

WATAC NEWS



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WATAC Conference – FUTURING NOW

By this time you will have received your Conference brochure in the mail – if you didn't or if you want further copies please ring me (Bernice 02.9534.8527) and I will send them straight away. The brochure contains all the essential information about the Conference but there are a few interesting additions to bring you up-to-date.

Rachael Kohn – the presenter of “The Spirit of Things” – has also agreed to be part of a Panel Session. However, she may be out of the country in May, so we are listing her as a “maybe” just now. We are hopeful!!

This year marks four hundred years since Mary Ward founded the wonderful Loreto Sisters, some of whom you will know because they have a long-term connection with WATAC, as well as being educators in their many schools around Australia. The significance of this anniversary of Mary Ward is that she was a pioneer in terms of the education of women for which she was, under Pope Urban VIII in 1631, branded as “a heretic, schismatic and rebel to Holy Church”. Her main “sin” was to gather together women to live a consecrated life without living in enclosure; she also believed that women could “do great things”. In light of all this, we are planning to have a Loreto Sister on one of the Panel Sessions to speak briefly about the challenge Mary Ward offers our Church NOW – four hundred years later!

It has been a great blessing for us to have been able to get Sr. Elizabeth Julian to speak at this Conference. Elizabeth Julian is a Mercy Sister from New Zealand and we tried to get her for our 2007 Conference, but she was unable to come then. Famously, Elizabeth Julian addressed a meeting of

the New Zealand Bishops and Congregational Leaders in 2006. Part of her closing words were:

“I invite, I encourage, I urge, I challenge you, our bishops, to take a stand together regarding the place of women in our Church – stand on the edge for the sake of the reign of God, for the sake of the gospel. I believe that if change is to come it will come from the margins, from the edge.....”

Quite spine-tingling words, I think.

The DVD that Phil Glendenning will talk about, *A Well Founded Fear*, is available on weekly loan from Alma Madden, 83 Caldarra Ave., Engadine Phone: 02.9520 8684. Just phone her and she will send it. It would be great if you have seen it before the Conference.

The other important thing that it would be good to do before the Conference would be to read Bishop Geoffrey Robinson's book, *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church – Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*. Published in Australia by John Garratt Publishing, 32 Glenvale Crescent, Mulgrave. Vic. 3170. It is also available at the Pauline Books & Media Shop, 150 Castlereagh St. Sydney Ph: 02.9264.8630.

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In the Introduction to his book, Bishop Geoffrey writes, "Through the story of sexual abuse and the church's response, I came to the unshakeable belief that within the Catholic Church there absolutely must be profound and enduring change. In particular, there must be change on the two subjects of power and sex."

In 1994 Bishop Geoffrey was elected by the Australian Bishops to the National Committee for Professional Standards whose job was to coordinate

the response of the Catholic Church in Australia to revelations of sexual abuse. He was co-chair of the committee from 1997-2003.

In his book Bishop Geoffrey critiques the church's use and misuse of power. He goes back to the Bible and to Jesus' teaching and most importantly of all he writes of a possible future church which includes all people. "A Church that wants to see in its members the responsibility appropriate to adults rather than the obedience appropriate to children."

Our sincere thanks to Graham English for permission to reproduce his cartoons. Originally published in *Women-Church* journal in 1987/88, they are still relevant to our times!

Bishop Robinson's Book

If you haven't yet read Bishop Robinson's book, it would be very worthwhile to at least get a feel for the issues he addresses in it before the WATAC Conference in May. As he says in the Introduction, this book is "not directly about abuse but about the better church these revelations absolutely demand". He then goes on to explore some unhealthy ideas concerning Power and Sexuality because, as he writes, "all sexual abuse is first and foremost an abuse of power".

There are fourteen Chapters in this very informative and incisive book and at the end of each of them there is a wonderful meditation on the contents of that Chapter. Reflective reading of these meditations is greatly enriching. The final meditation is about the life and message of Jesus' life. Bishop Geoffrey has used the metaphor of music to capture Jesus' message:

The most fundamental change of heart and mind required of us is that of a constant return to the Great Tradition, the person and story of Jesus Christ and the song that he sang.

For in everything he did and in everything he said, Jesus Christ sang a song. Sometimes, when he cured a sick person, he sang softly and gently, a song full of love. Sometimes, when he told one of his beautiful stories, he sang a haunting melody, the kind of melody that once heard, is never forgotten, the kind of melody you hum throughout the day without even knowing that you are doing it. Sometimes, when he defended the rights of the poor, his voice grew strong and powerful, until finally, from the cross, he sang so powerfully that his voice filled the universe.

The disciples who heard him thought that this was the most beautiful song they had ever heard, and they began to sing it to others. They didn't sing it as well as Jesus had - they forgot some of the words, their voices sometimes went flat - but they sang to the best of their ability, and the people who heard

them thought in their turn that this was the most beautiful song they had ever heard.

And so the song of Jesus gradually spread out from Jerusalem to other lands. Parents sang it to their children and it began to be passed down through the generations and through the centuries.

Sometimes, in the lives of great saints, the song was sung with exquisite beauty. At other times and by other people it was sung very badly indeed, for the song was so beautiful that there was power in possessing it, and people used the power of the song to march to war and to oppress and dominate others. Despite this, the song was always greater than the singers and its ancient beauty could never be destroyed.

And so the song continued through the centuries, sung in many languages and forms, argued about, fought over, treated as a possession, distorted, covered by many layers of human accretions, but always captivating people by its sheer simplicity and aching beauty.

At last the song came down to us and, like so many people before us, we too were captured by the song, and wanted to sing it with our whole being. The song must not stop with us, and we in our turn must hand on its beauty to those who come after us. We must always remember that this song has two special characteristics.

The first is that we, too, sing it badly, but if we sing it to the best of our ability, people do not hear only our voices. Behind us and through us they hear a stronger and surer voice, the voice of Jesus.

The second is that we always sing it better when we learn to sing it together - not one voice here, another there, each singing different words to different melodies, but all singing the one song in harmony, for it is still the most beautiful song the world has ever known.

Compared to this song, there is little else that is of great importance. In the atmosphere created by this song abuse cannot flourish.

WATAC Remembers Pam Williamson

21/2/1956 to 9/12/2008

I realise that some WATAC members may not have had the privilege of knowing Pam Williamson personally but you will all be aware that it was she who agreed to take up the challenge of the leadership of WATAC several years ago.

Pam was a woman of vision, energy and enthusiasm. Her passion for WATAC was quite contagious. She was great to work with; fun was always on the agenda and creative "sky's the limit" thinking was the norm!! Pam was a great gift to WATAC and we are deeply saddened by her death.

Colin, Pam's husband, has agreed to let us include his inspiring eulogy spoken at Pam's funeral which was a truly amazing celebration of her beautiful life.

It was just as our last Newsletter for 2008 was ready to go to the printer that Pam died on 9th December. We invited all of you who knew Pam to write some of your memories so that we could, in some small way, celebrate her life in this our first Newsletter for 2009. Thank you to all who have contributed your reflections on the gift this wonderful woman has been to all of us. And everyone please enjoy this mosaic we have put together.....

Let's begin with this beautiful poem by Amelia Josephine Burr – it could have been written for Pam:

A Song of Living

Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die
I have sent up my gladness on wings, to be lost in the blue of the sky
I have run and leaped with the rain, I have taken the wind to my breast
My cheek like a drowsy child to the face of the earth I have pressed
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

I have kissed young Love on the lips, I have heard this song to the end
I have struck my hand like a seal in the loyal hand of a friend
I have known the peace of heaven, the comfort of work done well
I have longed for death in the darkness and risen alive out of hell
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

I give a share of my soul to the world where my course is run
I know that another shall finish the task I must leave undone
I know that no flower, nor flint was in vain on the path I trod
As one looks on a face through a window,
through life I have looked on God,
Because I have loved life, I shall have no sorrow to die.

and this was written by Pam in 2000:

You arrive like snow in the desert,
Like poetry to transform my world.
You change my water into wine.
You are milk and honey upon my tongue.
You are passion and compassion,
Life and love.
You are my labyrinth:
I lose myself in you.

contributed by Colin

Pam - a Bright Star in the Sky

I have known Pam for over 20 years. First as a teacher in the schools my children attended, and then as a dear friend who was a power of strength to me when my husband died. It was Pam who helped prepare the liturgy and made it personal for my children and myself, by including Ron's great love of poetry. But most of all I remember her great sense of humour. Her ability to laugh at herself and how she just went straight to the core of issues. I spent time with her during her illness and marveled at her determination and courage. I will never forget her. She is a bright star in the sky.

Elizabeth Willows

We laughed!

When Helen asked me at Pam's funeral to write something for the next edition of WATAC news, I thought it would be easy. Pam and I have been friends for more than 30 years, when I first met her teaching at St. John Bosco Primary School in Engadine. We kept in touch when she went to Adelaide and Rome (pity there was no Internet then, but I have kept some of her very entertaining epistles, not for publication). Then she returned to Engadine and we both taught at Bosco High. We did a Counselling course together, not only driving across the city every Thursday night for years but also to residential weekends....it was when I came to this part of our shared history that I hit on a common theme. WE LAUGHED!!!!



Over the years we shared most aspects of our lives – hopes, problems, pain, joy, worry, illness, death, career concerns, the future – as you do with a close friend, but no matter how grim the topic was, somehow being with Pam was a joyous experience.

Even if it was through tears, we laughed.

On the October 24th 2007 we went on our last 'Thelma and Louise' road trip to visit Rosemary, Pam's sister, who lives in Melbourne and was recovering from an accident on her motorcycle (oh those Williamson girls). Pam had her last chemo on October 9th and had a bit of a cold but we set off on our adventure. Thanks Colin. We did 'let's remember'....a trip to Central Australia and Darwin with Year 9 students...some of the memorable characters we'd worked with....an unfortunate episode with one of her wigs...people in our Counselling course...oh, how we laughed.

We stayed in a nice motel in South Melbourne. Visualise Pammy sitting up in bed, doing a crossword (difficult when you have a spelling problem), wearing a cute little blue beanie with a tail on it to keep her head warm. She said, 'Astrid calls me sperm head when I wear this'. Memories of sex education videos at Bosco. Of course we laughed.

Shopping at South Melbourne Markets (shoes, shoes, and some more shoes), presenting trophies to one of Rosemary's basketball teams, being tourists, playing silly games at Rosemary's. Great fun, great memories.

On the way home, some parachutists nearly fell on us just out of Sydney. Pam concocted an elaborate story entailing spies, wigs and secret agents. We were still laughing when we got to Bexley.

This is how I want to remember my friend – not with sorrow, but with joy and gratitude that I have had the privilege to know her and love her.



Barb Minogue

Too Brief a Journey

It was with great sadness and shock that I learned of Pam's death when I had just come home from hospital.

When the fairly recent changes occurred with WATAC, it was with the usual apprehension which accompanies change that I accepted the differences. I quickly realised what wonderful people we were blessed with and Pam emerged very quickly, as the insightful, committed-to-gospel-values woman that I came to know all too briefly.

When a life ends far before it's natural term, and we are left wondering, I believe we can honour it best by living the riches we shared and treasuring the all-too-brief time we were privileged to journey together.

Our pain and loss is overshadowed by what her family must be experiencing ... my heart goes out to them.

Maree Lyndon

Remembering the Good Times

I feel sad writing about PAM. It's hard to believe I can no longer pick up the telephone and know that I can have a chat about the good and not-so-good things happening in our lives and where we can go for lunch or for a cup of coffee.

I first met Pam about 25 years ago when she was teaching at Bosco College. I worked in the office and we had many laughs and discussions about life in general and I was always overawed by her caring nature for her students. She was a much admired and talented teacher. Our friendship continued after she had a change of lifestyle and together with my husband, Don, we had many great meals together. I have to laugh remembering the good times with Pam. They all seemed to revolve around food, wine and quite a few cups of coffee. We had so many good discussions together about teaching, and the Church today. Pam has left an empty but treasured place in my heart.

Kay Humphrey

My Friend Pam

Pam and I met through WATAC about 17 years ago. At the time I had two boys under two, one a chronic asthmatic. Pam used to often call in to see me and at first I was embarrassed about the toys, piles of washing and other associated 'mess' which comes with two active littlies. Pam immediately made me feel at ease. She simply chatted to me as she folded nappies or bathed or fed one of the boys. I had never met a nun who was so "down to earth". She even swore sometimes! She accepted me as I was and I often wondered why someone as amazing as Pam would take the time to be my friend.

The boys loved Pam. She was the clown at Brendan's fourth birthday party. She captivated the hearts of all the gathered preschoolers for two hours with her innate sense of humour and amazing gift of being able to connect with young people of all ages. Pam always arrived at Christmas time bearing gifts for the boys. Their favourite was "the world's largest bon-bon" when she filled long cardboard cylinders with lollies and treats and decorated them as huge bon-bons.

Pam was a true friend. Together we journeyed through many ups and downs in both our lives. She was always there to share the tears as well as the laughter.

I have learned so much from Pam. She has taught me to be true to myself, to have confidence in my own ability and to laugh at myself. She was a woman of great depth and wisdom. Her courage, as she faced many adversities, was inspirational. Right to the end Pam continued to give so much of herself.

To me Pam was a shining example of my favourite biblical passage "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full". Although her life was cut short, she lived and loved fully. I will miss my dear friend Pam every day, but will try to honour her memory by doing all I can to embody the things in Pam that I loved most - her courage, wisdom, honesty, compassion and sense of humour.

Thank you Pam for the gift of you in my life.

Maree Kennedy

Pam - An Inspiration and a Lover of Life

My early memories of Pam are as a high-school girl playing netball, with our eldest daughter in the team which I managed, then as a young be-habited sister, teaching my son and later my daughter at Bosco High school. Pam had such a wonderful way with young people. They loved and respected her, as she did them. I recall the hard work she put into establishing "Youth Matters" in Engadine and the dedication she gave to her work there.

I also recall Pam as a picture of happiness the day she and Colin were married and she joyfully took on the responsibility of a ready-made family. It was a delight to visit their home, the venue of many WATAC Inc. meetings.

Pam was such an inspiration to me: her dedication

to WATAC and to what she believed in; the strength she showed throughout her illness; above all her love of life, of sharing a wine and a joke and living every day to the fullest. We are all very fortunate people to have known her.



St John Bosco Netball Team 1971 - Pam second from right

Maureen Watterson

A Role Model for Young and 'Oldies'

My memories of Pam go back to the early 80's when Bob and I were coerced to become the Parent couple for our Parish Antioch group. We were asked to bring 10 young people from our parish to an Antioch weekend in Engadine and it was there we met Pam. We marvelled at her rapport with the young people, her openness and her enthusiasm, and it was very obvious the youth loved her.

The years intervened and I ran into Pam various times at WATAC functions in recent years, the last standing out clearly when I met her at the Parliament House Luncheon a couple of years ago and I jokingly remarked that "she was fading away to a shadow". Pam took me aside and told me about her diagnosis and I could have crawled through the floor, I had no idea she had been ill. After that meeting I wrote to her to apologise about my thoughtless remarks and received a beautiful card from her saying she was "fighting it all the way" and thanking me for my concern and prayers for her. Bob and I will never forget Pam. She was a wonderful role model not only for the young people but also for us "oldies". We will never forget her and firmly believe that her spirit will always remain with us.

Anna Flynn

The Precious Gift of Pam

I first met Pam round 1997. However I didn't start to get to know her better until I was working toward the last WATAC conference and then doing the admin work for WATAC. These last couple of years it has been such a pleasure and privilege to get to know Pam better. Despite mostly doing my work for WATAC alone from home Pam truly was a colleague. We shared a similar capacity to see the funny side in often very grim circumstances, had a great rapport and an understanding of each other that allowed for an unflinching honesty I find rare and refreshing.

As Pam got sicker she would often send me text messages with an update to pass onto Bernice and, as we engaged in ongoing s.m.s exchanges, I was quite astounded to find this type of communication could result in profound, philosophical conversations about life, death and the universe.

One day in July last year I called in to see Pam after visiting another friend at the same hospital. I quietly entered her room to find her asleep. She looked every bit as ill as she was; I stood for a moment and soundlessly wept. I was about to leave when Pam woke and said, "Stay". We talked for a short while, her face livened a little but I knew this was the 'life' Pam was always filled with and at this particular moment it was actually the illness that dominated. I didn't want to tire her and made to leave but again she said, "Stay" so I stayed and sat in the silence with her. Just the two of us, in the quiet, for quite some time – it was a precious moment for me and I treasure it.

I long ago stopped looking for rhyme or reason in the face of such circumstance as Pam, Colin, Saskia, Peter and Astrid found themselves. When I first heard about Pam's cancer diagnosis I wrote her a short note and included some of the following John Shelby Spong quote. I have yet to come up with words of my own to comprehend God when faced with the tragedy of life events such as Pam's illness. I suspect there are few who accomplish the paradox of 'standing in our finitude while participating in infinity' though I think perhaps Pam was amongst them.

God is not victory...

God is the presence of transcendent meaning in the midst of human defeat.

God is not eternal life.

God is the presence of an indestructible meaning in the face of very real death.

God is not the promise of infinite reward.

God is the meaning that is present in the face of fate, tragedy and undeserved pain.

Our ultimate goal is not objectivity, certainty, or rational truth.

It is rather life, wholeness, heightened consciousness and an expanded sense of transcendence.

Our goal is to escape limits, to transcend barriers, to stand in our finitude while participating in infinity.

"Resurrection myth or reality?" (Bishop John Shelby Spong)

Helen Coles

Long Time Memories

I knew Pam for a long time. Her family and ours were early parishioners in Engadine over 50 years ago. She was in the same class as one of our sons. Pam didn't like school and would take herself home which was close to the school and her mum would bring her back. You always knew when Pam was around, she was a dynamo, an enthusiastic active member of the Parish and those who knew her were very happy when she married Colin.

Alma Madden

I Couldn't Say "No" to Pam

I first met Pam when my son (now 30) was in high school at St John Bosco. He used to say: "Sr. Pam is the best teacher I've ever had!" I didn't really get to know Pam till one day she rang me and asked me would I consider joining the Youth Matters fund-raising committee. Pam was the first coordinator of Youth Matters, a youth centre set up by the Engadine Parish Council of which Pam was a member. She fought long and hard for that youth centre. I couldn't say "no" to Pam – she was so passionate about helping young people and her enthusiasm rubbed off. She used to say that there was no child that couldn't be helped, and she helped many. I was a part of that committee for some years and it was a pleasure working with Pam; it was hard work but Pam always made sure we had lots of fun. We organised trivia nights, car boot sales, etc. The money raised helped Pam to do some wonderful things for those kids.

I joined Engadine WATAC and in those times the group met in the convent and a few of the Salesian nuns joined us. Pam was a dynamic member of the group. A great friend. Miss you Pam.

Marg Keyes

A Passionate, Intelligent and Courageous Woman

Pam was an intelligent, passionate, "hands-on" person and over the last few years WATAC was much enriched by her commitment. I loved working with Pam. She was highly organised, great fun and a lovely friend. She was a creative thinker and never afraid to look for new solutions to problems old and new. An hour together found us planning confidently into the future with an "everything is possible" courage and "never turning back" vision. Life will never be the same without Pam, but it would not have been half so good had our paths not crossed.

Pam, you will live on in our hearts, in our minds and in WATAC always.

Bernice

St Dominic's Cat

Legend has it that in about the year 1173 Jane of Azra dreamed that with the birth of her baby, a dog would leap from her womb and travel the whole world carrying the torch of the Gospel message.

I know this because almost ten years ago in 2000 this story was told to Pam and me as we were initiated – or perhaps indoctrinated – into the Dominican charism. Logically it follows that St Dominic is often depicted with a dog holding a torch in its mouth sitting at his feet.

I remember the story because the next day Pam arrived at work with a gift. It was a simple offering – a small cat, super-glued to a box of matches, proclaiming the title: *St Dominic's Cat!* You could always rely on Pam's refined sense of the ridiculous! She broke the rules. She had the wisdom to discern which rules could be broken and which rules were absolutes – and she loved to find reasons to tear down the latter.

You try to find words to capture a relationship, a vibrant energetic life; the words serve only to limit the reality. How can words possibly fill a page with laughter or with prayer or explain an office space where the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour hung next to a magnetic Barbie? Pam's world was expansive enough to include both. How do you capture and hold onto countless challenges and the free spirit of a heart that always longed for truth. How do you match the countless situations where Pam had cause to mutter under her breath; "And Jesus wept!" against the times when her eyes welled up with tears at the joy of being loved by an inclusive and always surprising God? Pam knew how to celebrate that reality.

I have thought about writing this for a long time. I trawled the old emails, cards and letters I have from Pam hoping that some sentence would leap off the page to capture all she was. There are so many expletives, I would need to edit with the wrath of a puritanical censor. She used bad words – a lot! I find instead something I wrote to her in that first year of our friendship:

I never knew you in an earlier lifetime and in many ways that's like talking to me about a different person. I just know Pam Williamson in 2000 and I stand in awe of your intelligence, your creativity and your ability to articulate your passion for finding some sort of authentic response to God, to honouring people's stories and to seeking truth and justice. Every day I have the privilege of watching a confident and articulate professional woman try to make sense of a complex world where the rhetoric frequently falls far short of the reality. You bring to each day the many experiences that have formed you and made you who you are. With you that's about being genuine and honest about who you are and what has brought you to this point in the journey.

I don't know ultimately where our journeys will take either or us but I suspect that in ten years time – when neither one of us will be in the same place – that I will look back on this year and the moments where I have learned and grown. The thing that I am certain I will carry with me, that essence of truth which will have made a lasting difference in my life will be that for a while I had that rare professional opportunity to work with someone who I respect and admire, someone who expanded my horizons and someone who continued to embrace the unfolding mystery of her own growth.

It seems that ten years on there is little left to add! Except that I had lunch in January with an ex-student, She spent a considerable amount of time assuring me that she wasn't a spiritual person. And then she talked about Pam and the difference Pam had made to her life and her worldview. She used words and phrases like justice, inclusion, passion for life, faith, God-search, finding another way, finding a better way, making a difference, finding a purpose and being herself. She asked questions about faith, integrity, wisdom, intelligence and creativity. She laughed while she talked as she remembered moments, stories and conversations. The joy of having known Pam welled up in her and spilled over both of us. I'm so glad that this particular young woman doesn't consider herself a spiritual person and chose to share that reality with me. Pam would have enjoyed the conversation so much. I am certain that she was there with both of us.

When I recall that lunch I am reminded of the wisdom of Timothy Radcliffe O.P. who so aptly describes how Pam lived. "The teacher is not there to fill the pupils' heads with facts, but to strengthen them in their deep human inclination towards the truth and to accompany them in their search." It's not surprising that his writing spoke to Pam's heart.

Tomorrow I'll be back at my desk at work. At some stage I suppose I will glance up to the shelf above my desk. Dominic's cat sits there watching me – a reminder that I have to consider again what rules I might choose to break.

Sharon Brien

PAM - my sister for 52 Years 9 Months and 18 Days

Did you know Pam was the 5th born of 7 to Marie and Percy Williamson - 3 boys 4 girls?

Did you know Pam was 11 when her mum died at age 46?

Did you know that, since mum died, we have interchanged the roles of mother, sister, daughter and friend to each other throughout our lives?

Did you know death is no stranger to our family?

Did you know Pam had been an orphan since 1997 when her dad died?

Did you know the youngest in our family (Fiona) has buried her mother, father, brother, son and now sister ... all before her 50th birthday?

Did you know that it is Pam's 53rd Birthday as I write this?

Did you know that I am crying on the inside and outside?

Did you know that many lives are richer because of her giving?

Did you know that we affectionately call Pam "Pammy Poo Face" - don't know why but we did?

Did you know that secretly we also called her "Snappy Tom" - due to her sometimes quick and sharp retorts - ?

Did you know that Pam's vocation to 'formalised' Religious Life as a Salesian Sister (Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) spanned over 20 years?

Did you know Sister Christina Swan FMA was a constant mentor in Pam's life since she was 6?

Did you know that Sister Christina, aged 93, wanted Pam to be the one to deliver her eulogy?

Did you know that we all embraced Pam's choice in Colin?

Did you know Pam had a stepmother at age 18 and became the world's greatest "stepmom" herself?

Did you know that Pam's family moved to Engadine in 1956?

Did you know that Pam had a strong affiliation with St John Bosco Parish Engadine - Primary Schooling, 1st Confession, 1st Communion, Confirmation, Netball Player, CYO Member, Sodality Member, 12 Star Club Leader, taught at the Primary and Secondary Schools, Final Profession as a Religious Sister, Head Honcho of Youth Matters, and the grand finale -the celebration of her life 13th December 2008?

Did you know that I write this on behalf of my sisters Kathryn and Fiona?

Did you know that there are things we don't want to happen but have to accept and people we can't live without but have to let go?

Did you know that Pam would not fancy all the accolades that have been expressed **BUT** would be mindful that what is done for the dead is really for the living to assist them in their grieving?

Did you know 'life has a beat - we can't change its rhythm'?

Did you know we loved her so?

The Williamson girls
Rosemary, Kathryn, Fiona



A memory of Pam

It was an incredibly hot and humid Sydney afternoon – so it was probably February. It was the WATAC meeting in a stifling class room at St Scholastica’s to hear the results of the survey which many of us completed several weeks before. The woman making the presentation was good- looking, elegant and articulate. I also found her very annoying. It seemed to me that she was interpreting the survey results from the half-empty rather than half-full perspective. The response of members was incredibly high for survey research and answers were positive on WATAC products like the *Newsletter* and the conferences. Yet the annoying woman made two undeniable facts from the findings - our lack of enthusiasm for running with new initiatives and our advanced ages. I found out over tea that this challenging woman was Pam Williamson.

I am sure that Pam galvanized into action hundreds of people – students, colleagues, family, friends as well as many WATAC members. I went home from the survey results meeting feeling that I could show her that there is a kick still in this old WATACer. So Pam was the catalyst for beginning of the Eastern Suburbs Group.. She was also a continuing joy to observe in her contributions to the Interfaith meetings with the high school classes at Parliament House and in meetings generally. It was a privilege to be included in the warmth and humour of her friendship.

Pam was at once a woman of much style and much substance. Her memory will continue to inspire WATAC in all its works.

Carmel Maguire

Wasteful Loving

We are called to be risk takers.
Not for us the safety and security of the
acceptable
The tried and tested.
Not for us the careful, measured dripping of love
and passion,
But a reckless spilling of empathy,
Breaking our complacency and inspiring us to
give our all.

We will know that we must risk
To spill our love wastefully,
Freeing it to cascade into the hidden crevices
Of lost hope and despair,
Finding its own level to work its healing balm.
It will be costly and sometimes our hearts will be
broken, our dreams will be smashed.

People will question our sense of direction,
Challenge our motives
And test our confidence in things that cannot be
quantified.

The words of censure will be there;
What a waste,
What a waste of time, resources, money and
energy.

They will call us impetuous, emotional, silly over-
extravagant
And tell us there are more deserving causes,
More important things to get fired up about.

We are called to be risk takers
For today and for the future
To waft the aroma of sweet memory,
Flowering in new areas of need.
One cannot happen without the other.
In the memory is a dying,
giving way to new visions hitherto undreamed of.

We are risk takers for the future.
Not always comfortable,
But then, why should we expect to be?

We will have done what we could,
Risky for the sake of love
And the fragrance of the actions will never be
lost,
Even if in the eyes of the world it has been
wasted.

Stella Bristow: "Sensing God"

Colin's Eulogy to Pam

Pam and I met relatively late in her life. We had both been through some tough times and were ready for a new page to be turned in our lives. Somehow we would end up on that page together. What clinched it for me were all the strange coincidences ...



Not only had we gone to the schools next door to each other in Sutherland but we were actually in the same year, we knew many of the same people but had never actually met. Pam had also come to the school I was working at several times but still we had not actually met. Destiny finally won through and despite some early resistance on Pam's part and persistence on mine we ended up as a couple. We weren't all that young so we thought we'd better just fast track the courtship phase and marry. She was game to take on the full package deal of an undisciplined man and three teenagers. She took a big risk.

So the Von Trapp family finally had its Maria. The children trembled in fear every time Pam opened or closed the curtains in case they ended up wearing them. It wasn't, however, a movie or a fairy tale. Pam had to learn and adapt. Teaching kids doesn't give you all the skills you need to actually share a home with them. Pam didn't give up. She learned to bend a little and we learned to bend a lot. She always referred to Saskia, Peter and Astrid as "our" kids. She took them on as hers.

During our time together I was constantly amazed at the number of friends she had. I suppose they saw some of what I saw in her. A person so full of life, so full of spirit, so funny you just wanted to be with her as much as you could. She was life-giving in her relationships.

For me she was a constant positive. She "raised me up" through her spirit. She had this unswerving confidence in me that it has taken me a long time to live up to. The fact that I am here doing this is testament to her belief that I could do pretty much anything. I'm sure that this feeling of being lifted up will ring true for all of Pam's friends. Her confidence was empowering.

Pam loved her family, her sisters in particular. It was a bond forged through adversity. They are a formidable bunch not to be messed with. When those girls got together the laughter would flow as easily as the wine. *Rock my soul in the bosom of Abraham*, complete with actions, was sung with enthusiasm if not skill. Life was on display in all its musical glory. Her sisters made room in their hearts and homes for me and our children. Their generosity has been and is boundless.

Pam was an educator, not just a teacher. She would not give up on kids. She knew about nurturing and mentoring and she knew the value of the persuasive stick. Last July Pam received a letter from a young man whom Pam had taken on as a project a couple of years earlier. He could barely read when he arrived in Year 7. I'm sure he won't mind if I quote some of it: '...if it wasn't for you Ms Williamson, I wouldn't be where I am now. I believe that you were the only one to push me. You were on my back all the time. I had never really pushed myself to read before. I'm at TAFE doing plumbing and have even topped the class in some of my tests. I know that school wasn't the same after you left, so hurry up and get better soon as there are other kids out there who need your help.....'

Another young man contacted me this week. I will quote a little from his email: 'Pam changed my life in a way that it's hard to put into words. It was because of Pam that I am who I am today. When Pam ran Youth Matters I looked up to her and even idolised her. I remember saying that one day I wanted to be just like Pam.'

I'm sure there are hundreds if not thousands more stories just like these of Pam's inspirational and life-changing influence on young people.

Pam was passionate about teaching and learning, about meeting kids where they were and taking them forward. She could see the potential in all kids and she never gave up on them. She never applied bandaids but gave kids skills to solve their own problems. She put in 100% to everything she did: lessons, mentoring other teachers, liturgies, nurturing leadership in kids, Friday drinks. She wanted everything that she had anything to do with to be the best that it could be. All this has a touch of delicious irony about it considering that she was so naughty at school. She always had a bit of a soft spot for the naughty ones as a result.

Pam was passionate about her faith and her church. She was a deeply spiritual person not content to be passive. Hers was a spirituality of life, of action, of justice. Pam's involvement with WATAC, especially over the last couple of years, gave her meaning and focus once she could not give teaching the energy that she felt it deserved.

Her trip to Cambodia with Caritas was also something that increased her passion for justice, as well as increasing her ever-widening circle of friends. Her passion for social justice was infectious. She could communicate the message to kids. She was always preparing for the time when she would not be there. She was training up the next generation of advocates for the poor and the marginalised in our world.

During these last weeks and months, the family and friends have come forward. They gave to Pam what she had given to them: nurture, love and a full measure of life. It has been difficult watching her incredible energy and passion for life slowly disappearing. She did, however, manage to keep her sense of humour. She thought it very funny that her palliative nurse's name was Di. She asked the dentist the last time she went whether her teeth would see her out. The dentist did not quite know how to take that.

We often hear about the battle against cancer. This implies that you have some control. I think that this overstates it. Pam would talk about going with the flow and making the most of the time she had. She lived her life the same way after she got cancer as she did before: to the full - with her family, with her friends, with me.

She was so used to being life-giving that she thought deeply about how her death might affect those who loved her. A passage in Romans was of particular significance to Pam.... "The life and death of each of us has its influence on others." If her death means we think about how she was in life, then she need not worry.

The afternoon before Pam died there was a massive storm that lasted quite a while but later cleared. We looked out the window and as the sun began to emerge from the clouds a huge rainbow appeared in the east. We all noticed it and marvelled at it. Pam thought that the rainbow might have been a good omen. Let's hold on to that thought.

A Eulogy is a piece of advocacy. It is an appeal for some space in your memory. It can't tell the whole story. This is just one of many. We all have our own or we wouldn't be here. This story I hope will inspire many more. Pam's fiery spirit will make sure of it. She will not be forgotten.

If you build your house on the edge of a volcano, life will never be dull. It's about risk-taking. Do it and apologise later as Pam would say. It's about living life to the full. What is the point of living a cardboard cut-out life? This is her ultimate lesson to us. Take risks. Sing! Laugh! Make a difference. Change yourself and change the world. Be a life-giver!

Pioneering educator who challenged Rome

Jane Livesey

(from *The Tablet*)

Four hundred years ago an order of nuns was founded by Mary Ward, who defied the pope with her belief that women had it in them to 'do great matters'. A commemorative Mass this week at York Minster highlights reconciliation in a city associated with the persecutions of the Reformation.

In 1951, during the first World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, Pope Pius XII paid tribute to a seventeenth-century Yorkshire woman, Mary Ward, calling her "that incomparable woman, given to the Church by Catholic England in her darkest and bloodiest hour". His words went some way to heal the memory of the bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis*, written by Urban VIII in 1630. Nailed to the doors of the Lateran Basilica and St Peter's, it spoke of the outrageous attempt by Mary and her "Jesuitesses" to "employ themselves at ... works which are most unsuited to maidenly reserve ... arrogantly and obstinately disobey[ing] our paternal and salutary warnings to the grave disadvantage of their own souls and the disgust of all good people".

This week sees the modern-day English followers of Mary Ward in the Congregation of Jesus and the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrating the four-hundredth anniversary of their foundation with a Mass in York Minster. All over the world thousands will honour the memory of England's foremost pioneer of female education, who laid the foundations for unenclosed, self-governing religious life for women, although she was denied the title of founder of her own congregations for the best part of 300 years.

The Mass at York Minster points to a major shift in the unfolding story of Mary Ward, as well as in the wider story of ecumenism. The bitterness of religious persecution has given way to generosity and reconciliation. Her followers have received the warmest of welcomes at the heart of the Anglican establishment. What is being celebrated is not just the memory of a remarkable historical figure but

the enduring legacy of her vision, so far in advance of its time. Born in 1585, Mary Ward lived during the worst period of persecution against recusant Catholics who refused to attend the state Church. Like fellow Yorkshire woman Margaret Clitherow, the women in Mary Ward's family belonged to underground Catholic networks. In general it proved safer for women to remain Catholic (even though some, including Mary Ward's own grandmother, often had to endure imprisonment as a result) while men conformed in order to save the family from the savage recusancy fines. In the absence of clergy and sacramental worship the faith was kept going in secret, with itinerant Jesuits celebrating the sacraments and teaching members

of the household, including girls, Latin, Greek and Scripture. Many women became accustomed to working alongside these priests, exercising spiritual and practical leadership within their extended families and often sizeable households. Some would later become members of Mary Ward's pioneering congregation.

Three of Mary Ward's uncles died as a result of their involvement in the Gun-powder Plot and Mary herself was not above a spirited response when

challenged. When a Jesuit expressed his conviction that women could not comprehend God, Mary ascribed his belief to his lack of experience, urging her companions to believe that women could "do great matters". She refused to accept that there were only two choices for women - either marriage or the cloister. Having tried - twice - to live the cloistered life as a Poor Clare she became convinced that God was calling her to another way of life, as yet unheard of in the Church, and in 1609 she led a group of young women to St Omer to begin a consecrated life without enclosure.

Believing herself called to found a self-governing congregation for women on the lines of the Society of Jesus, with their Constitutions and characteristic mobility and missionary focus, between 1609 and



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(first published in *Women-Church Journal*/No.2, 1988)

1630, she and her companions set up underground missionary networks in England and schools for girls all across Europe, in cities as far apart as Liège and Pressburg (Bratislava) and taking in many others including Munich, Vienna, Rome and Naples. The Council of Trent had permitted no relaxation of enclosure for women, and St Ignatius had insisted that there were never to be female Jesuits. Mary crossed the Alps on more than one occasion and mainly on foot, through plague and war, to petition the Pope for her new venture, but neither the Church nor society were prepared for someone who taught her sisters that “there is no such difference between men and women, that women may not do great things”. Accusations arose of arrogance and immorality, of women aspiring to priestly roles. Epithets applied to them included “galloping girls”, “wandering gossips” as well as the ubiquitous “Jesuitesses”. One Jesuit remarked that, while Mary Ward’s “English Ladies” were remarkable for their fervour, “when all is done, they are but women”, and their new venture was therefore bound to fail. Mary nevertheless remained firmly committed, both in word and deed, to her belief that a future full of hope and potential lay before women and “I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much”.

Imprisoned in 1631 as a result of Urban VIII’s bull, as a “heretic, schismatic and rebel to Holy Church”, Mary’s dream of apostolic work for women was utterly condemned. At her death in 1645 it seemed that all that was left of this once bright hope, with the power to attract so many others, was dust and ashes.

However, her few surviving sisters clung on to her memory and her vision, eventually achieving grudging canonical approbation in 1749 on condition that Mary Ward herself was not claimed as founder of the order. Nineteenth-century Irishwomen Teresa Ball and Mary Aikenhead trained in the historic Bar Convent, York, to make their own pioneering foundations, which spread worldwide, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a member of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary before founding her Missionaries of Charity. In 1909, Mary was finally officially recognised by the Church as the foundress.

Today Mary Ward is honoured and studied as an English woman writer, a pioneering educator and above all as a woman who loved the Church

but challenged it to think and act far beyond its own theological categories. Her vision for women flourishes even at the United Nations, where Mary Ward International has been a non-governmental organisation since 2003. Carol Bellamy, executive director of Unicef, recently pointed out that “there can be no significant transformation in societies and no reduction in poverty until girls receive the quality basic education they need to take their rightful place as equal partners in development”.

Of the world’s 875 million illiterate adults, almost two thirds are female. In more than 45 countries, fewer than one in four girls is enrolled in secondary school. More than 120 million children, two-thirds of them girls, are denied a basic education. Across the world Mary Ward’s followers are involved in both formal and non-formal education of girls and women from basic literacy programs to university level. In Peru, sisters run libraries and a computer centre for village students without books or electricity. A 20-acre farming collective is introducing a new system of irrigation that will put an end to women hauling water in buckets from the nearby river. Elsewhere in shelters for battered women and campaigns for the elimination of domestic violence, traumatised women and children learn a new sense of their own dignity and worth. In Romanian orphanages, on a Hull housing estate and in campaigns against female circumcision in Africa, Mary Ward’s followers continue to work for women to have the chance to fulfil their potential and “do great things”.

Today, young women in Mary Ward schools learn from her to accept the social and wider responsibility that comes with privilege, since “we must not only love our neighbour as ourself, but behave as if we do”.

The cause for Mary Ward’s canonisation recently took a major step forward and Pope Benedict XVI, a former pupil of the sisters in Bavaria, has expressed warm admiration for her. Perhaps the day is coming when another papal pronouncement will complete the vindication of one of England’s greatest heroines, who to the end of her life lived out her admonition to her followers in the earliest days of her enterprise that “real strength and courage consists in doing what one knows to be good in all circumstances in which we are placed, and in not letting ourselves be deterred from this by any opposition”. Not a bad lesson for any of us.

**Sr Jane Livesey CJ is the provincial
superior of the English province of the
Congregation of Jesus**

Catching the Waves

Life in and out of politics

Susan Ryan

Reviewed by Margaret Knowlden

Although this book was published in 1999, I have only just discovered it and hope my belated enthusiasm will inspire others to want to know more about Susan Ryan – a remarkable woman to whom all who have enjoyed the benefits of Feminism owe a great debt.

Many of us will be able to relate to Susan's early Catholic roots when a rebellious nature often led her into conflict with the Brigidine Sisters at Maroubra and ultimately with church authority. However she sees in her schooling many of the influences which ultimately guided her life:

... Catholic education was about action, not passivity. It was about doing good deeds for the poor, helping the helpless, putting others' needs before ones own. ... Catholic girls must have the character – a favourite concept with the nuns – to stand up for what was right in the face of ridicule and hostility.

She goes on:

If convent girls did what the nuns told them – examined their consciences, tried to find the truth, stood up for themselves, strove for altruism rather than individualistic motives – it is no wonder that they took to the second wave of feminism like ducks to water. Effective school debaters, winners of eisteddfods in public speaking, straight-shouldered in pursuit of truth and justice rather than what was "comfortable" (that tedious mantra of our time), we were certainly not among those feminists who would approach the microphone at the big, rowdy women's conferences of the 1970s only to break down into tears or inarticulate stammering, claiming inability to speak because the microphone was a phallic symbol, or the conference was a patriarchal structure, or that language itself had been invented by men and therefore could not be used. Conference delegates clapped and cheered such sisterly sensitivity, but those of us who had easily beaten Christian Brothers' boys in debates and engaged in dangerously brazen argument with ferocious nuns looked at each other in amazement.

Here undoubtedly lies a clue to the puzzle of why so many convent-educated girls later achieved success in the public arena.

For Susan the opportunity to go to university opened up a whole new world. An early marriage to a career diplomat ultimately took the family to New York where she was introduced to the work of feminists including her friend Germaine Greer and Betty Friedan, Kate Millet and Gloria Steinem.

Recognition of the palimpsest of patriarchy was like an electric shock given for depression, a sudden violent awakening, after which nothing would be the same.

Sadly, her newfound enthusiasm for Feminism was not shared by her husband and, like many marriages, theirs did not survive.

Returning to Australia as a single mother with two young children, Susan worked her way through guilt, criticism and unhappiness until she found her calling with the beginning of the Women's Electoral Lobby. This set her on the path to politics and a parliamentary career where she achieved an historic landmark as the only woman in Cabinet. She was instrumental in implementing many of the policies we take for granted today: Termination of Pregnancy Ordinance, Aboriginal Land Rights, Sex Discrimination Act, State Aid to Private Schools, to name but a few.

This ten-year old book is still a fascinating account and a tribute to a great woman of our times. It is well worth a read ... lest we forget!

The following letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (14.1.09) will be a timely reminder of what life was really like:

What about the women?

A few paragraphs into Stephen Asprey's account of why the "old days" were so much better (Letters, January 11), I said to myself: "He must be a bloke."

Vast inequities in salary, being forced to leave public service employment upon marriage, domestic violence dismissed as "a private matter", relatively ineffective contraception, being stuck in abusive or unhappy marriages, social and financial obstacles to tertiary education, no protection against rape in marriage, exclusion from careers such as policing, firefighting and the military, needing a husband's permission to have a bank account, no legislation against sexual harassment or discrimination, abortion criminalised and prosecuted, maternity leave vanishingly rare, no formal child care ...

Good old days? Not for women.

Margaret Morgan, Mount Kuring-gai

NOTE: Susan Ryan will be the guest speaker at the CCJP meeting on Sunday 15 March 2009

Could the shutters yet come down?

Nicholas Lash

(from *The Tablet*)

Fifty years ago this week, Pope John XXIII announced the Second Vatican Council. Today, some suggest that the council was a break with the past rather than a movement of reform. What has been lost, says a leading theologian, is confidence about the Council and its changes.

“Trembling a little with emotion but at the same time humbly resolute in my purpose, I announce to you a double celebration which I propose to undertake: a diocesan synod for the City and a general Council for the universal Church.” John XXIII was addressing a group of cardinals on 25 January 1959. The announcement came like thunder from a clear sky. A council? Why? Had not the strengthening of papal power at the last council in 1870 made councils unnecessary?

The word he used, again and again, to describe the purpose of his council, was “pastoral”, but what exactly did this mean? It meant, I think, above all, that his extraordinary inspiration sprang from a concern, not primarily with ideas or institutions, but with *people*, with ordinary men and women. Withdrawn, on standby since the dangerous dawning of modernity some centuries before, the Church needed to wake up, open the windows, let in some fresh air, breathe “a new Pentecost”. (That was John’s phrase, in the prayer for the council which he composed and, when the council ended, the very English voice of Bishop Christopher Butler observed: “I am less doubtful than I once was that [the council] was gathered for a second Pentecost.”) Since an address by Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia in December 2005, debates about how the council is best remembered and interpreted have been conducted in terms of either “continuity” or “rupture” with the past. These debates have tended to obscure a more fundamental question. Pope John wanted a council that would bring the Church out of the nervous isolation of the post-Tridentine period and into a new phase of witness and proclamation, recovering long-forgotten riches of Catholic tradition. He saw his council as setting in train a comprehensive programme of ecclesial reform. Fifty years after his announcement, how well is that programme being understood and implemented?

In his address on 25 January 1959, John XXIII devoted only two phrases to the aims of the council: it was to be for “the enlightenment, edification, and joy of the entire Christian people” and it was to issue “a renewed cordial invitation to the faithful of the separated Churches to participate with us in this feast of grace and brotherhood”. In the first place, then, we should give thanks for the considerable progress that has been made, ecumenically, in recent decades.

In the second place, for all its unevenness, much has been achieved in terms of liturgical reform, above all in the renewed recognition that the agent of liturgical celebration is the whole assembly, God’s gathered people, and not only the individual we used to call “the celebrant”. Admittedly, Benedict XVI’s *motu proprio* “*Summorum Pontificum*” has thrown a spanner in the works. The Pope’s claim (in the letter accompanying the *motu proprio*) that “there is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal ... What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too” is tantamount to the assertion that the Missal of 1962 did not need reform.

“The council,” said Bishop Butler, “has helped me to see that this notion of the sacramentality of the Church is basic to our understanding of her”. In the third place, then, we might note that this recognition that the Church exists to be, in Christ (as *Lumen Gentium* puts it) “a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race”, has found flesh in the increasing acknowledgement of the centrality of issues of “justice and peace” to the Church’s mission; in giving more than lip-service to the “preferential option for the poor”.

On the other hand, in the fourth place, perhaps the greatest failure of the conciliar programme of reform has also been ecclesial, or ecclesiological. The need to balance due recognition of papal primacy with acknowledgement that every bishop is, in his church, “vicar and ambassador of Christ” (*Lumen Gentium*, 27), and that it is the college of bishops, led by the bishop of Rome, which is the governing body of the Catholic Church, was generally agreed to be at the heart and centre of the council’s programme. Nobody, I think foresaw the possibility

that, 50 years later, the offices of the Roman Curia should have increased their control over the Church. Not only does the coagulation of power at the centre frustrate the ability of the episcopate to recover a proper sense of episcopal authority and the development of appropriate structures of collegial governance, but it has weakened the recognition of the indispensability of the *sensus fidelium*.

It is becoming fashionable, in certain circles, to describe the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* as “prophetic”, with the somewhat curious implication that, had Paul VI had the courage to endorse the report drawn up by the Pontifical Commission on Population, Family and Birth, which John XXIII had established in 1963, this would have been a *less* “prophetic” act. The four members of the Commission who did not sign the report took the action that they did because they feared the damage that such a change to official teaching on birth regulation would do to people’s trust in the authority of the Church. Paul VI grounded his decision to reject the report not on better arguments in the ethics of reproduction, but on considerations of church authority: he felt unable

to differ from his predecessors. The irony – and tragedy – of *Humanae Vitae* is that it seems to have been Paul VI’s refusal to countenance change which undermined the confidence of so many Catholics in the very authority which he sought to uphold.

But the damage done goes deeper. Since 1968, agreement with the key propositions of *Humanae Vitae* seems to have been the chief test of failure which disbars a priest from episcopal appointment. It is difficult not to suppose there to be a connection between the quality of leadership resulting from this policy and the failure of the episcopate to withstand curial control.

John XXIII invoked, and trusted in, the Spirit. The best way of celebrating the golden jubilee of his inspired initiative would be for Catholics of every size, and shape and colour to invoke that same Spirit’s aid enabling us to exhibit the kind of down-to-earth confidence in events and in each other which John XXIII displayed. We need, I think, in this way to pray for a release from fearfulness about the Church’s future.

Nicholas Lash was Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge from 1978 to 1999



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(first published in *Women-Church Journal*/No.1/1987)

“Truth – What is Truth?”

I will continue to fight for what I believe is the truth”, said Bishop Morris this week when speaking of his experience of being under investigation by the Vatican for the last two years.

Bishop William Morris has been the very caring Bishop of Toowoomba in Queensland for sixteen years. Realising that by 2014 most of his priests will be eligible for retirement, leaving only six active priests in his diocese, Bishop Morris sent out a pastoral letter to his diocese encouraging the discussion of the prospect of married priests and of women priests.

The Bishop now faces the possibility of being sacked and of having to stand down. But he insists that the Church cannot stifle debate and he will continue “to fight for the right to be able to ask questions”.

There is a common element in this Toowoomba situation and that of St. Mary’s, South Brisbane, and it is that a group of very conservative Catholics are travelling around parishes dobbing in priests who don’t “toe the line”. Bishop Morris says they are known as “the temple police” and they report directly to Rome as well as to the Bishop of the Diocese.

The St. Mary’s, South Brisbane parish is also the victim of these “temple police”. Because of their reporting and intrusion into the parish worship at St. Mary’s, Fr. Kennedy is to be replaced by Fr. Ken Howell, who has been appointed administrator as from 21st February 2009. Consequently, the parish is threatening to stage a “sit-in” at the Church but Fr. Kennedy says they will pursue an agenda of “peaceful rebellion”, “peaceful disobedience”.

Speaking to the Courier Mail, Fr. Kennedy said, “I feel no hostility to the Archbishop, I’ve thanked him often for letting us be...” “We have created a new way of being Church – a Vatican II type of Church”.

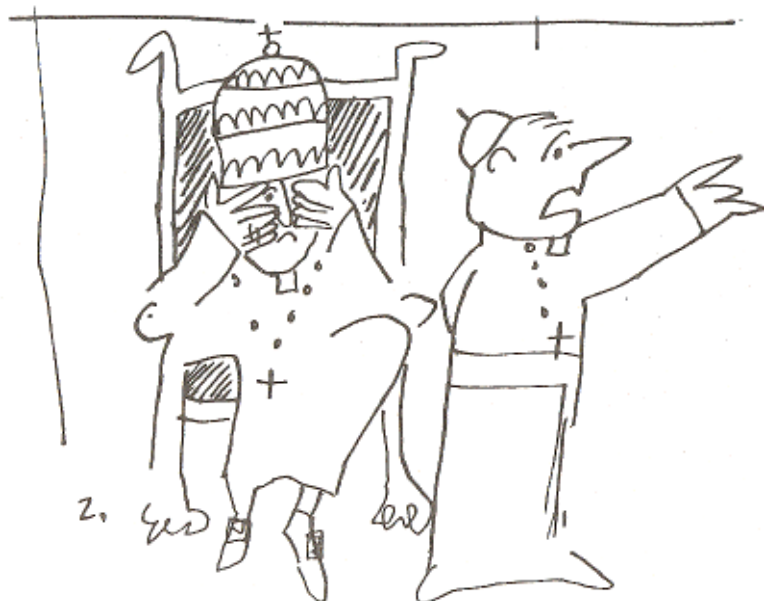
Is St. Mary’s being penalised for being alive, vital and filled with love? Or is it just that, “There are rules and regulations in everything”,

Why not write and support these people in their search for truth in this Post-Vatican II Church:

Bishop W. Morris
P.O. Box 1262,
Toowoomba Qld. 4350

Archbishop J. Bathersby
P.O. Box 936
New Farm Qld. 4005

Fr. P. Kennedy
St. Mary’s Parish
20 Merivale St.
South Brisbane Qld. 4101



NO HOLY FATHER, SHE HASN'T GONE AWAY,

© Graham English
(first published in Women-Church Journal No. 17/1987)

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*"CONFRONTING POWER AND SEX IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH:
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and the issues raised about the book by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (see overleaf).

**SATURDAY MARCH 08TH 009
9AM - 4.15PM**

Facilitator: Geraldine Doogue AO.

**Speakers: FRANK BRENNAN sj, BARRY BRUNDELL msc,
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\$30 PER PERSON

including morning tea and lunch.

**RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL - RSVP Monday 03rd March
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*Catalyst for Renewal is a not-for-profit group seeking to promote conversation for the sake of renewal in the Church and our wider society. We organise *Spirituality in the Pub*, Dinners and Forums on topical subjects. 'Seeking truth and renewal through conversation'*

Yes, I want to be part of this conversation

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Email: catalyst-for-renewal@tpg.com.au Web: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au

Group Reports

Milton

At our meeting on Saturday 7th February, 13 members were present, with apologies from four others who were not able to attend. As we had decided last year to devote part of this year studying Bishop Robinson's book, Anne Troup and Kath Prendergast presented Chapter 1, 'Healthy People In a Healthy Relationship with a Healthy God'. We were asked to think about what the word 'Healthy' meant to us in these three concepts and were then asked to share with the group where we stood in our relationship with God today compared to other times in our lives.

After the usual scrumptious lunch we planned our days and topics for this year and Bernice told us about the coming Conference. Judi Powe asked for a volunteer to take over the leadership for our group which Kath Prendergast very kindly took on for this year. The group thanks Judi for doing such a good job of leading us during 2008. Judi prepared a beautiful liturgy in which we particularly prayed for Bernice's sister Mary as well as remembering Pam Williamson, our past members Joan Sheppard and Meryl Mooney and Judy Mahon's darling husband Dennis who passed away just before Christmas. It was a moving liturgy full of love and meaning.

Our days for 2009 are Saturday April 4, July 4, September 19, November 28. The November 28 day will be our Christmas gathering when partners are asked to join us for dinner.

Anna Flynn

Penshurst

This year the group continues our reading and discussion of Bishop Geoffrey Robinson's book *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church - Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus* which we begun last year. This book is so rich in content and honesty that it provides great material for good discussion. Also, in proclaiming a way forward, it gives hope in these dark times. We will all be well-prepared for the Conference in May.

Our last meeting of the year included a beautiful liturgy prepared by Bern and a shared meal to celebrate Christmas.

We were all shocked and saddened by the news of Pam William's death. We knew she was sick but I guess we just didn't want to contemplate losing her, so young, generous and beautiful in the best sense of the word. Her death has been a great loss for WATAC. But she will be remembered with much gratitude by us all.

Maureen Hager

Engadine

We gathered for the first time in '09 at Alma and Phil Madden's home to pray and reflect together. It was a precious and very beautiful moment of life when we celebrated who we are for each other, and the God among us and within us! Michael Morwood's prayers nourished our spirits and hearts.

The theme of our prayer was drawn from Teilhard to Chardin's thoughts: 'We will make the earth our altar':

'Over the entire Earth, the sun touches all of nature with light ... The living surface of the Earth wakes and trembles once again and begins her fearful labour of birth ...'

On Monday, 16th February, we will hold our first WATAC meeting and we plan to look at the DVD, *A Well-Founded Fear*, which features Phil Glendenning and some of the refugees who the Australian government excluded from our community in 2006-7. No doubt it will be an enthusiastic and very vocal gathering to start our WATAC year.

Broken Bay

It seems a long time since November, so our first meeting for 2009 on 22 February was a joyous reunion with plenty of catching up on family news as well as discussions of films and books etc. etc. Those of us who have been in the group since its beginnings were particularly delighted to welcome Chris Edwards back to our fold. As a late convert to Catholicism, Chris also clings to her Anglican roots so always has very insightful contributions to make. This year marks the 20th anniversary of our group's formation - something we will have to celebrate in a few months.

Our sympathies today were with St Mary's Brisbane, wishing we could have been there today to swell the crowd of Fr Kennedy's supporters!

Our task for today was a discussion on the introduction to Bishop Robinson's book and we particularly noted his comments about the traditional training of priests. In this context, we thought it might be useful if we invited one of the two seminarians in the Broken Bay seminary to attend one of our meetings. This would be a good opportunity to exchange mutual expectations of the role of women in the church. We'll see!!

One of our members, Suzanne, was in the USA before the election and worked as a volunteer for Obama's campaign.

Our next meeting will be on Sunday 5 April.

Margaret Knowlden

Parramatta

Our meetings are always stimulating; the conversation varies from social justice issues to those of a spiritual enrichment. One group member takes responsibility for a topic each month.

Recently themes for discussion and reflection have been The Female Ancestors of Christ, Women in the New Testament and Christianity and Child Sexual Abuse. One of our members spent a few weeks working in Bangladesh before Christmas, so we will be looking forward to hearing about her experiences in the near future.

We welcomed two new members to the group last year (Amber & Grace). Sadly, Marg Hinchey was diagnosed with breast cancer at the end of last year and has had two operations. Our thoughts and prayers are with Marg as she goes through this difficult time. We meet on the last Monday night of the month at OLMC Convent at Parramatta.

Chris Brenton

Mount Claremont (W.A.)

We haven't started up properly yet but we have some things in the pipeline. We plan to study Albert Nolan's book *Jesus Today* and Mary Ward's *Conversation Circle*. The Circle of Peace will continue to explore the issues around where to after Sorry. So when we are further down the track we can tell you more. We will have our first gatherings in APRIL although the WALK FOR PEACE is our March event (see notice below).

Margaret Finlay

YOU ARE INVITED TO A
CELEBRATION IN THE PARK
FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR PEACE 2009

at Bardon Park (Perth W.A.)

Saturday 7TH MARCH - 8 am

Following the WALK there will be light refreshments.

Please bring something simple to share.

(No drinks in glass containers are permitted).

Please bring a CHAIR or a MAT

RSVP

MARIE THERESE RYDER 9443 9298

MARG FINLAY 9384 9114

FAZIDA RAZAK 0409297420

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 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 Mobile: 0419 426 174
Email: margaret.cody1@bigpond.com

LISMORE HEIGHTS Group meets 1st Tuesday of each month for coffee & spiritual nourishment at 'La Baracca Coffee Shop' 29 Keen Street, Lismore. 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@iprimus.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

REMINDER – WATAC SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE FOR RENEWAL

If you have not yet paid your subs for 2009 please return this form with payment to address below.

NOTE: WATAC is a non-profit organisation and is GST exempt

PLEASE PRINT

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....POSTCODE:.....

PH(H):.....EMAIL:.....

BASIC MEMBERSHIP \$50 GROUP MEMBERSHIP \$150 SELF RELIANCE MEMBERSHIP \$75 \$100 \$150

Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc. If using Credit Card please complete the following details.

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Automatic Credit Card renewal – by ticking this box you will be authorising WATAC to automatically renew your subscription each year in January. WATAC will use the credit card details provided here for the equivalent amount of your original subscription. Please notify WATAC of any changes to your credit card details.

e-newsletter – tick here if you would prefer to receive your WATAC Newsletter by email. It comes as a pdf file in full colour to your email address.

Please write your email address clearly

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e-information- we sometimes get requests from 'like-minded' organisations to forward information please indicate:

Yes – I wish to receive other information via email

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PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH PAYMENT TO:

The Subscription Secretary WATAC Inc. 9 Casey Close Kurri Kurri 2327

Ph: 02.4937.2019 Fax: 02.4936.1109 Email: maureen@watac.net

I would like to continue to receive WATAC News but am not able to contribute at present

WATAC Conference 1st - 2nd May 2009 Registration Form

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....POSTCODE:.....

PH(H).....EMAIL:.....

Full Conference \$150 **Early Bird Full Conference \$130 (by 30-03-09)**

Conference Saturday Only \$90 **Early Bird Saturday only \$85 (by 30-03-09)**

Conference Dinner only \$65

I require a vegetarian meal Please indicate if a hearing loop would help you.

Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc. If using Credit Card please complete the following details.

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Maureen Watterson, WATAC Inc. 9 Casey Close Kurri Kurri 2327

Further information – Ph/Fax 02.9520.9409 email: helen@watac.net