. Members of WATAC are also invited to join us.

Women, Religion and Peace

Date: Wednesday 5th November 2008 - 12 noon to 3pm
(Light refreshments will be served from 12:00)

Venue: The Theatre at Parliament House, Sydney

The following women will explore, from the viewpoint of their faith traditions, the concept of Peace; both personal and its challenges at a global level. Following this there will be an interactive dialogue between the speakers and the students.

Iona Lee A.M. has a special interest in multicultural health, is President of the Shalom Institute and a Board Member of OzHarvest, a charity that collects excess food and delivers it to organizations that feed disadvantaged people in our community.

Jan Barnett rsj is the national chaplain for the AYCW (Australian Young Christian Workers) who work to uphold basic human rights, especially the right to meaningful and just work - YCW educates for global awareness and solidarity.

Third Faith Tradition speaker to be advised.

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL BEFORE FRIDAY, 24th October 2008

For further details contact WATAC:

Helen Coles: Phone/Fax: (02)9520 9409 Email: helen@watac.net

COST - \$20 per person - Payment on the day at venue

If you wish to attend the symposium, please complete this form and return to Helen Coles by
Fax: (02)9520 9409 or email relevant details to helen@watac.net or post to
WATAC, 37/121 Anzac Avenue, Engadine NSW 2233

Contact Person: _____

Ph: _____ Fax: _____

No. of people attending: _____

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA (N.C.C.A) AND GENDER COMMISSION

Extends an invitation to members of WATAC to share an evening with

PROFESSOR LARISSA BEHRENDT

Professor Larissa Behrendt is Professor of Law and Director of Research at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney. Larissa is a Judicial Member of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal, Equal Opportunity Division. Her book, 'Achieving Social Justice: Indigenous Rights and Australia's Future' was published by The Federation Press in 2003. She won the 2002 David Uniapon Award and a 2005 Commonwealth Writer's Prize for her novel 'Home'.

Venue: The Theatre at Parliament House, Sydney

Date: Friday 24th October, 2008

Time: 5.30pm to 8pm

Cost: \$30 payable with booking

Finger food and drinks will be served from 5.30pm. Formal proceedings will commence at 6.10pm

For further details on how to book contact Bernice Moore Ph 9534 8527

'Conscience compels us to be here today'

Homily text of Father Roy Bourgeois

National Catholic Reporter, August 9, 2008

When I met Janice Sevre-Duszynska years ago in the SOA Watch movement, she spoke about her journey of faith and her call to be ordained in the Catholic church.

That day has arrived. And we are here to share in her joy and to support Janice in her call to the priesthood.

As we know, the ordination of women in the Catholic church is a controversial issue. Ten years ago I wrote the following letter to my Maryknoll community about why women should be ordained. It was published in the Maryknoll newsletter under the headline "No One Likes a Bully."

In prison one has a lot of time for long thoughts and long prayers. Among my thoughts has been the issue of the ordination of women in the Catholic church.

Years ago, while in the military, I felt called to the priesthood and entered Maryknoll. Today I have women friends who say God is calling them to the priesthood. Who are we to judge their calling? As people of faith, we believe that a person's call to ministry is initiated by God and is something sacred. Who among us has the right to tamper with God's call?

In my 26 years as a priest, it is my experience that we need the wisdom, sensitivity, experiences, compassion and courage of women in the priesthood if our church is to be healthy and complete.

Sexism is a sin. However, [according to] the idea of Joan Chittister, the problem is not so much with sexism as it is with the perception of God held by those who oppose the ordination of women. As people of faith we profess that God is all powerful and the source of life. Yet, when it comes to women being ordained, it seems that opponents are saying that this same God who is all powerful and created the heavens and the earth and can bring the dead back to life, somehow, cannot empower a woman to be a priest. Suddenly, we as men believe God becomes powerless when women approach the altar to celebrate Mass.

I am in prison for protesting the training of Latin American soldiers at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA). The SOA is about men in Latin

America who abuse their power in order to control the lives of others. They cause people to suffer and are seen as bullies. There are also bullies in prison who cause fear and threaten to punish those who speak out.

Just as soldiers in Latin America and inmates in prison abuse their power and control others, it saddens me to see the hierarchy of our church abusing their power and causing so much suffering among women. Jesus was a healer, a peacemaker, who called everyone into the circle as equals.

The ordination of women in our church is a moral issue and will not go away. A growing number of people of conscience and faith feel a responsibility to address this issue. I would very much appreciate knowing how my brothers and sisters in our Maryknoll community feel about women being ordained and respectfully ask that you write Maryknoll News and express your views. In peace, Roy Bourgeois, MM

Now I have been a Catholic priest for 36 years and I must say, more than ever before, I am convinced that women should be ordained in the Catholic church.

The hierarchy will say, "It is the tradition of the church not to ordain women." I grew up in a small town in Louisiana and often heard, "It is the tradition of the South to have segregated schools." It was also "the tradition" in our Catholic church to have the Black members seated in the last five pews of the church.

No matter how hard we may try to justify discrimination, in the end, it is always wrong and immoral. As Reverend Nancy Taylor of Boston put it, "Prejudice in liturgical clothing is still prejudice."

We can go to the Scriptures and find numerous passages that support the ordination of women in the church. In Romans 16:7, we read that in the early church of Rome, a woman named Junias is described by Paul as "an apostle" who was imprisoned for spreading the faith. In Galatians 3:26-28, we read, "It is through faith that you are God's sons and daughters. ... There is neither male nor female. In Christ Jesus you are all one." And in the Gospels we read that after Jesus was

crucified, he chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene and other women. Jesus told the women to go and bring the news of resurrection to the men who, out of fear, were hiding behind locked doors.

Janice has been very active in the SOA Watch movement. As a high school teacher, she participated in a nonviolent protest against the SOA and was sent to prison for three months. Janice and the more than 250 others in our movement who have gone to prison are called, "Prisoners of Conscience."

Conscience is something very sacred. It gives us a sense of right and wrong and urges us to do the right thing. Conscience is what compelled Franz Jagerstatter to refuse to enlist in Hitler's army. On this day, August 9, 1943, this humble

farmer was executed for following his conscience. Conscience is what compelled Rosa Parks to say, "No, I cannot sit in the back of the bus anymore." Conscience is what compels Janice Sevre-Duszynska and the other women to say, "No, we cannot deny our call from God to the priesthood." And it is our conscience that compels us to be here today. How can we speak out against the injustice of our country's foreign policy in Latin America and Iraq if we are silent about the injustice of our church here at home?

Janice, all of us present in this church today, and the many who cannot be here, support you and walk in solidarity with you in the struggle for peace, justice and equality.

May our loving God bless you in your ministry and journey of faith.

WATAC Says Thank-You to Paul Ryan

I am sure many WATAC-ers will be able to picture the very beautiful paintings we have been able to offer for raffle prizes over the years. Some of you will know the sense of wishing your number would be drawn, just this time! At our raffle at the 2007 Conference at Canterbury I was just one ticket away from winning Paul's painting and still remember my breathless anticipation and subsequent disappointment.

Paul's Mum, a dedicated WATAC-er from the Wollongong group, has written about him at our request. Our sincerest thanks to her and to Paul and his family.

Bernice Moore

Paul Ryan

Paul, the eldest of our four children, was born in Auckland NZ in 1964 and came to Australia in 1973 when the family moved to Wollongong. As a child on rainy days he would frequently draw, but we never envisaged him becoming a full time artist.

Paul graduated with a Bachelor of Creative Arts in 1991 majoring in painting, and he has continued to paint since then. He won his first Art prize, whilst still a student, with a drawing of a local industrial scene for the Faber Castell drawing competition. As practical parents we frequently suggested he "get a proper job" but these hints were ignored as he continued to paint.

In 1993 Paul was first hung in the Archibald exhibition with a portrait of Chris Hayward the actor, and since then has been a finalist seven times, this year being named as one of the final five, with his portrait of Peter Booth, a Melbourne artist.

Over the years Paul has won numerous art prizes, both locally and nationally. He now exhibits with the Rex Irwin Gallery in Woollahara and is busy preparing for an exhibition in December.

In recent exhibitions Paul has drawn on his love and knowledge of the Northern Illawarra landscape and he has also done some semi-historical paintings depicting the relationships between the early settlers and the aboriginal people.

Paul met his wife Tanti during a surfing trip to Bali and they now have two beautiful children, Jaya and Samantha. Whilst we are happy with his artistic achievements, we are most proud of the wonderful husband and father he is and the way he is concerned for the environment and the world. He is very generous as he is frequently called upon to donate work to raise money for local projects and charities.

Jan Ryan

Reflections on 2007 WATAC Conference

A Most Gratifying Experience

Helen Coles

After last year's WATAC Conference I put down some of my thoughts on the experience I had on the Conference Committee. I'm pleased to share them with you here. WATAC is currently in the early stages of planning for the 2009 Conference and we are wondering if there are members who would like to join the Committee for their own 'experience'! I have put my hand up again - would you like to join me on the 2009 Conference Committee? If the answer is "Yes" see details page 11. You can start small etc You can start small - I did and this is where it took me. This is what I wrote in the aftermath of the 2007 Conference:

Before I volunteered for the conference committee I asked a couple of questions:

- Will Bernice be steering us?
- Are Anna's team, including Beth and Pat on board?
- Has Anne Lane signed on?

When I knew these women were committed to it I decided I would too, because I knew what having these people leading the way would mean. It's a wonderful mechanism that comes into play and I don't know if it's unique to WATAC or if it's to do with women working together on a project, but it was certainly there for this one: Each individual understands what they are best able to bring to it and, perhaps more importantly, what they are willing to do - for what collective good is individual ability without the willingness to share it and benefit others? Just as important, they let the others on the committee get on and do 'their thing' - we each bring different strengths and recognising our own and those of others is something we seem to do well.

I do not have the connections Bernice has nor the chutzpah required to front the type of folk we need to approach for speakers and workshops. I love the wonderful rituals and interludes Anna Warlow creates; however I would not know where to start if I had to do the job Anna does. Beth Riolo and Pat O'Gorman bring a wonderful dimension with their expertise in technology that is also such a time, money and resource saver. While I'm reasonably IT literate if you'd been relying on me for the PowerPoint and working microphones we'd have been at the racecourse well into the next week.

As July drew ever nearer there came a time after a few meetings when one could have been excused for feeling trepidation as to how the multifarious threads would ever be woven into a fabric worthy of being called a 'conference'. I had similar feelings during the lead-up to the previous conference and soon understood that Bernice has things well in hand and in the end the weaving indeed produces a magnificent, rich fabric. I wondered if I had bitten off more than I could chew as the task of liaising with the staff at the venue was time-consuming and required much more time, skill and energy than I had anticipated and more than I would ever have guessed at had I not actually done the job. The staff at Canterbury Sydney Turf Club are all such professionals and a real pleasure to work with, particularly Chris Eagle. However I knew when I put my hand up that this is the type of thing I'm particularly good at so, whilst it brings many pressures, it wasn't exceptionally stressful. Overall it was an immensely gratifying and rewarding experience.

There is the robust discussion in committee meetings about workshops and presenters as together we shape and create the conference content and feel; discussion with book-sellers and other stall-holders; finding places to purchase 300 little boxes of lollies, pens and exercise books for all the Conference bags - then gathering to assemble them. Going to the conference venue to decide on seating and what spaces to book when registrations started going through the roof. I do not particularly enjoy shopping, though I do love to find just the right gift for people and I had a fabulous time shopping for a token of our appreciation for both the presenters as well

as the many people who helped bring the conference to its crescendo.

In the days before the conference it looked like I might be having Michael Morwood come to stay with me. Not an opportunity to pass up, though finding the time to clear out the spare room may have been near impossible so, when Bernice told me to not take it personally but Michael would prefer the solitude of a motel, there was certainly no offence taken and I could understand his thinking.

The big day dawned and I was on the go from the time I arrived until the time I got home (and then into the wee small hours). There were people arriving with luggage to be put some place, special dietary requirements that went astray, folk arriving late, workshop presenters needing a ride to the station, a quick dash with Bernice to Officeworks and Dick Smith to try to find I.T. equipment for Pat and Beth so Ann Gilroy's laptop could be hooked up to the data projector (at least I think that's what it was - I.T. equipment is not my forte!!!) On the Sunday afternoon Dom Furlong said to me, "You must have walked the length of this space 100 times this weekend Helen". I replied, "At least! But you know Dom, I am ever so grateful to be capable of doing it".

There are other things that happened which were completely unexpected and they added very much to my bounty for all the hard work.

The first day of the conference it became clear to me that Joan Chittister could do with some help - her allergies were playing up and she wasn't at her physical peak of fitness. As I arranged some of the things Joan needed we developed a rapport and come lunch time, between her writing in and signing books, I spent some time just sitting and talking with her about her week, like the time spent fishing at Rose Bay and round by the Opera House. I realised she enjoyed my humour and candour and by mid-afternoon Joan declared, "Honey - I'd like to take you on the road with me"!

On the Saturday evening I went into Glebe to collect Ann Gilroy, who had spent a few hours

catching up with Joan Chittister and ensuring their presentations complimented. I drove Ann to where she was staying with her congregation in North Sydney. We talked of life and the universe. We are both from large Catholic families though we experienced growing up in them quite differently. It seemed to me Ann's gentle and caring nature was undiminished by a very certain strength, commitment and courage in her convictions.

It had been a hectic and full first day. However as I made the drive across the harbour bridge from the north of the city to my home in the very south I felt blessed to be in a position to get to know these wonderful women a little better and in a more personal way. If I had not put my hand up to be on the conference committee that would never have happened.

The conference gave me the opportunity to share my gift for organisation, to meet new people and to briefly catch up with others. Whilst spending one-on-one time with Joan Chittister was gratifying, it was no less so to meet and spend time with Ann Gilroy. And it was just as gratifying to collaborate with and get to know better these truly wonderful women:

Bernice Moore, Margaret Keyes, Camille Paul and Joan Pavitt; Pam Williamson and Maureen Watterson; Anna Warlow, Pat O'Gorman and Beth Riolo as well as the rest of Anna's team particularly Jen Charadia who brought to the conference the glorious added dimension of live music; and of course Anne Lane whose job as mistress of ceremonies is probably the only other task I might consider taking on, though it would be a quite different experience - we all have individual personalities and strengths we bring to such public exposure.

It was a rewarding experience to work with people who are so good at what they were contributing and had such passion for what we were doing. The sum of our parts enabled us to weave the luxurious golden threads of our gifts into a whole that benefited the many who were swathed in the rich, warm cloak of:

Women Making the Vision Happen.

From Where I Stand

Joan Chittister, OSB

National Catholic Reporter, July 17 2008

The church world got a really good piece of advice this week. The pope, we're told, warned the Anglicans not to split over their internal controversies about homosexuality and the ordination of women bishops. He warned, quite wisely, about the dangers and the destructiveness of schism. As easy as it sounds to simply go away and play in your own ecclesiastical sandbox, the fact is that divisions are never neat – if for no other reason than that they not only fail to resolve the present problem but they model how not to resolve the next problem, too. After all, if we can fix one issue by simply leaving it, we can do the same with the next one – and there will be a next one – until what was intended to be a nice, clean division becomes one fracture after another, more a splintering and a slivering, than a surgically healing separation of unlike tissues.

Now if the Catholic church could only get to the same clear point about the question of “excommunication” and/or “interdict” – the process of splintering a church within a church, of putting people outside the pale of the sacraments, of separating ourselves from contentious questions one person, one diocese, at a time. While we're getting better at holding both ends against the middle at times – we managed to deal with the Feenyites and the Lefevbrites, for instance – we clearly have some serious problems about how to deal with individuals who dare to raise new questions in the midst of a shifting body politic. Like how to be personally moral in a pluralistic state if you're a politician or, worse, a candidate for political office, for instance. Like how to maintain past liturgical forms in the face of the development of more contemporary ones.

Nevertheless, more important than the question of excommunication is the unevenness with which it is applied. We excommunicate women who support the ordination of women, for instance, but we don't excommunicate either military officers or military chaplains who support the use of nuclear weapons. We excommunicate people who belong to groups of which we don't approve. In the past, for instance, YMCAs and YWCAs were forbidden to Catholics. In the present, in some places, it's membership in Call to Action. But we

didn't excommunicate bishops or priests who said nothing about Adolph Hitler in Germany or Augusto Pinochet in Chile, nor did the church excommunicate those who belonged to their organizations.

Now we are watching while Sister of Charity Louise Lears is denied the sacraments and the opportunity to minister in the archdiocese of St. Louis for her support of the role of women in the church, though women religious have always worked on behalf of the role of women in church and society when the rest of the world stood aghast at the thought of even educating women, let alone training them for independence. Yet, at the same time, executioners in prisons – who do their public work secretly! – will not be excommunicated for executing prisoners. Whatever we think of the essential morality of state executions, the number of errors we now know to be the norm in the public practice of capital punishment ought surely be enough to make the practice morally reprehensible.

We are, in other words, dangerously close to being more punitive of women who raise theological questions about women's role in the church than we are of any other facet of moral confusion or contention in society. And the situation is not a new one. In the 1600s, the church excommunicated Mary Ward for wanting to start a religious order of non-cloistered women. In our own era, in Indiana, they excommunicated M. Theodore Guerin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence, for starting new schools without the bishop's permission. She was canonized in 2006. In 1871, they excommunicated Mary MacKillop in Australia for trying to do the same and then beatified her in 1995. Church officials excommunicated Joan of Arc – and burned her at the stake – because she wouldn't agree to obey the church voices around her over the voice of God she heard in her heart. But they don't excommunicate pedophile priests who prey on children or military dictators who use genocide or ethnic cleansing as a political tool against others and massacre against their own. No, we just excommunicate those who question the practices of the church itself.

There will be a great deal written about Lears' situation, of course, – and it should be – while we

all try to sort out both the question and the so-called spiritual cure.

But the issue, not the system, is the issue. Instead of a difference of opinion about the role of women in religion, a subject that is at this moment of history a topic in every tradition, every religion, every part of the globe, we now have a full-blown ecclesiastical shoot-out. An "excommunication." A casting out even of those who do not break the canon laws on the subject but who do broach the forbidden discussion. What should be seen as part of the spiritual discipline of living in hope and faith and openness to the Holy Spirit in "the-already-but-not-yet" is labeled instead as infidelity.

Finding ourselves in a time of social turmoil when all the answers of the past are being brought into question has become for many a Galileo moment. Non-thinking, euphemistically called "obedience" in such situations, has become more important than the search for light in darkness. The last time such things happened we made it a mortal sin to go to the marriage of a loved one in a Protestant church. We turned a blind eye and deaf ear on wife-beating while forbidding divorce and remarriage. We declared slavery the will of God and made one human color the color of intelligence, ordination and the fullness of humanity. As a church, we forgot the Gospel on some issues and condemned whatever was the present brand of heretics.

But the scripture is there and won't go away. In the face of all that, Jesus tells us a parable: "Do you want us to go and pull up the weeds?" the laborers in the story ask the farmer about the bad seed "an enemy had sown." The answer, at a time of great change and deep reflection, ought perhaps to give us great pause: "No," the scripture answers, "because as you gather the weeds you might pull up some of the wheat along with them." We pulled up a lot of wheat with the excommunication of Martin Luther and the reformers, for instance, and have been trying to repair those exclusions ever since. Surely this is no time to start doing the same kind of thing again. Surely we have learned better by this time. Surely we don't want to do it to one nun whose only crime is a question and in whom the people see a minister of uncommon quality. Maybe we ought to "leave some chaff and grain to grow up together" for a while longer until we can see clearly which is which.

From where I stand, Pope Benedict XVI is dead right about urging the Anglicans to sit down together and work things out. He's right about calling us to remember that we're all in a time of new beginnings. He's surely right, history shows us, about making community a more demanding factor than law with all its cultural vagaries and historic changes. Now if we ourselves would only take the call to heart and sit down together and do the same. □



US conservative appointed head of Vatican's 'supreme court'

Robert Mickens in Rome
Rocco Palmo in Philadelphia

ARCHBISHOP RAYMOND L. BURKE, one of the United States' most conservative and controversial Catholic leaders, has been chosen by Pope Benedict XVI to head the Vatican's highest court, the Apostolic Signatura.

The appointment, announced on 27 June, means the 60-year-old canon lawyer and, up to now, Archbishop of St Louis, will eventually be made a cardinal. He is the first non-European and only the third non-Italian to ever head the Church's most important tribunal, which was established in the fifteenth century. He replaces Cardinal Agostino Vallini, 68, who was named Vicar of Rome on the same day.

In his new post Archbishop Burke will deal mainly with disputes over marriage annulments. But his office also deals with conflicts between Vatican offices and appeals against decisions by diocesan bishops or Roman Curia dicasteries.

Archbishop Burke is perhaps best known for insisting that Catholic political candidates who support legalised abortion, and those who vote for them, should be denied the Eucharist. It is a stance he held during nine years as bishop of his home diocese of La Crosse in Wisconsin, beginning in 1995, and one that has gained him even greater prominence in the last four and half years as archbishop in St Louis in

Missouri – especially during the 2004 presidential elections.

But the controversies have not been limited to the politics of abortion. Archbishop Burke has also been accused of failing to act following claims of sexual abuse by priests. And in 2005 he excommunicated the lay directors and priest of St Stanislaus Kostka Parish in St Louis for refusing to put their church fully under archdiocesan control. The parish had been operated as a lay corporation since 1891 when it was designated to care for Polish immigrants. Archbishop Burke also excommunicated three women last March who underwent "ordinations" inside archdiocesan boundaries.

Ordination of women

Congratulations on your leader ("Flight from women bishops", 5 July), which concluded with the observation that many Catholics wish the Church would ordain women. Let us have an honest debate about a burning issue, and let us no longer be silent because the Vatican has forbidden talk about it. Women in all ranks of ordained ministry would bring the sacraments to millions of people who at present cannot receive them, because our Church, which is a sacramental Church, rates the sex of the priest as more important than the availability of the sacraments. This is a travesty of tradition, which should live and develop, not atrophy at a certain point in history.

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12 July 2008 THE TABLET

Communion on the tongue becomes norm at papal Masses

POPE BENEDICT'S master of liturgical ceremonies, Mgr Guido Marini, has said it will become the norm for the Pope to distribute Communion on the tongues of those who kneel before him, writes Robert Mickens.

In an interview in the 26 June issue of the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, Mgr Marini said the Pope's decision underlines "the truth of the real presence in the Eucharist, helps the devotion of the faithful and introduces the sense of mystery more easily". He maintained that it would help people's devotion and better foster a sense of mystery. Current norms allow communicants to receive Communion in the hand while standing, but Mgr Marini pointed out that this is a concession or indult from universal law.

The first indication that Pope Benedict wanted to revert to the earlier practice came on

the Feast of Corpus Christi on 22 May outside the Basilica of St John Lateran, when ushers placed a kneeler in front of the altar and communicants knelt to receive Communion from the Pope on the tongue.

The same happened when he celebrated Mass at the southern port of Brindisi on 15 June.

However, Mgr Marini also stated that the Pope's preference for the traditional practice is not meant to "take anything away from the other" permissible form of standing or receiving the Eucharist in the hand.

In the same interview, the 42-year-old master of ceremonies defended Pope Benedict's return to wearing ornate pre-Vatican II vestments just three weeks after Cardinal Carlo Martini had accused some Church leaders of showing "vanity" in their choice of dress.

Mgr Marini said wearing the older vestments was intended to underline the "hermeneutic of continuity" with the past as the "exact criteria" for celebrating the liturgy. It was "not so much the antiquity or modernity" of the Pope's vestments that mattered, but their "beauty and dignity".

The Genovese priest defended the reintroduction of other discarded elements into the papal liturgies which have occurred since he took up his post last October; but he refused to call them pre-conciliar. "Terms such as 'pre-conciliar' and 'post-conciliar' that some people use seem to me to be part of an outdated language. And if they are used to indicate a discontinuation in the Church's progression, I think they are wrong and typical of ideological views that are very reductive," he said.

Group Reports

The Reports have a 'new look'. Instead of the leaders writing their reflections on recent meetings, it was suggested that group members be asked to consider two questions:

- ◆ What do you find helpful about our WATAC meetings?
- ◆ What do the Liturgies mean for you?

Here are some responses:

Broken Bay

Maree: We had another very well-attended meeting on Sunday, 27 July 27, with a lot of sharing, which is always the result of the positive dynamic that occurs with our group. The exchange of several topics started while we were finishing our delicious meal and one that continued, was the sexual/religious experiences a number of us had in our earlier life, our attitude to it and how we had handled them. The group was nurturing and supportive to a new member who is going through the 'letting go' of old beliefs and is experiencing the challenge and grief in confronting and accepting modern theology. At tennis today, it was interesting to hear, from my non-Catholic friends, their observations about the lack of female presence 'on stage' at the Papal Mass.

Suzanne: I thought the meeting was great but I went away with a feeling (just a little) that I talked too much ... I have a million questions!!! I am looking for a group where I can share my thoughts and feelings and spirituality ... and where there is some intimacy. I was part of a CLC group for 10 years and, although I don't want to go back to that, I do miss the intimacy the group shared as well as our relationship with God. Bernice had heaps of handouts which were great and she asked us what struck us in one particular handout. It would be good if each of us had a turn to respond. I think we need to be quiet in this part, with no interruptions from anyone, including me! So maybe the lighting of the candle means we are moving to a more quieter place where we are more thoughtful and reflective and listening to each person.

Wagga Wagga

Audrey: In spite of the fact that the last meeting was small for various reasons (cold weather, viral infections and perhaps even a 'church-fatigue' following WYD??) it was lively and informed as usual, ranging over a broad spectrum of topics. We continued reading Joan Chittister's book -

this time the chapter entitled 'Sanctuary' - which reassured us that all is not wholly lost for women in the Catholic Church. Joan's intelligence and insights continue to resonate with us and we rejoice in this sane and compassionate women's voice telling it how it is. We also looked at a video of the recent ABC Compass program dealing with the 'problems' of the priesthood - i.e. the paucity of priests, the need for an objective look at the structure and relevance of the priesthood in today's world, and the question of married clergy and female priests. While we agreed that the program did not tell us anything new, we agreed that it was good to find the questions being aired in the public domain.

Parramatta

Peggy Adamson: Our monthly meeting is on a Monday evening, and it is always good to gather and renew contact with this group of women. There were seven at our August gathering. We have been reading *Roots and Wings* by Margaret Silf, described as 'The human journey from a speck of stardust to a spark of God'. Earlier chapters have reflected on our present scientific understanding of cosmology and evolution, so different from biblical cosmology and the story of Adam and Eve. What difference does this modern scientific understanding make to our spiritual journey? The focus of our reading this month was the coming of Jesus. Did he come as a saviour to rescue us from our banishment from Eden, or can we see him as a model who will lead us forward into all that we, and humanity, might become? Can we understand the historical time of his arrival as the time when the human race had awakened enough, spiritually, to respond to him? The arrival of God with us is compared to the arrival of daffodils in spring-time, the bulbs always there, the flowering when the time is right. Many challenging questions, many insights. As well as talking, our gatherings always include music and movement, and end with cups of tea and more talk.

Milton/Ulladulla

Margaret: Here are some thoughts after our gathering yesterday at Val William's home. Even if we were a smaller group than sometimes, I felt we were at one discussing the issues that came up from the chapter on *From Sand to Solid Ground*. May Bishop Robinson, Michael Morewood and all those committed Christians, whether they darken church doors or not, continue to have the wisdom, courage, will and strength to continue to expose the corruption of power and greed of money, and sexism, not only in Churches of all Denominations, but in Politics and Business as well. Surely Celibacy – that is demanded for Priests in the Roman Catholic Church, but obviously not followed – has much to answer for in the hurt and harm caused to innocent young lives.

Anna: Our WATAC day was held on Saturday 23 August. We welcomed Janet Cain and Kaye Hodge who made the pilgrimage south to be with us and swell the numbers. Our topic for the day was Chapter 8 of Michael Morwood's book *From Sand to Solid Ground*. There's no doubt his book certainly keeps us all hopping. The discussion and ideas that came up were stimulating to say the least! We also had a long discussion about the WATAC letter-writing campaign to the Bishops regarding Bishop Robinson's book. Several bishops have replied, some favourably but many not so favourably. These letters were shared around for the group to read and also caused much comment from all who attended. We also talked for some time about the reports on Radio National's Religion Report regarding St Mary's Parish in South Brisbane and it was suggested we write to their priest and people as a way of support in the crisis they are facing.

Penshurst

Betty: I like the discussion. We talk about issues that matter and the atmosphere is one of freedom I love the fun and the jokes we share. I love our Liturgies. They are personal and moving. I don't feel outside. I am a woman and I am included. We women can feel good about ourselves.

Alice: It gives me hope for a future, better church. The Liturgies are a reminder of what I loved about the church. They call me to a place of prayer and inspire me on life's journey.

Pam: I like the conversations with like-minded women. We all share the same catholic cultural heritage. We find hope even though with the church there can be a lot to be despondent about. I love our Liturgies. There are always beautiful, meaningful prayers that everyday people can understand and relate to.

Marisse: I find the discussion, information sharing and different perspectives very interesting. I like learning about the faith, the place of women in the church, and broadening my awareness. Our Liturgies are just beautiful. The intimate sharing makes it all so special.

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 dcffc@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 dates for the rest of the year are 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 last dates for 2008 are 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@primus.com.au or Mary Medley mbmedley@bigpond.net.au 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

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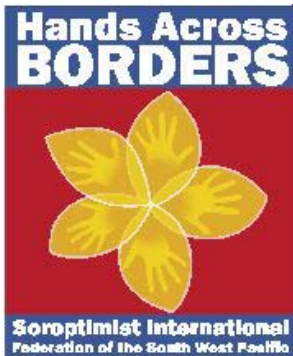
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