

# WATAC NEWS



VOL 21: NO 3

WOMEN AND THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH

AUGUST 2010

**WATAC Administration Officer:** Helen Coles 9520 9409 Mailing address: 37/121 Anzac Avenue, Engadine, 2233

Website address: [www.watac.net](http://www.watac.net) email: [watac@people.net.au](mailto:watac@people.net.au) A.B.N. 48 406 052 808

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: BERNICE MOORE

TYPESETTING/DESIGN: MARGARET KNOWLDEN  
Email: [knowlden@optusnet.com.au](mailto:knowlden@optusnet.com.au)

## Woman, Why Are You Weeping?

*The following are edited portions of Sr. Theresa Kane's talk, "Woman, Why Are You Weeping?" given July 22 in Chicago at the Celebration conference on effective liturgy.*

We see Mary of Magdala in the garden as someone who has experienced the torture and death of a close, intimate friend. She was a companion, certainly a benefactor to Jesus, and a disciple. We, too, have all wept at the death of loved one.

As we enter that garden scene, we feel the depth of grief, the anguish and pain at so horrible a death, and we also sense that Mary probably had a conviction that a grave injustice had been done. When one has a clear vision and insight about injustice, one weeps not only with anguish but from anger, even rage. Rage comes from courage, and at any injustice, all of us should be filled with rage. Such an emotion is core to righting the wrong, to bringing about justice.

Let me speak of the women of our Catholic community today. Why do we weep? Without the full incorporation of women into leadership, discipleship and all church ministries, full participation in the liturgy – which was the vision of the council – we do not experience community as women at liturgy, and we do not experience life-giving worship. Our presence at liturgy has become and continues to be a source of anguish, sadness, even emptiness. We continue in severe tension over exclusive, sexist language, and this has gone on for decades, the continued use of terms like *man*, *his* and *mankind* that deny our very presence.

In 1978, Pope John Paul I said publicly, and I have never forgotten this and continue to proclaim it, "We need to call God 'mother' as well as 'father.'" It was a powerful statement. I can still remember him saying it on television. Because until we do that, our language of God remains exclusive, patriarchal and militaristic.

One of the real tensions is between the vision we have of community and a governance that is monarchical. I have been with bishops who say, 'We are not a democracy.' And the question to the bishop is, then, what form of governance are we? And do we not respect cooperation and participation and inclusion?

Catholic women weep because male Catholic leaders, many of them bishops and pastors, are culturally ignorant and culturally impotent regarding the presence, the potential, the human aspirations of women to be adult, mutual co-responsible collaborators. A wonderful word, *collaborate*. It means we co-labor. We are radically equal.

Why are we weeping today? We are in crisis. Many women have already moved out of traditional Sunday worship. Other women have begun very courageous, strong, alternative liturgies, which we believe are valid, mystic, pastoral, spiritual, all the qualities that are needed for the human soul.

Many are moving to other Protestant traditions or are doing feminist liturgies, taking turns presiding, co-presiding, and are perfectly comfortable with it. Maybe it is the beginning of a new church. Maybe this is how we have to look at Pentecost. I think we need to be willing to address it. To continue in an exclusively male priesthood is in my judgment both a form and expression of idolatry.

An example: A group of sisters in the Midwest were having their community assembly. Out of courtesy, they invited the bishop. We generally do not invite the bishop because we are such good friends and want to celebrate, but unfortunately – and I feel very sad about this – we do it because it is expected and out of courtesy. The bishop wrote back and said it must be in a parish church and not at the motherhouse, you must have altar boys come in to assist me, and no sister may carry the cross in the procession. They prayed about it and decided not to have liturgy. The real tragedy is that a magnificent opportunity was lost for a bishop to gather with a group of women to worship.

As Catholic woman, I continue to hope. Why? At gatherings such as this I meet so many women and men who are open and want to make this a new church. I go home inspired. I don't really have

a need to run back to traditional worship. There are many organizations that are very much alive, spiritual and Vatican II – Call to Action, Women's Ordination Conference, FutureChurch, and the congregations of women religious ourselves.

I find hope from the words of scripture. In the fullness of time God's purpose will be revealed. When will the renewal come? In the fullness of time. It may be tomorrow. Maybe next week. But it's God's time, not my time. I also have the deep conviction that nothing is impossible with God. People say to me, "You can't do that, it's not possible." With God, all things are possible. And this gives me great hope.

Mercy Sister. Theresa Kane is a former head of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious. National Catholic Reporter 9<sup>th</sup> August 2010

## Contents

Woman, Why Are You Weeping? .....	1-2
Parliament House Luncheon report .....	2-3
Welcome to Country .....	4
Luncheon Blessing .....	5
Larissa's Talk .....	6-9
Schools' Reports .....	9-11
Wanted Women of Spirit in our Time - Joan Chittoister .....	11-12
WATA Annual General Meeting and Annual Report ..	13-15
The Inner Workings of a Hierarchy with a Sex Offender Mentality – Fran Ferder & John Heagie .....	15-16
Advertisement re Ethics Conference .....	17
Mutinous Rumblings among senior Australian Catholic Clergy .....	18-19
Recommended Reading: <i>Half The Sky</i> .....	19
Health Care Issue Complicates Investigation – NCR – Thomas Fox.....	20-22
A Hierarchy Deeply Damaged from within – NCR Editorial .....	23-24
Group Reports.....	24-25
Membership form .....	26



# 'Our Time is NOW!'

## WATAC at Parliament House

1<sup>st</sup> June 2010

We selected this theme for our Luncheon at NSW Parliament House this year and how appropriate it was! Some 170 people were there, including many young women and men from our Catholic school system. If you were not able to be present we hope the following pages will capture the experience for you, and if you were there our hope is that this summary of events will help you to re-live the joy of the day – it was WATAC at its challenging best.

How blessed we were to commence our gathering with a beautiful 'Welcome to Land' prepared and presented by three Indigenous students from St Scholastica's College, Glebe Point. Following this some students from St John Bosco College, Engadine, read a beautiful blessing of our meal and gathering, which they had prepared. We have included both of these, thanks to these students.

Larissa Behrendt, our keynote speaker, has also generously agreed that we share with you her wonderful and inspiring talk.

Margaret Day who facilitated our Luncheon shared this memory with us and it encapsulates something so many people talked about:

The outstanding memory for me of this year's luncheon was Larissa Behrendt. For some time I have admired her for her fine incisive mind and her ability to clearly and passionately articulate the injustices faced by our Indigenous people without becoming strident. The quality that shone at the WATAC luncheon was the mentoring and leadership she gave to the young people at the luncheon. She was generous with her time, despite an urgent post-luncheon commitment. She chose to stay at the lectern longer than needed, so that she could hear all the young people's questions – questions, which she answered with empathy, honesty and hope. She was an inspiration to all and a role model not only to the young adults present, but also a fine model of mentoring to us older members of the community.

Larissa's response to the students was indeed heart warming and generous and they definitely took up the challenge of 'Our Time is Now' to ask intelligent, pertinent questions. From the first about being at boarding school and missing family and country and wondering if Larissa had such feelings when she was so far away studying at Harvard.

To the last question of the day asking if there was any advice Larissa would have for young women wanting to work in the area of social justice and all the questions in between, from the young and the not so young folk, made for a fantastic, engaging afternoon.

We invited the students who were present to reflect on the experience and we have included their reports. Thanks to Larissa her talk will soon be available to view on the WATAC website and we are hoping by the time you get the Newsletter you will also be able to view the photos from the day taken by Maureen Short, thanks Maureen. And a big thank you to everyone who contributed to making it such a fabulous day – the WATAC working group, especially Margaret Day, Maureen Watterson, Margaret Keyes, the Honourable Marie Andrews, member for Peats who hosted us and the staff at NSW Parliament House, Sheila Quonoey for the beautiful wall hanging for our raffle and to all the teachers, students and WATAC-ers who supported the luncheon.

Do enjoy reading more about this wonderful WATAC event and as usual, it was declared our 'best ever' WATAC Luncheon. □



# Welcome to Country 2010 WATAC Luncheon



Nioka Tyson, Laura Murray and Jinnaya Tyson of St Scholastica's College, Glebe

## **Bereewagal, -naa niya – yura ngura dyi ngurang gurugal**

People who come from afar, I see all of you.

Aboriginal People camped here at this place long ago

**Ngoon dyalga niya, ngoon bamaradbanga ni**

We embrace all of you; we open the door to all of you.

**Ngoon – mari ngurang – niya mundang yura ngurra**

We lend this place to all of you to live while we sleep.

**Dyi nga ni nura**

Here, I see my country

**Then we all joined to proclaim as one a commitment to**

**WALK TOGETHER ON A JOURNEY OF HEALING**

God of all Creation

We who have come from every land

give thanks for Australia.

This earth that feeds us;

The stories that bind us;

The skies that envelop us in freedom.

We stand together, united as one people;

proud of our ability to work together;

grateful for our gifts;

nourished by our diversity and our harmony.

Yet we turn to the original owners of our land,  
and see too what we have taken.

We weep for their loss of freedom,  
of country, of children –

Even of their very lives.

We stand in awe at their survival,  
and in debt for their land.

We have shadows in our history

Which if unfaced diminish us.

We have taken without asking;

Our nation has taken without asking;

Lives are wounded

We see the pain, feel the sorrow  
and seek forgiveness.

Let us look back with courage;

see the truth and speak it.

Let us look around with compassion;  
see the cost and share it.

Let us look forward with hop;  
see what can be and create it.

Give us courage to face the truth,

Compassion to share the burden –

Strength to play our part in the healing –

And hope to walk forward to a place of justice.

With courage, compassion, strength and hope

We will walk together on the journey of healing.

# Blessing of the Gathering for the 2010 WATAC Luncheon



Danielle Mathias and Thomas Ross of St John Bosco College, Engadine

**D**ear Lord, We thank you for the gift of women who have been a fundamental part of the Australian Church.

We pray you give us the strength to follow their examples and help us in raising awareness of Christian feminist issues.

We thank you for the presence of Australia's most influential woman, Mary Mackillop, who changed the understanding of the role of women in the Australian Church and society by putting young uneducated people before herself and helping them create a better future.

Lord, give all Australian women the determination and strength to achieve their hopes and dreams as Mary Mackillop did.

Holy Spirit, guide us in the path of achieving justice and equality for women in the Australian church.

Help us to recognise the needs of those less fortunate amongst us and give us the courage to represent and aid these people as our Lord Jesus did.

Mary, Mother of Christ, as leader of women, mould us into individuals who together can bring about a better future for all people.

We give thanks for the women in all our lives who have helped us and supported us when we needed guidance and given us the courage to break through our personal barriers and shaped us into the people we are today.

Bless and guide WATAC as they continue being a voice for women in the Australian Church.

Let us not forget the origins of our land and the dreaming as we strive for a better future for Australia. We pray for all the Indigenous women who have struggled immensely to gain rights and respect in the Australian community and establish their place in the church.

Together let us all say,

Amen.

# Some Reflections from My Journey

Professor Larissa Behrendt

I am very honoured to be speaking to you today. I have long admired the work of Women and the Australian Church. They have maintained a strong, unyielding focus on issues of social justice and, through their work, embody the principle of always thinking about how we can improve the lives of those who are less fortunate than ourselves.

I am also honoured to be speaking with such a dynamic group of young women. You have your futures before you. There is every promise of every opportunity in the pathway ahead of you. So I want to share some reflections from my journey in the hope that some of the things I have learnt along the way may be of interest to you.

I was born into an Aboriginal family. My father grew up in a home and my grandmother was taken from her family when she was only twelve. She never returned home. My father did not find our Aboriginal family until I was about the same age as my grandmother was when she became a member of the stolen generations.

And while I saw the difference it made to my father to know who he was and where he was from and had watch fascinated as he changed from an insecure and self-conscious person to someone who was confident and felt he had much to give, it was my grandmother's story – at least what I knew of it – that haunted me the most.

What must it have been like for a girl of twelve years old to have been taken from her family and, not put into a home with other girls, but sent to work with a family? It cannot have been a pleasant experience because the archival record shows that she became pregnant, the child taken from her and she was sent to work in the hospital at Parkes.

My family's experience with the policy of removing Aboriginal women from their families was what interested me in social justice. How a policy that inflicted such cruelty could operate for so long and with such devastating impact over generations seemed outrageous to me. And even as a child, I knew that there was something about the way the laws were set up that allowed such a policy to exist – giving no ability to parents to appeal or question or reclaim children that they loved and had looked



after. And it was the removal policy that made me first want to be a lawyer.

While my father struggled with his identity, I never did. I did not even know there was anything negative about being Aboriginal until I went to school and I was teased by other children about it. My father was raised in an orphanage where he was told over and over again that he was inferior because he was Aboriginal. I grew up in a family and my mother, who is white, constantly referred to my Aboriginal heritage in positive ways.

And when I first asked her about what the children had said at school about Aboriginal people being lazy and like monkeys she had told me that I should feel sorry for children who say such things as they are just jealous that they do not have a cultural heritage as rich as mine. I am not sure now that this was the truth but, at the time, of course it reassured me and reaffirmed my pride in my heritage. I can never recall a time when I felt ashamed of who I was.

I share this with you on this occasion for a couple of reasons. The story of my white mother raising two Aboriginal children who were part of their Aboriginal community and proud of their heritage is the kind of story that reflects the most important type of reconciliation: the one that occurs at the personal level, between people in their personal relationships.

And it shows the important role that the support of other women plays in our success. There is a saying I love because it captures my own experiences: Behind every successful man is a good woman; behind every successful woman is a good mother.

I grew up with a strong sense of political activism and social justice. I also had a strong pride in my

Aboriginality and I knew all about the history of Aboriginal people in New South Wales. I must have seemed unhappy as I tried to fit in at high school. My favourite teacher, Miss O'Sullivan, once said to me, "Larissa, you might not like high school but you are going to love University." Her comment struck a chord with me and since she said that I thought it was the most natural thing that I would go from high school to university even though I hadn't thought about it until Miss O'Sullivan mentioned it. Miss O'Sullivan highlighted the role that a good mentor plays. She allowed me to see beyond the world that I knew, to see further down the path I could travel than I could see myself.

Miss O'Sullivan was right and I loved University. I wasn't a star student. In fact, I failed the first semester of my commerce degree so I switched to another degree! But I got into the pattern of study and I worked hard. I became involved with student activities and spent most of my time at the Aboriginal student centre. I met some great people there and they are still some of my closest friends and most supportive colleagues. It was during this time that the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was taking place and I co-wrote an article with my brother (my first published article) in the University newspaper about police racism. It was called 'Bad apples or rotten fruit.' It was a small place to start but I've been writing and publishing my thoughts ever since.

I had wanted to do a law degree because I wanted to change the world. When I graduated from Law School, I worked in the Family Law Section of the Legal Aid Commission. As I was processing maintenance applications through the Local Court, I felt more like a cog in a wheel rather than working on the issues that I thought were pressing. I was feeling frustrated and I went and spoke to Roberta Sykes, a family friend and an Aboriginal person who had been involved with Aboriginal affairs all her life about the fact that I thought I would go back to do some more study and work in the University. I had been teaching general studies classes – Aboriginal history, culture and contemporary issues – and I really enjoyed the experience. Education became an area that I saw as increasingly important if there were to be greater understanding the Australian society about Indigenous issues.

I spoke to Roberta about this and she asked if I was thinking about doing and I told her I thought I would like to do a Masters. She encouraged me but added, "You should apply to Harvard." I didn't take it seriously because I thought Harvard was out of



my league. When Roberta handed me the forms to fill in, I was too frightened of her to say "No" to her so I dutifully filled them in and sent them off. I never expected to get in and I couldn't have been more surprised when I found myself on a plane to Boston. I was worried for the first few weeks that I would be told that there had been a mistake and I had not been accepted. In the years since I have often been asked how I got to Harvard and I think that the expectation is that I will talk about goal setting and ambition but the truth is I never saw myself as having as much potential as Roberta thought I had. She was the best mentor that I could have ever had.

People often ask me what my greatest achievement is and I would have to say that it would be a tie between supervising Indigenous doctoral students and writing. My first novel was published in 2004.

I have always loved writing but only resumed creative writing when I was in Boston with the encouragement of my closet friends and the writing group we established. The story is about the impact of the removal policy on three generations of an Aboriginal family. It sought to explore how pervasive and psychological the impact was and to show that Indigenous people and families still live with the effects of that policy today. It was a very personal story and I felt that there was an increasing need to continue to tell those stories because I feel that we are living in an era in Australia that is becoming increasingly disinterested in Indigenous issues.

I had always thought that if people knew the human cost of policies like the removal of children on Aboriginal people that there would be increased understanding as to why our communities and families face the issues that we do. I was shocked that some sectors of the Australian community



responded to personal accounts from the stolen generations by attempting to deny their experience and trivialise their hurt and suffering. I felt it was really important to continue to tell those stories so they would not be marginalised or forgotten.

Writing *Home* and getting it published was something I feel very proud of and, although it got mostly rave reviews, there was one that trashed it by saying that it was too political and not well edited. I was crushed at first, despite all the wonderful and positive things that were said about the novel. I made the mistake of listening to only the bad review, not all the good ones. But the more I thought about it I did feel proud that, even if there was a negative reaction, I had taken the brave step of putting a story I believe in out there. You can't expect to make a contribution to public life without getting criticism. But that doesn't mean that it is easy and at these times, more than ever, that network of peer and mentor support is valuable beyond words.

I want to finish my remarks tonight with a reflection on some of the other wisdom that has helped me on my journey. And this is wisdom that comes from my Aboriginal culture. There are three things from this I want to share with you.

The first is that we are all connected to our environment and we have a responsibility to protect it. There are heated debates about climate change and, while I am personally persuaded by the science, it has always puzzled me that people require scientific proof before they feel there is a need to protect our environment. We have that responsibility because we need to ensure that the air we breath and the water we drink are clean. We need to make sure that our ecosystems are strong. Whether we live in the country or live in the city, everything we eat comes from nature and we owe it, when we take from it to sustain ourselves, the respect to work to make sure ecosystems are vibrant, strong and cared for.

The second lesson is to listen to the wisdom of our elders. We are often focused on what we learn at school or university. We are tested on that, graded on it and those grades determine our future. Aboriginal people understand that older people are the custodians of our culture and through their life experience have wisdom that can be invaluable as we take our own journeys.

The third lesson is that women are not inferior. Despite the popular accounts in the press of Aboriginal culture as violent and tolerant of violence against women, that does not reflect my experience within the Aboriginal community or of the values in my traditional culture. Where violence is endemic in the Aboriginal community it is usually because the traditional values have been undermined, the traditional role of women has been ignored and the social fabric has unravelled leaving in its place the dysfunction that stains some Aboriginal communities today.

In the Eualayai and Gamillaroi nations, women had separate roles to men but these were not subordinate in the way they are in western culture. There was women's business and men's business but, while these were separate, one was not seen as inferior to the other. In our culture, women had the primary control over the spiritual life of people in the community.

Women decided where a child would be conceived and born – decision that would affect the child's spiritual responsibilities throughout their lives. In our culture, the creation spirit was female so god really was a woman. And decision-making was not gendered. Greater weight was given to the wisest elders, whether they were male or female.

My final note tonight is this. I chose a path in which my work would focus on issues of social justice. Of course, I do not expect that this will be the pathway for everyone. But I do believe that, whatever role we take, whatever profession we do, however we decide to resolve the work/family balance, we, as women, have a responsibility to at



least have an informed opinion about the kind of society we live in. We have the ability to influence our families, workplaces and communities with our moral authority as women – as mothers, sisters, daughters, partners, friends, bosses and colleagues.

So even if your view of the kind of community we live in is not the same as mine, we are all invested in the issue of what values our society should embody, in the way we treat those who are more disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable than we are. Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “Do what you feel in your heart to be right – for you’ll be criticized anyway. You’ll be damned if you do, and damned if you don’t.” It is a sage reminder about being true to yourself.

She also wisely said, “No one can make you feel inferior without your consent” and I have to say that I can think of no better advice to pass on to other women than that. □



Margaret Hinchey gives heartfelt thanks to Larissa

## Schools' Reports

### BRIGIDINE COLLEGE, St Ives

On the first of June 2010 eight year twelve girls, Mrs Thompson, Mrs Ryder and Sister Chanel attended the 14<sup>th</sup> Women and the Australian Church luncheon at NSW Parliament House Sydney. WATAC began in the 1980's and has continually striven to raise the consciousness of women on Christian feminist issues. Through speaking to members of WATAC and listening to their guest speaker, Professor Larissa Behrendt, we learnt that WATAC is committed to total inclusivity and equality in Church and society. Professor Behrendt is a Eualeyai/Kamillaroi woman. She is the Professor of Law and Director of Research at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney.

She is also a published author, of two books on Aboriginal law and two fiction novels. In her extremely inspiring address Professor Behrendt spoke of the importance of mentors in your life. Drawing on her own experiences she recounted an English teacher who told her “You may hate high school, but you’ll love university.” For Professor Behrendt, as a young Indigenous girl, she had never thought about attending university and it wasn't until she heard this advice that she believed she could.

It was with the support of her English teacher and her mother that she sent an application to

Harvard College in Boston and then attended the most prestigious law school in the world. Perhaps the most influential advice she gave all students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, was to surround yourself with friends that you respect and respect you. Friends that you trust and most importantly make you laugh. Professor Behrendt said that laughter was essential to find happiness and also to find yourself.

The WATAC luncheon was a wonderful experience and we must thank our three amazing teachers who organised and gave us this opportunity to learn more about the role of women in the church and society.



## St Peter's, Tuggerah

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, Melissa Besgrove, Dannielle Kelly, Emma Byrnes, Claire Bodle and I attended the 14<sup>th</sup> Luncheon of Women and the Australian Church at Parliament House in Sydney. Although knowing very little of WATAC and what they do, we were eager to attend the luncheon not only for the mere experience of the day, but also to learn more about the role this association plays in society.

We travelled down to Sydney by train unsupervised, much to the amazement of many guests we spoke to. Arriving at our destination proved to be not too much of a difficult task. Just being inside Parliament House was an experience in itself, with its grandeur and history. On excursions, the journeys to the destination are always, without fail, a memorable and enjoyable time. However, the luncheon itself was the most memorable and enjoyable part of our day.

It was a great experience to be able to mix with students from other schools and we befriended girls at our table very easily. This luncheon was also a fantastic opportunity to be inspired by women in Australia who are working towards making a positive change to society.

The key note speaker of the day was Professor Larissa Behrendt, an Indigenous Euleyai/Kamillaroi woman who has a long list of commendations attributed to her name. From her ancestors' experiences with the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Behrendt has become an inspirational role model to both men and women by becoming an advocate for the rights of Indigenous Australians. Behrendt is a Barrister for the Supreme Court, Land Commissioner at the Land and Environment Court, the Alternate Chair of the



Serious Offenders Review Board, a founding member of the Australian Academy of Law, Director of Bangarra Dance Theatre, an author of several books, 2002 recipient of the David Uniapon Award and 2005 Commonwealth Writers Prize. But that is just to name a few. All five of us found Professor Behrendt's speech inspirational.

For an individual whose family has experienced the Stolen Generation issue, Behrendt has come forward to make a change in society thus inspiring young people in society to do the same, proving that anything is achievable. Her experiences subtly addressed the uprising of women's participation and their role in both the Australian Church and society.

WATAC is an impressive association of men and women who are dedicated to the inclusivity of women and raising the roles of women in both society and the Australian Church. Being selected to attend the luncheon was both a great honour and privilege and I highly recommend any individual to attend the next one.

*Danielle McComber*

## St JOHN BOSCO, Engadine

On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June a group of Year 11 and 12 students, accompanied by Mr Casni, attended the Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) Luncheon at the Parliament House of New South Wales. The main theme of the meeting was "Our Time Is Now". This involved being treated to a two-course meal while listening to some of the foremost female figures in the community.

The luncheon was highlighted by the speech of Professor Larissa Behrendt, the NAIDOC Person of the Year and author, as well as working with the United Nations and the Land and Environment Court. During her speech, Professor Behrendt provided a fascinating insight into her life and achievements, stemming from a rich Aboriginal heritage that had been devastated by the Protectionism policy. Behrendt explained that it was this



impact on her family that encouraged her to pursue a Law career to help those of Indigenous heritage.

A great deal of gratitude should be given to the organisers of the luncheon and to Mr Casni who provided a very interesting and informative excursion.

*Liam Ensor and Amie Hamling (Yr 11)*

## Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta:

On Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> June, many students and teachers from Catholic schools in the greater Sydney area attended the -14<sup>th</sup> Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) Annual Luncheon at NSW Parliament House, Sydney. From Our Lady of Mercy College was Charlotte Barclay, Elisha Eco and Laura Zournazidis, and our teacher, Mrs Christine Hackett. There were also many other members and patrons of WATAC who were there, including guest speaker, Professor Larissa Behrendt. We all went into one of the dining rooms and were served a wonderful lunch of king prawn and asparagus salad for entree and lamb with gnocchi and pesto sauce for main. It was absolutely delicious.

Midway through the meal there was a 'lucky door' prize, which was more like a 'find the ribbon' prize and it created a great atmosphere as both students and adults were able to have fun trying to see if they had 'the green ribbon under the chair'. There was also a raffle at the end which saw the collecting of many beautiful prizes donated by various people and organisations.

But the highlight of the day would have to be the guest speaker, Professor of Law at UTS, Larissa Behrendt, who spoke on the topic 'Our Time is Now'. The stories that Prof. Behrendt told were not only humorous and enjoyable, but were also inspiring to everyone, especially to the many young people who were there. The passion with which she spoke made her life story so incredible and showed how no matter who you are, if you believe and try hard, you will achieve. Her enthusiasm for all areas of social justice was also very interesting,



and I think that the way Prof. Behrendt spoke with such gusto, she made everyone in the room fall silent, in awe at what she had achieved and what she believes in.

However, the most rewarding part of the day was the question and answer time with Prof. Behrendt, where anyone was able to come up to the rostrum and ask her questions. This amazing experience allowed both young and old to ask questions on a variety of subjects such as Aboriginal rights and options on starting careers in social justice; this time really topped off the wonderful day we had.

On behalf of all who attended, I would like to thank the members of WATAC and the staff of Parliament House for organising and holding such a wonderful event that was thoroughly enjoyed, and also to Professor Larissa Behrendt, whose words were an inspiration to all.

*Charlotte Barclay*

## Wanted: women of spirit in our own time

Joan Chittister

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious is meeting in Dallas this week under scrutiny from Rome and with a cloud hanging over its head.

What shall we think about such a time as this when the women religious who have built, carried, led and staffed every work of the church from the earliest days of this nation to this present time of turbulence and transition are being accused of being unorthodox, unfaithful, and unfit to make adult decisions about what they need to hear and who they want to have say it?

The problem is that in the face of opposition they have also been unafraid.

What shall we think about that? Think David, maybe, who confronted the giant Goliath; think Moses, perhaps, who faced the Red Sea with an Egyptian army at his back; think Judith and her handmaiden, certainly, who routed Holofernes and saved the city; think Shifra and Puah, without doubt, who refused the order to murder Jewish newborns and so saved the nation. Think Mary of Nazareth and Mary of Magdala who stood as independent women alone and unblinking. Think moment of decision.

Then think of the foundresses of every religious order you have ever known who came to the United States without money, without professional resources, often without the language, and commonly without support — even from the church

– to deal head on with the social justice questions of their time and so saved the church in the process.

These were women who opened schools for girls in a world that considered the education of women a useless and uppity waste.

These were women who nursed soldiers on both battlefields of the Civil War, North and South, in an age when sisters didn't work with men at all, let alone nurse them.

These were women who worked with what was left of a Native American society that had been stripped of its dignity, robbed of its lands and denied its civil rights in a culture that defined both the American Indian and the women who served them as less than fully human.

These were women who taught blacks for centuries and then walked with them in Selma, Ala., to claim their full humanity – attack dogs at their heels, fire hoses in front of them – and met disdain everywhere from Christians who used religion to justify first slavery and, after it, segregation.

These were women who gave their lives to insert Catholic children into a Protestant society as equal participants in the democratic dream all the way to a Catholic presidency.

Indeed, for hundreds of years, over and over again, women religious have found themselves at the junction between past and future. For hundreds of years they have consistently, persistently, confidently and courageously chosen for a necessary future – whatever difficulties the doing of it meant for them in the present. Over and over again, they chose for tomorrow rather than settle for a more convenient past.

The entire history of religious life in this nation has been a history of crisis and response, of need and resistance, of response and reaction.

It was not an easy time.

At a time when the sick died uncared for, and the uneducated died illiterate and the poor or addicted died destitute and minorities died invisible to the rest of society, women religious chose to challenge any and every system for the sake of the coming of the reign of God.

And in the end, they succeeded. But don't be fooled: They did not succeed because their numbers were large or their influence was great or their social support was either broad-based or obvious. They succeeded because they refused to allow the ideas of the past to become the cement of the future. They succeeded because of the courage of women who went where they were told not to go.

Now we are at another crossroads moment in time. This is a time, too, of deep crisis and great needs, of the rejection of those who raise new questions and a reaction against those who raise new ideas in a system trying to preserve the old ones in order to preserve itself.

It is a time, as it has always been, for leadership. But leadership and authority are not the same thing. It can take a long time to learn the difference between the two but there is nothing in life that demonstrates the difference between the two better than a crossroad.

At the crossroads in life, authority goes one direction: back. Authority goes in the direction that's already in the book; the path that has been clearly trod before now, the way that is safe and sure, clear and certain, obedient and approved, applauded and rewarded.

Leadership, on the other hand, rewrites the book. It takes the direction that leads only to the promise of a better tomorrow for everyone however difficult it may be to achieve it now. "The seed," the Zen master teaches, "never sees the flower."

The times are clear. The needs are now. The time for new decisions is upon us. Authority is not enough for times such as these. We need leaders now.

As women religious meet in Dallas these days as a "Leadership Conference" rather than as a conference of "Major Superiors," may God raise up women among them who will lead.

It is a new period of crisis. We must determine to meet this challenge to spiritual maturity, to human adulthood now as did our foremothers before us meet theirs. We, too, must move beyond fear to the real, real faith that can, we have seen, move mountains.

It is another period in which public and even ecclesiastical approval must be second again to the needs of those who look to us for both vision and voice.

It is a period in which we must not forego reaching for what is necessary because others tell us it is not acceptable.

For the sake of religious life, for the sake of women everywhere, and, in the end, for the sake of the very integrity of the church itself, we are looking to you now to be "Women of Spirit." May we be to our age what our ancestors were to theirs. Whatever the cost to ourselves.

For that, we are depending now on you.

National Catholic Reporter 11<sup>th</sup> August, 2010

# An Annual General Meeting To Remember

Because WATAC is an incorporated body we have to hold an AGM each year. This year we decided to hold it in the Waratah Room at NSW Parliament House following our wonderful Luncheon. What a great idea it turned out to be because so many WATAC-ers came – we even needed to find extra chairs! And this was a first-ever happening. The real draw card was the presence of our high profile speaker: Paul Collins who had come from Canberra accompanied by his wife, Marilyn Hatton, who has, for some years, been involved with OCW (Ordination of Catholic Women).

At the business end of the Meeting the new Working Group for WATAC Inc was installed for the next twelve months. This happily included three new members who put their hands up to help the wonderful group of women who do all the background organisation of WATAC activities and are involved in the thinking and planning for the future. We all owe them a debt of gratitude for their commitment and energy. This group now also includes; Lynette Allen, Chris Edwards and Helen O'Brien.



Maureen Watterson presented the Financial Report which indicated that while we ran at a deficit in 2009 WATAC is still very healthy financially, and the deficit was a result of our various decisions to be actively involved in working for justice, rather than settling for passive 'on-looking'.

Bernice presented the WATAC Report on the year's activities and then invited Paul Collins to speak with us. (You can read this Report after the outline of Paul's following interaction with the group.)

Paul is a member of Catholics for Ministry which has been active for four years. It is a small group who decided to actively work together on Church issues where they felt that they could make a difference.

One of their projects was the organisation of a petition regarding the ordination of married priests

and the role of women in the Catholic Church. This petition touched 120 parishes and was signed by 17,000 people including 168 priests. They then sent it on to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference however they had very little response.

Another project was personally undertaken by Paul Collins when he became aware that there was very soon to be a literal new English translation of the Mass imposed on all English speaking countries. Paul wrote and printed the booklet 'And Also with You'.

It was at this stage that WATAC and Catholics for Ministry began to work together on the project of which you are all aware; sending Paul's booklet to all WATAC members, then to all parishes and now producing the booklet 'And So the People Said'. It has been a big undertaking and very worth-while.

Catholics for Ministry is also involved with a formal study of the number of foreign clergy in Australia. They have established that 23% of Australian priests are foreign born and are sadly often being treated as 'sacrament machines'. Catholics for Ministry are hoping to have this report ready

for publishing soon. It should provide a factual basis for serious discussion.

Another issue of concern for Catholics for Ministry is the situation of women in the Church and the many issues arising from the Church's bias against them. The group OCW *in Australia* is currently closing down and Catholics for Ministry is taking on some of their concerns which includes hosting their website.

Paul thanked WATAC for their financial support of Catholics for Ministry in the last six months. His talk involved lively inter-active discussion with the WATAC women and men present and the joint ventures between Catholics for Ministry and WATAC were enthusiastically endorsed by all at the AGM.

We all agreed that it was a good idea to combine the AGM with the Annual Luncheon so it looks like this will be a future pattern of action. □

# WATAC Inc REPORT to Annual General Meeting

NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE  
1<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2010

The 2009 WATAC AGM was held on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> June at the Conference Centre of the Sisters of St Joseph, North Sydney. Rosemary Breen, a WATAC member from Inverell was our gifted speaker. She spoke of the work of Sanctuary Inverell, a group that organises the resettlement of refugees in their community. Inspired by Rosemary Breen's talk to us at our 2009 AGM, WATAC has been able to support their work in a small way this year. We have met three different groups on their arrival at Sydney International Airport and supported them in getting to their new location in Australia. In a recent development Rosemary Breen has agreed to represent WATAC at the International Meeting of WOW (Women's Ordination Worldwide) to be held in Orsay, France on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010. Marilyn Hatton of OCW (*Ordination of Catholic Women Australia*) invited a member of WATAC to be present on her behalf this year and Rosemary will be there from WATAC and Australia! We will publish her report in the next WATAC Newsletter.

The WATAC Inc Committee was nominated at the 2009 AGM and they have actively served WATAC during the last 12 months. WATAC Inc has met every four to six weeks depending on the need. Members are: Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Margaret Day, Kaye Hodge, Margaret Keyes, Margaret Knowlden, Alma Madden, Bernice Moore and Judi Powe. Maureen Watterson is Financial Secretary and Helen Coles is WATAC Administrative Assistant.

The 2009 WATAC Luncheon was held on September 10<sup>th</sup> at NSW Parliament House. Our keynote speaker was Bishop Pat Power and his warm, honest and encouraging words captured the hearts and minds of all present, but none more so than the young women and men from the various schools present. They enthusiastically entered into dialogue with Bishop Pat. A great moment of life!

The life of WATAC is lived out most meaningfully through the many local groups that continue to meet, usually monthly, in the homes of various members. A significant event in 2009 was the formation of a new group in the Blue Mountains region. This dynamic group was birthed in October as an outcome of a Reflection Day held in Blackheath parish based on the film 'As It Is in Heaven'. The group now meets monthly at the Leura home of

the Charity Sisters. Some of the books WATAC Groups have been discussing during the year are Michael Morwood's *'From Sand to Solid Ground'*, Albert Nolan's *'Jesus Today'* and Geoffrey Robinson's very challenging book. One group has been using the BBC engaging drama *'Heart and Soul'* to stimulate discussion. Bernice also met with the Inverell Women's Group in November 09 where the focus was on the Blair-Kaiser novel *'Cardinal Mahoney'*; a very enjoyable gathering!

In November '09 Paul Collins of *Catholics for Ministry*, organised a meeting between some active, committed, grass-roots groups at St Scholastica's Conference Centre to hear Anthony Padavano, an American theologian. He came to Australia for the World Parliament of Religions so it was a wonderful opportunity to hear him and be in dialogue with him and the other active groups.

Following this meeting WATAC and Catholics for Ministry decided to work together in terms of alerting people to the proposed new English translation of the Mass. Action which has followed from this decision includes:

- Copies of Paul Collins booklet 'And Also with You' were sent to WATAC members who were encouraged to read it and complete a written response. These responses were compiled and this document was sent to our Australian Bishops in November 2009. Some Bishops responded and most were supportive.
- WATAC donated \$3000 to Catholics for Ministry to help fund further printing of 'And Also with You' and to support their research projects.
- Paul Collins and Bernice Moore met and planned the mailing of this booklet and further information re the new translation of the Mass to all Australian parishes. (This distribution was carried out by some of WATAC's dedicated members and the task was completed by 25<sup>th</sup> March.)
- Priests' Responses have continued to arrive by mail and email since then and the majority by far have expressed their dismay, disappointment and frustration at the translation and lack of consultation.
- The Priest' Responses are being collated at present. A compilation of the first twenty responses was printed in the May WATAC Newsletter. This Newsletter has been mailed to all those priests who responded, together with a note of thanks for their participation.
- When all responses are printed into a completed document this will be sent to the parishes who responded (all identifying references have been deleted) and we are planning to also send the completed document to the Australian Bishops as well as to all WATAC members.

In November '09 WATAC organised the 'Women, Religion and Peace' inter-faith dialogue for Year 11 and 12 students. As usual it was an outstanding event with a maximum number of students filling the NSW Parliament House Theatre. There is usually a similar event early in the year however we had to cancel the 16<sup>th</sup> march meeting this year due to a clash with the celebrations of Catholic Schools Week. The next inter-faith student event is planned for Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> November.

The WATAC Newsletter continues to be produced four times a year thanks to the work of Helen Coles, Margaret Knowlden and Bernice Moore. The mailing of it relies on Janet Cain and Kaye Hodge. WATAC says 'Thank You' to all.

The WATAC website continues to elicit requests for information about WATAC, our groups and

events and is also accessed as a source of information for students from schools and universities. Maureen Short's photography of our Luncheons and Conferences are in the photo galleries at the website. It is maintained by Jason Rhodes of JR Network Solutions and updated on a semi regular basis.

As ever, this has been a year full of action and challenges. WATAC **IS** its membership and their commitment to do, to be, to think and to keep raising their voices is our "raison d'être". Thank you to all especially the WATAC INC Committee, Helen Coles, our Administrative Officer and Maureen Watterson, our Treasurer. Our thanks also to those Religious Orders who generously give us financial support and to our subscribing members who help keep the coffers healthy enough to continue the important work that WATAC does.

---

## The inner workings of a hierarchy with a sex offender mentality

Fran Ferder and John Heagle

Aug. 02, 2010

### Analysis

The Vatican announcement that the attempted ordination of women is a "grave crime" to be dealt with according to the same procedures as the sexual abuse of minors exposes the way those running our church actually think. In attempting to explain revised norms to church canons, they reveal the legalistic inner workings of their minds, and affirm unsettling psychological patterns of thought.

Msgr. Charles Scicluna of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, for example, speaking about the new codes July 15, identified the sexual abuse of minors as an "egregious violation of moral law." His statement placed the emphasis on "violation of law." When all the words are parsed, and the nuances carefully articulated, it is law that has prominence.

What about the children? Should we not think of sexual abuse, in the first place, as an "egregious violation of children?"

This distinction is significant because it paints in bold letters the central concern of a hierarchical church whose first interest is ensuring its pronouncements are obeyed. A violated law and a violated child evoke, or ought to evoke, quite different emotional responses. Tears are generally not shed over a broken law. Perhaps this is why we have seen precious few tears among church leaders. They have been schooled to place obedience to the law above all else, with a tragic disconnect of empathy the predictable result.

One of four North American women is ordained to the priesthood on a chartered tour boat on the St. Lawrence River on the U.S.-Canadian border in 2005. The Catholic church said the ordinations were invalid. (CNS/ Art Babych) Perhaps this is also why those who crafted the latest document can think of sexual abuse and the ordination of women in the same category of "grave crime." As long as both the abuse of minors and the ordination of women are avoided, the law is kept, and Rome is pleased.

We have conducted psychological evaluations of dozens of clergy sex abusers over the past 25 years, becoming familiar with their style of cognitive processing. Similar to sex offenders in general, they typically deny responsibility, minimize the seriousness of their offenses, blame their victims, react with outrage when accused and redirect attention away from their behavior. They are self-centered and often exhibit a sense of grandiosity — a belief that they are above accountability. If this sounds familiar, it is because we have repeatedly

– and sadly – been seeing it in the responses of church officials from the cathedrals of the United States to the basilicas of Rome.

A mentality is a way of thinking, a deeply ingrained pattern of perceiving, reasoning and decision-making. A sex-offender mentality is one that prompts defensive, self-serving, deceptive and blaming responses when faced with credible accusations of sexual crime. Unaware of their abnormal processing, sex offenders display a blindness that is central to the problem.

Even more disconcerting, however, is that characteristics observed in the mentality of individual offenders can also be present in systems and institutions. The similarity in cognitive processing between actual offenders and the system that seeks to shield itself from their offenses is often chilling:

- “Holy Father, the people of God are with you and will not let themselves be influenced by the petty gossip of the moment” (Cardinal Angelo Sodano, former Vatican secretary of state, Easter 2010, St. Peter’s Square).
- “Pupils told me on concert trips about what went on. But it didn’t dawn on me from their stories that I should do something” (Fr. Georg Ratzinger, brother of Pope Benedict XVI, BBC, March 29).
- Only 300 of about 3,000 sexual abuse cases spanning 50 years involved allegations of “genuine pedophilia” (Scicluna, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s promoter of justice, March 13).
- “All we ask is that it be fair and that the Catholic church not be singled out for a horror that has cursed every culture, religion, organization, institution, school, agency and family in the world” (Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, March 28).
- And the latest – the attempted ordination of women is a grave crime that ought to be treated with the same severity as the sexual abuse of a child.

These and similar statements illustrate a mentality whereby the characteristic way of thinking of sex offenders has found its way into the collective

psychic structure of an institution. The same “default” setting in the brain that triggers distorted mental processing prompts members of an entire group to think and respond in much the same way that sex offenders do. This “group think” inadvertently offers protection to actual sex offenders, and may have attracted them to the institution in the first place.

Let us be clear: We are not suggesting that church leaders are sex offenders. But we must name a tragic reality: Many of them think or respond the way sex offenders do when confronted with clergy sex abuse and its cover-up: They deny, defend and blame. They minimize and cover up. They become outraged when their abysmal handling of abuse cases is exposed. Most egregious of all, they display appalling deficits in empathy for victims: They turn to categorizing crimes when all people want is a heartfelt pastoral response from their leaders.

Celibacy is mandated for male church leaders. Women are excluded from sacramental leadership, thus creating an ecclesial environment that offers a perfect refuge for those whose sexual interests do not include women. Among them are the sexually disinterested, who simply don’t pick up sexual cues in the environment. For these asexual men celibacy is easy – and so is failing to notice if some of their brothers become sexual with minors. Since asexual individuals have a minimized capacity for intimate feelings, their affectivity is stunted, limiting their ability to experience the whole range of the most normal human feelings, including falling in love and feeling horrified over the abuse of a child. Women are a genuine threat to this world. They can expose it. Keeping them far away from the inner workings of the system is essential to its survival.

Rome has now connected the sexual abuse of minors and a ban on the ordination of women in one of its own documents. Perhaps those who crafted the document are on to something: The refusal to allow women into the inner sanctum of ecclesial power may well be related to clergy sexual abuse, and to the Vatican’s impotence in addressing this crime in a truly pastoral way. Is the attempted ordination of women a crime, or is the real crime the refusal to allow it?

[Fran Ferder is a Franciscan nun, clinical psychologist, author and professor at Seattle University. John Heagle is priest, psychotherapist, canon lawyer and professor at Seattle University.]

The Centre for Progressive Religious Thought

Freedom to Explore

presents

**ETHICS WITH or WITHOUT GOD**  
**Exploring a Progressive Religious Basis**  
**For an Ethical World View**

Regional Conference  
at Beecroft Community Centre  
Corner Beecroft & Copeland Roads, Beecroft

Saturday 28 August, 2010 (9am – 4pm)

*Lunch, Morning and Afternoon Tea provided.*

Speakers

DR ALAN SAUNDERS BA, MSc, PhD  
REV DR IAN MAVOR BA, BEd, BD, EdD, OAM, FACE  
MS TERESA RUSSELL  
MRS JAN TENDYS MA, DipEd

FOR DISCUSSION: How do we leave behind elements of an unsatisfactory moral code which were ordained by ecclesiastical authority or by the supernatural? How do we develop new progressive moralities appropriate to advances in scientific discovery and philosophical thought? How do we balance our new freedom to develop a suitable morality with our responsibilities to humanity and nature? How can we best contribute to the conversation about what is appropriate ethical behaviour in our changing environment? How do we teach and model altered ways of understanding and responding to ethical problems to the next generation?

Payment options: Cheque: Please make cheques payable to CPRT  
EFT: Account Name: THE CENTRE FOR PROGRESSIVE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT  
BSB: 082 155 A/c No: 83 243 0417 (include your name on EFT)  
All Registrations and Mail: 22 Badajoz Rd, RYDE NSW 2112  
Email: cprtfreedomtoexplore@yahoo.com.au Web Site <http://www.cprtfreedomtoexplore.org>  
Coordinator: Eric Stevenson Mob: 0405758116 Secretary: Ken Fletcher Tel: (02) 9876 4147

---

**Registration Details (Please print clearly)**

Title and First Names ..... Surname .....  
.....

Your Address including Postcode .....

Tel. number ..... Email Address .....

Registration for: Aug 28th 2010 Ethics Conference

<b>CPRT MEMBERS Adult</b> (after 1 August).....	<b>\$ 45.00</b>
<b>NON-MEMBER Adult</b> (after 1 August) .....	<b>\$ 50.00</b>
<b>NON-MEMBER Pensioner** and Student</b> (after 1 August) ...	<b>\$ 45.00</b>

**EARLY BIRD** (paid before 1 August) **pay \$5.00 less than the above prices.**

Amount Paid \$ .....

Cheque enclosed

Paid to bank account

Post to: 22 Badajoz Rd, RYDE NSW 2112

# Mutinous rumblings among senior Australian Catholic clergy

Noel Debien

ABC Religion and Ethics | 16 Jul 2010

"Everyone in this room knows very well that George Pell was transferred from Melbourne so he could get the red hat so he would become an elector of the pope. And that was the sole reason ... Most bishops would be in favour of the bishops electing the cardinals ... What happens at the moment is the pope appoints the cardinals who then elect the pope who then appoints more cardinals and on and on it goes. So it's a vicious circle. And it is deliberately designed to ensure we do not have another Pope John XXIII."

So said Australian bishop Geoffrey Robinson to 250 or so priests and bishops on Thursday this week. He was speaking to the Australian National Council of Catholic priests held in Parramatta. He was advocating some modest democracy in the Catholic church: namely the franchise for bishops. Sustained and loud applause from 250 odd priests followed the bishop's words.

Some of the audience were victims of sexual abuse themselves - including the very same Bishop Geoffrey Robinson who received a 5 minute long ovation from the priests when his arrival was noted. This same week saw a call for the resignation of the bishop of Broken-Bay diocese over alleged mismanagement of sexual abuse go to air nationally through Australia on ABC TV and appear in the Irish press.

Some priest delegates knew or had worked with colleagues gaoled for sexual abuse crimes. Some delegates were bishops responsible for responding to horrendous legal and pastoral situations beyond even their worst nightmares. There was frustration among them. At times there was white hot anger. There were also open tears - but there was genuine friendship and camaraderie between the many fellow priests there. They gave every appearance of being united in crisis.

There were many times during this week's conference of the where an emotional foment could be sensed: something that must have been like pre-revolutionary Paris of 1789. The 250 or so clergy and bishops had come from all over Australasia,

and they were listening to speakers including American priest-author Donald Cozzens - who has been writing and speaking internationally on the roots of crisis in the Catholic church and priesthood for over a decade.

Cozzens has focussed directly on issues of clerical sexual abuse and institutional denial. Cozzens spoke about the church culture of "discretion." He spoke about bishops who don't tell the pope what the pope doesn't want to hear. He spoke of clergy who don't tell bishops what they don't want to hear. He pointed out the habitual way in which discretion is exercised within church circles, and so the truths of situations are not adequately confronted. He praised Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge for having weighed into the problem of "discretion" in church circles, Cozzens nevertheless politely poured fluorosulfuric acid onto the culture of feudal loyalty he says still operates in the Catholic church.

If there had been any pulling of punches early on in this week's conference, the gloves were well and truly off by the third day. Though I have heard much of what was said before in other places, I have never heard it all said in front of 250 Catholic clergy and five Australian bishops. I have never heard it said so strongly or clearly.

I heard calls for a third Vatican Council, married priests, discussion of women priests, warnings of church implosion, calls for cardinals to be elected by bishops, as well as public criticism of Cardinal Pell's appointment to Sydney. That was just for starters, and all coinciding with this week's strong condemnation of women's ordination by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. At one point I leant over to a bishop - not noted as a progressive radical - and asked if I could check his pulse. He had the good grace to laugh, though I am not all that sure he was feeling all that jocular. It was pretty strong stuff.

Bishop Robinson didn't just outline his frustrations with the colossal failures of the church in addressing sexual abuse, he laid the responsibility for failure right at the top: "Every bishop takes an oath of loyalty to the pope. And yet from the time it

first came to our attention in the mid 80's right though to 2004 - twenty years - Pope John Paul said next to nothing. And the loyalty of bishops was to a silent pope and so they became defensive - whereas had the pope in 1985 come out and said 'this is a terrible blight on the church, we're going to confront it, obliterate it from the church'; then the very loyalty of the bishops would have worked in favour of victims, whereas in fact it worked against them: a culture of secrecy."

Bishop Robinson and the other bishops and clergy then discussed a practical reform process for the clergy to begin. Robinson pointed out that the clergy could effect change only by convincing their bishops, and he even explained the (frankly) Byzantine approach needed to effect change. The bishop teased out the complex loyalty of bishops to the pope. He was backed up by Bishop Patrick Power who told his fellow priests that he saw the abuse crisis as a means of facing the "structural issues that need to be challenged".

Many of the issues raised by these priests would cause more my conservative Catholic friends to tear their clothes and strew ashes over their heads - immediately before delating the whole meeting to Rome via flaming email of course. On the other hand, progressive Catholics would have been surprised and heartened. I am still ruminating over what I heard. The real test will be discerning whether this is all just steam being let off by grumpy clergy, or whether it is the enormous glacier of the Catholic church loudly cracking.

I finish with Robinson's most foreboding remark. "In 1989, who could have possibly foreseen that by the end of the year Communism would have collapsed - yet it happened. A few years later, who could have foreseen that apartheid in South Africa would collapse - but yet it did ... the growth of discontent in seeing the dysfunction in the regime ... reached a critical mass. And when it did, things collapsed. it is my belief that change on the church is most likely to happen in that fashion."

Noel Debien is the producer of ABC's  
Sunday Nights radio program

---

#### Recommended Reading

## *Half the Sky*

*Turning oppression into opportunity for women worldwide*

Nicholas D. Kristof and  
Sheryl WuDunn

Every so often, a movement or a book can change the world. Think of the abolition of slavery; think of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*.

*Half the Sky* must be ranked as potentially one of the powerful books of our time. It would be impossible to read this book without being appalled at the abuses of women worldwide and, at the same time, deeply moved by the stories of valiant women who have somehow risen from the ashes of their brutalised lives.

Reflecting on the security and comfort I have always enjoyed, I can only say with deep humility "There but for the grace of God go I!"

Margaret Knowlden

I read *Half the Sky* in one sitting, staying up until 3 a.m. to do so. It is brilliant and inspirational, and I want to shout about it from the rooftops and mountains. It vividly illustrates how women have turned despair into prosperity and bravely nurtured hope to cultivate a bright future. The book ends with an especially compelling 'what you can do' to exhort us all to action. GREG MORTENSON, author of *Three Cups of Tea*

If you have always wondered whether you can change the world, read this book. Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn have written a brilliant call to arms that describes one of the transcendent injustices in the world today-the brutal treatment of women. FAREED ZAKARIA, author of *The Post-American World*

This stirring book is at once a savage indictment of gender inequality in the developing world and an inspiring testament to these women's courage, and their struggle for hope and recovery. An unexpectedly uplifting read. KHALED HOSSEINI, author of *The Kite Runner*

These stories show us the power and resilience of women who would have every reason to give up but never do. They will be an inspiration for anyone who reads this book, and a model for those fighting for justice around the world. You will not want to put this book down. ANGELINA JOLIE

It's impossible to exaggerate the importance of this book. Wonderfully written and vividly descriptive, *Half the Sky* can and should galvanize support for reform on all levels. Inspiring as it is shocking, this book demands to be read. ANNE RICE, author of *Called Out of Darkness*

I think it's impossible to stand by and do nothing after reading *Half the Sky*. It does what we need most: it bears witness to the sheer cruelty that mankind can do to mankind. GEORGE CLOONEY

*Half the Sky* is a passionate and persuasive plea to all of us to rise up and say 'No more!' to the seventeenth-century abuses to girls and women in the twenty-first century world. This is a book that will pierce your heart and arouse your conscience. TOM BROKAW

# Health Care Issue Complicates Investigation

Vatican Officials, US Women Religious Meet  
Thomas C. Fox

National Catholic Reporter  
July 6, 2010

**A** Vatican doctrinal investigation of the largest leadership organization for U.S. women religious appears to have been complicated by the group's support last March of health care legislation opposed by the U.S. bishops.

In meetings with Vatican officials last April, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious repeatedly fielded questions from Vatican officials about its support for the legislation despite the fact that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had argued the bill would allow federal funding for abortions.

The Leadership Conference, along with a number of other Catholic groups, including the Catholic Health Association, disagreed with the bishop's interpretation of the legislation, saying it did not allow for federal funding of abortions.

Last March, in the final days of a highly politicized health care debate in Congress, the Leadership Conference offered support to a Senate-backed House bill that eventually passed 219-212.

The Leadership Conference supported the legislation, saying it would bring health care coverage to an additional 30 million people.

President Obama signed the measure, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, on March 23, leaving a visible rift between the bishops and women religious. The issues involved now appear to have gone beyond specific health care legislation to include the proper use of church authority, who can speak to moral and political issues, and the scope of constitutional rights of vowed religious.

Elements in these thorny issues have been thrown into the mix of the ongoing doctrinal assessment by Vatican officials of the U.S. women religious leadership, an internal Leadership Conference document indicates.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious is an association of the leaders of congregations of

Catholic women religious in the United States and claims more than 1,500 members, representing about 95 percent of the 68,000 U.S. women religious.

It was in February 2009 that the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, headed by U.S. Cardinal William Joseph Levada, sent a letter to the conference, announcing the doctrinal assessment. Levada cited Vatican doctrinal concerns with the conference dating back to 2001.

The Levada letter set no timetable for further discussions or resolution of the issues involved. The outcome of the assessment could have a significant impact on the future of the conference and, in turn, the leadership of U.S. women religious communities, possibly leading to Vatican demands for new methods of communication among women religious or even new structures of leadership.

However serious the outcome of the doctrinal assessment could be, it has received relatively little public exposure in large part because the process has been overshadowed by a far more public Vatican investigation of U.S. women religious congregations, which was initiated two months before and is now in the second year of a three-year process.

This second Vatican inquiry, officially called an apostolic visitation, was announced in December 2008 and involves the nation's apostolic religious communities. This investigation is being carried out by the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, headed by Slovenian Cardinal Franc Rode.

When Rode's congregation first announced the study of U.S. women religious communities, it cited as reason falling numbers within them and a need to determine their "quality of life."

Whatever the Vatican intentions, many U.S. women religious have seen this probe as an affront. They say they were never consulted, were never involved in its planning or execution, and will not be allowed an opportunity to refute allegations before the report is passed along to Vatican officials for consideration and possible action.

As a result of these objections, some religious communities have not been fully compliant with the study, although there have been no reports that communities singled out for personal site visits have been less than receptive. The apostolic visitation is now in its third phase, which involves the visitation of between 80 and 100 religious communities.

Meanwhile, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious has been tightlipped about the

Vatican probe into its conduct. Asked by NCR for information on the Vatican study, the conference issued a short statement confirming the dates it had met with church officials, while adding that it has been cooperating with them, answering all questions regarding its “practices and policies.” The conference confirmed it had met with Vatican officials in Rome in April 2009 and April 2010, and with church officials in November 2009 in Washington.

Once informed of the Vatican doctrinal assessment in March 2009, the conference informed its members, sharing with them the cardinal’s letter and their initial response. NCR obtained copies of those letters at the time.

According to Levada’s letter, the Vatican study became necessary after the conference failed to respond adequately to concerns expressed by the Vatican in 2001. The Levada letter cited three areas of doctrinal concern: women’s ordination, the primacy of the Catholic faith, and homosexuality.

Levada designated Toledo, Ohio, Bishop Leonard P. Blair, a member of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, as the lead bishop in the study.

Following the Leadership Conference officers’ meeting with Vatican officials last April, it sent out a letter to its membership, updating them on the conversations. NCR obtained a copy of that letter.

Three of four current officers met with Vatican officials, including Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration Marlene Weisenbeck, the conference’s president; Franciscan Sr. J. Lora Dambroski; and Notre Dame de Namur Sr. Jane Burke. Dominican Sr. Mary Hughes, also on the leadership team, could not attend the meetings.

The conference’s letter informed its members that at a meeting the women had April 23 with Levada and members of his staff focused on two topics: the Leadership Conference’s support of the health care reform bill and the status of the doctrinal assessment.

Describing the gathering as “frank and open,” the leadership team wrote that it had insisted at the meeting it does not support abortion, but did support the idea of speaking out on a political issue.

“We clarified that LCWR does not support abortion and that we have made this position clear,” the letter said. “We explained that we feel a moral imperative to see that there is health care coverage for all persons, and that we believe this bill will guarantee that more than 30 million uninsured persons would finally be provided health care.” The

letter added: “We were very clear in stating that our actions were not in opposition to the U.S. bishops.”

The Leadership Conference told its membership that Levada was concerned that the organization’s actions “were being interpreted as a public display of disunity within the church and that they undercut the perception of the church as one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic.”

The conference said it responded, speaking of the necessity to be able to exercise “rights, duties, and obligations as citizens.” The letter stated that Levada acknowledged women religious operate in two worlds – as Catholics and as citizens. However, he insisted that the bishops are the ones who make key decisions in matters of faith and morals.

Addressing the doctrinal assessment, the letter indicated the women expressed surprise as some of the materials requested by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith “go beyond the scope of a doctrinal assessment.” The letter did not elaborate on what those materials are.

The Vatican requests, the letter stated, caused the women to ask if the process “had moved beyond an assessment and into an investigation of LCWR.” The letter did not indicate how Levada responded to the question.

Levada told the women, the letter stated, that once Blair sends his final report to the congregation, his assessment will be sent for review to different groups, including “a subcommission, the American cardinals in Rome, and perhaps some others.” Levada explained he will then consult with Rode and develop a final report that will be presented to Pope Benedict XVI.

Blair’s diocesan director of communications, Sally A. Oberski, said the bishop has a policy of not speaking with the media about the assessment.

According to the letter, the leadership team met the next day, April 24, with Rode and members of his congregation. Again, Vatican officials queried the women about the conference’s support for the health care legislation.

The meeting moved on to discussions about the apostolic visitation and to a Leadership Conference statement approved at its 2009 national assembly in New Orleans. That statement, “LCWR Call,” was intended to set a five-year course for the organization.

“We discussed at length the LCWR support of the health care bill. The cardinal stated his belief that we cannot defend our position because it was contrary to the bishops,” the letter went on. “We again clarified that we do not support abortion and that we are quite aware that we are citizens of our country who must take action, and we base our actions upon our understanding of all the moral imperatives brought to the table within this particular piece of legislation.”

The letter said Rode instructed the women that “LCWR cannot declare a pastoral direction since this responsibility belongs to the episcopal conference alone and, he noted, that by our actions we broke unity. We reiterated our view that we do not support abortion and our belief that the moral imperative of providing health care for more than 30 million uninsured was an action we had to support.”

According to the letter, the women noted “some the benefits we have experienced [in the apostolic visitation], including the support and appreciation women religious have received from the public, as well as the opportunity to learn more about the rights and duties of religious within the church. We also noted that the process has caused confusion among our members because neither we nor the U.S. bishops were well-informed about all aspects of the apostolic visitation.”

The letter stated Rode spoke of “his serious concern over the many congregations that did not complete the entire apostolic visitation questionnaire.”

It stated that a doctrinal congregation staff member, Passionist Fr. Leonello Leidi, reiterated that Mother Mary Clare Millea, in her position as apostolic visitor, “is the vicar of the pope,” and

that the actions of some religious communities that did not fully comply in answering visitation questionnaires last year were acting in “open opposition” to Rome.

The letter stated that Leidi spoke of “possible consequences for leaders who may be judged as disobedient.”

The women religious leadership team asked Rode what he hoped would be the final outcome of the visitation, the letter noted.

“He responded by saying that he understands that women religious have historically worked for migrants and persons who are poor, and acknowledged that we have built schools and hospitals and have provided services to many people. He expressed a desire to get a clear, objective view of religious life as it is lived today and that a focus be placed on values, life in community, prayer, and living the evangelical life.”

The letter stated that the meeting ended with the cardinal making two recommendations: that the Leadership Conference of Women Religious be clear about its position on abortion, and that it invite members to collaborate with the apostolic visitation process.

“He again stated that LCWR has influence and we must use it to support the church and its efforts. He further indicated that he has spoken with Pope Benedict about the apostolic visitation and noted that the pope is concerned and may be making a statement about the process or may ask Cardinal Rode to issue a statement.”

The letter ended with the leadership team saying it will keep members informed about other aspects of the visit.

*Thomas C. Fox is NCR editor and can be reached  
at [tfox@ncronline.org](mailto:tfox@ncronline.org)*

# A hierarchy deeply damaged from within

## An NCR Editorial

Jul. 08, 2010

The first half of 2010 has been a particularly bumpy patch for the papacy of Benedict XVI. It wasn't supposed to be this way. This pope had as goals to sharpen the teaching of the world's largest Christian denomination, to do battle with secularism and relativism, and to convince the world, Catholic and otherwise, that Christianity authentically lived is more about possibilities and new freedom than about "thou shalt nots" and other restrictions.

His program has been seriously sidelined by the lingering effects of the sex abuse scandal in the United States; the explosion of the scandal in Ireland, Germany, Italy and now Belgium; and the diminishment of the episcopal office, particularly in those countries most affected by the scandal.

Are we witnessing the ecclesial equivalent of one of those slow-motion depictions of implosion, the kind where a seemingly invulnerable structure falls in upon itself, laid waste by some well-placed explosives? Perhaps.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that what is imploding is the church. The church is, in many ways, just fine. What is imploding, rather, is a culture of clericalism, especially the hierarchical layer of that culture, which has become so disconnected in many of its expressions from the core mandates of Christian scripture that it seems to barely function at all.

The authority that has been slowly leaking from the structure for decades is now gushing out as bishops contort themselves in attempts to convince the world of their good intentions and transparency while simultaneously railing against those within the church and without who are working to reveal the truth.

The shocking raid of a bishops' meeting in Belgium is but the latest indication of the degree to which the old protections and privileges enjoyed by the clerical culture are disintegrating. It stands as a clear symbol that an age is ending. The disintegration could be seen occurring during the past quarter century in the United States under the grinding weight of revelations that the Catholic

hierarchy had repeatedly protected those who had sexually molested children and had hidden the crimes from the church and the wider community.

It continued in Catholic Ireland, where the deep betrayal of the community caused a serious exodus from the church amid lingering anger. In one of the greater absurdities of this period of crisis, church leaders in Rome have decided to send bishops from the United States to determine what happened in the Irish church.

The erosion goes on, at a quicker pace, ugly in details that keep heaping up for the world to see. The pope's brother admits to slapping choir students who didn't perform properly — a human imperfection made all the more perceptible in an arena long wrapped in a façade of seeming perfection.

Meanwhile, the world outside this favored culture is beginning to realize that one of the most powerful men within it during Pope John Paul II's papacy, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, once secretary of state and now dean of the College of Cardinals, took money from the likes of the late Fr. Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder of the Legion of Christ. Maciel was a favorite of the former pope, and a man who abused his young seminarians and is accused of fathering children, including a son, whom he also allegedly repeatedly abused.

Sodano was one of Maciel's most ardent backers.

That Sodano should be nowhere near any level of control at the Vatican is apparent to most everyone who has given this scandal the slightest thought. But there he is, still posturing, offering paeans to a beleaguered pope during liturgies, and dismissing the growing chorus of charges against fellow bishops as petty gossip.

And when one of those fellow bishops, Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Austria, dares to call him out, as someone should, in one of the more rational comments that anyone inside the culture has yet made, Sodano is able to manipulate a meeting with Schönborn and the pope. The world is subsequently informed that such criticism is not to occur cardinal to cardinal. Such power is reserved for the pope alone. The pope remains silent and Sodano remains influential.

The protection from scrutiny previously enjoyed by the culture, a reflection more than anything of royal prerogatives and palace behavior, has disintegrated to the point where the U.S. Supreme Court gave approval for a suit that seeks to hold

## Group Reports

the Vatican responsible for the transfer of pedophile priests from place to place, transfers that occurred without warning to law enforcement bodies or to the communities involved.

The sex abuse crisis, as we've said in this space before, is a crisis of the clerical culture, a crisis of authority and ecclesiology. The sex abuse crisis is the awful symptom of much deeper problems.

Projection is occurring on a global scale as the bishops grasp for ways to explain how so much has gone so wrong so quickly. Relativism! Secularism! Cultural influences! All those bad things out there, they reason, are influencing the people to revolt, to backslide, to not believe as they should, to disregard the hierarchy's rulings and pronouncements. It is the bishops who fail to recognize that they, themselves, are the best living examples of the relativism and secularism they decry.

The great irony in all of this, of course, is that the hierarchy need not thrash about wondering how to adjust their culture and lives to the demands of an educated church in the 21st century.

The great questions of this age – and its demands for accountability and transparency – were anticipated by the church, which began to deal with them during the Second Vatican Council, the reform gathering of the mid-1960s.

There was reason – perhaps the Spirit responds when so many openly seek its guidance – why the texts of that council's documents were different from any before, why those texts are filled with notions of dialogue, of acceptance, of restraint in judgment and punishment, of the new description of church as the people of God.

Perhaps those at the council anticipated that the hierarchy of the future would have to structure itself differently, lead differently, and see the world differently.

What seems clear at this moment is that the hierarchy as it has evolved in the past half millennium is deeply damaged from within. And there is little evidence of the imagination, the creativity, the spirit, necessary to repair or rethink the structure.

The second half of 2010, it seems, may be just as disheartening to the Holy Father, just as bumpy, as the first. □

### Engadine

In May a new member joined our group which is always well attended. After much lively discussion it was decided that we would begin to read & discuss Albert Nolan's new book, *Hope in an Age of Despair*. In June another new member joined us and we began our new book. Nolan says 'the most valuable contribution that a Christian can make in our age of despair is to continue, because of our faith, to act hopefully, and in that way to be an encouragement to those who have lost all hope' In July we suspended our usual meeting date to attend a lecture in Sydney hosted by Aquinas Academy. Fr Donald Cozzens spoke about how he sees these turbulent times in our Church. He says that when a ship is sailing in turbulent waters it is tempting to stay below in our cabin and pray for the storm to settle, but it is much better to get up on deck, breath the fresh air and do what one can to help. His talk was recorded and is available from Aquinas. It could be a good resource for WATAC meetings & discussion.

Annette Milross

### Inner City

This year we decided not to read a particular book, but to take turns at leading prayer and discussion, based on a current event, or particular interest. So far we have looked at 'The Emerging Church' with reference to an article of Richard Rohr, women who have inspired us by their lives and work, and the Martha and Mary story: a new perspective. We are fortunate in having people of varied faith traditions in our group, who can share different spiritualities. Julie Brackenrigg will lead our next meeting, and as she is a Baptist pastor working in a challenging area of Glebe/Forest Lodge, where there are many 'issues', her material is always fascinating. Denise Whip has also promised to share the vision of the Grail at a later meeting.

All welcome, third Monday of the month at 7.30pm now, instead of 7pm.

Margaret Cody

### Shepparton

I've wanted to be able to participate in a WATAC group for a number of years and after meeting some ex-Victorian WATAC members who live close by I decided it was the right time. We met on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August to discuss Paul Collins booklet "And also with you". We had eight people at the meeting and a number of apologies from people who hope to join us in the future. Awareness of the changes to the language of the mass was varied amongst the group and perhaps the greatest

concern we discussed was that this was a sign of a greater movement away from the reforms of Vatican II. It was wonderful to begin hearing the stories of some of the ladies and their personal struggles with church, and how they have continued to nourish their faith and come to terms with many of the things that have not seemed right to them.

We also watched some snippets from a recent Compass episode, hosted by Cherie Blair, which seemed pertinent to the topic we were discussing. We closed our meeting with a version of the Creed, written by Joan Chittister, it was lovely to hear some new words, to an old prayer, which were faith giving and uplifting.

We are looking forward to meeting again on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September.

*Jennifer Frisardi*

### **Wagga Wagga**

**W**e are still reading and discussing the book by Barbara Fiand *Awe Filled Wonder*. It raises many issues for us at times and makes us delve deeper into the questions about the universe, God and our relationships with all. Living with some of the questions seems to be what we are engaged in at this point. Wagga Wagga has had some wonderful rain this week also.

*Ros Bennett*

### **Eastern Suburbs**

**A**round ten of us gather on the afternoon of the last Sunday of the month and topics for reflection and discussion are not hard to find. In July our musing began on What/who is 'The Church' which was propelled from our reading of the media, viz. 'Losing my religion' by Michelle Dunne Brian, *SMH* 24-5 July, News review, p.3; 'Women's ordination among "most serious crimes": Vatican' *CathNews* 16 July 2010; 'Vatican revises abuse process, but causes stir' by Rachel Donadio, *New York Times*, 15 July 2010. We finished by reading aloud Michael Morwood's 'A prayer for all people' and found lots of inspiration, for example: 'We accept the challenge to heal the wounds of division and to respect diversity as we respect what unites us: the great commandment to do unto others as we would want done to us'. We have begun reading Albert Nolan's *Jesus Today* and are delighted by the readable erudition of 'The signs of the times', which is Part I. We value reading aloud the passages which we find especially interesting and enlightening. When has the significance of  $E=mc^2$  ever been so clearly presented to non-geeks? Next meeting is on Sunday, 29 August 2pm at Carmel Maguire's place, 8 Dudley Street, Randwick, tel 93981004, and visitors would be most welcome.

*Carmel Maguire*

## **GROUP INFORMATION**

**BEENLEIGH (South Brisbane):** For more information contact Therese Flynn-Clarke Ph: 07 3804 0636 or email: [dctfc@optusnet.com.au](mailto: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. For more information contact Margaret Knowlden Ph: 02 9449 7275 or email: [knowlden@optusnet.com.au](mailto:knowlden@optusnet.com.au)

**EASTERN SUBURBS Group.** This group usually meets on a Sunday 2pm-4.30pm monthly. Meeting dates vary. Venue: 8 Dudley Street, Randwick. For more information contact Carmel Maguire Ph: 02 9398 1004 or email: [c.maguire@unsw.edu.au](mailto:c.maguire@unsw.edu.au)

**ENGADINE Group** meets on the third Monday of the month in a member's home at 7.30pm. For more information contact Margaret Keyes Ph: 02 9520 4240 Email: [keyes888@bigpond.com](mailto:keyes888@bigpond.com) Engadine group members also meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month at 10am for Prayer and Reflection. For more information contact Alma Madden Ph: 02 9520 8684 or email Cathy Griffin: [kgriffin2@bigpond.com](mailto:kgriffin2@bigpond.com)

**INNER CITY Group** meets at Glebe on third Monday of each month at 7.30pm. Venue 62 Boyce Street, Glebe. For more information contact Margaret Cody Ph: 02 9692 9384 Mob: 0419 426 174 email: [margaret@mountainretreats.org](mailto:margaret@mountainretreats.org)

**LEURA Group** meets 4th Saturday morning of the month. Venue Leura. For more information contact Carmel Vanny Ph: 02 4787 8706 or email: [cvanny@tech2U.com.au](mailto:cvanny@tech2U.com.au)

**LISMORE Group** meets 1st Tuesday of each month for coffee & spiritual nourishment at a local coffee shop in Lismore. For more information contact Mary Bruggy Ph: 02 6624 6530 or email: [marytbruggy@optusnet.com.au](mailto:marytbruggy@optusnet.com.au)

**MILTON/ULLADULLA Group** meets bi-monthly from February to November on a Saturday from 10 - 4. Venue varies each meeting. For further information contact Kath Prendergast Ph: 02 4454 5097 or email: [kathpr@shoalhaven.net.au](mailto:kathpr@shoalhaven.net.au)

**MOUNT CLAREMONT (W.A.)** For more information contact Margaret Finlay Ph: 08 9384 9114 or email: [Marg.fin@globaldial.com](mailto:Marg.fin@globaldial.com)

**PARRAMATTA Group** meets on the last Monday of the month from Feb to November at the Convent Parramatta from 7.30 - 9.30. For more information contact Margaret Hinchey Ph: 02 9890 7903 or email: [mhinchey@lifequestoz.net](mailto:mhinchey@lifequestoz.net)

**PENSHURST Group** meets at 7.30pm on the fourth Monday of every month at Narwee. Venue 5/30-32 Grove Avenue, Narwee. For more information contact Bernice Moore Ph: 9534 8527 or email: [bernice@watac.net](mailto:bernice@watac.net) or Maureen Hager Ph: 02 9580 5384 or email: [maureen\\_hager@optusnet.com.au](mailto:maureen_hager@optusnet.com.au)

**SHEPPARTON Group (Vic)** For more information about this new group started in mid 2010 contact Jennifer Frisardi Ph: 03 58224064 or email [mannardi@optusnet.com.au](mailto:mannardi@optusnet.com.au).

**WAGGA WAGGA Group** meet on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. For more information contact Rosslyn Bennett. Email: [rosbennett@ozemail.com.au](mailto:rosbennett@ozemail.com.au)

**WOLLONGONG Group** meets on the 4th Saturday afternoon of every month from February to November at Horsley. For more information contact Mary Flanagan Ph: 02 42608061 or email: [john\\_flanagan@uow.edu.au](mailto:john_flanagan@uow.edu.au)

**WATAC INC NSW**  
**MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION**  
A.B.N. 48 406 052 808



**PLEASE PRINT**

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: .....  
.....

POSTCODE: .....

PHONE[H]: .....

PHONE [W]: .....

PHONE [M]: .....

EMAIL ADDRESS: .....

**BASIC MEMBERSHIP \$50**

**GROUP MEMBERSHIP \$150**

**SELF RELIANCE MEMBERSHIP - \$75 \$100 \$150**

WATAC was incorporated in 1993 and as a group we are endeavouring to be self reliant. If you are able to contribute beyond the basic membership fee it will help us achieve this goal.

**Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc.**

**If using Credit Card please complete the following details:** MasterCard / Visa AMOUNT: \$ .....

Card Number: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

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

Cardholder's Signature: .....

**One time only payment      OR**

**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-options**

**e-newsletter** - tick here if you would prefer to receive your WATAC Newsletter by email. Comes as a pdf in full colour to your email address. **Please fill in the name and address details above even if you are getting an e-newsletter and ensure your email address is written clearly.**

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

Yes - I wish to receive other information via email - please ensure you have filled in clearly your email details above.

No - I do not wish to receive other email information

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**

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

www.watac.net