



Walking His Way

Frank Brennan SJ AO

Show Your True Colours
Diocesan Gathering
Townsville Catholic Education Office

27 June 2003

Acknowledge Traditional Welcome

Bishop Michael and Tent People of the Townsville Diocese. It is a joy and a privilege to return to Townsville for your Tent Gathering of 1,000 participants and to be welcomed by the Aboriginal and Islander people of this place. Such a welcome would have been unimaginable when I first came here on behalf of the Queensland Catholic Bishops researching the issues of Aboriginal land rights and self-determination in 1982. If such a welcome had been part of the program then, it would have been seen to be too political and inappropriate. Now there is nothing political and we are all delighted to be welcomed to this place, knowing that our indigenous brothers and sisters give us privileged access to the land and to the world of their ancestors.

As a non-indigenous Australian, I always feel awkward about acknowledging the traditional owners of a place unless such an acknowledgment has first been made by the indigenous people of the place. So I happily join in that acknowledgement today. A couple of weeks ago, I was speaking in Parliament House in Sydney and was welcomed by Linda Burney, an Aboriginal member of that Parliament. At that gathering we all had a sense of completeness that an Aboriginal woman could welcome us to the mother of all Australian parliaments while at the same time welcoming us to country.

As church, when we come together in this way, great things can happen. I well recall my own ordination in Brisbane in 1985 when so many Aboriginal people from this diocese, including Deacon Monty Pryor, made the journey to Brisbane and participated in the liturgy. Because we had been working together ecumenically for justice in Queensland, it was only appropriate that the Primate of the Anglican Church and the State Moderator of the Uniting Church join us on the sanctuary for Eucharist that evening. The Spirit can achieve great things when we are committed to working together, for justice.

My Theme for this opening Keynote Address is Walking His Way: Finding our Way in the World and Finding a Way for our world without the boat and without the tried and tested path of the parents. As a diocese you are continuing to reflect on the outcomes of the Oceania

Synod, especially through the papal prism of Pope John Paul II's post synodal exhortation *Ecclesia in Oceania*. I take my cue from the scripture verse quoted by the Pope at the beginning of his chapter entitled Walking the Way of Jesus Christ in Oceania:

Going on further Jesus saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. (Mt 4:21-22).

They left the boat and their father and they walked with Jesus. This morning, we receive a similar invitation. Other chapters of the Holy Father's exhortation are entitled Telling the Truth of Jesus Christ in Oceania and Living the Life Way of Jesus Christ in Oceania. And you will be hearing from Sally Ann Atkinson and Fr Elio Capra on those topics.

In contemporary Australia, we Christians are like the young fisherman who has left his boat and his father. In the loss, there is the prospect of a new gain. In the uncertainty, there is the promise of a new future. It might be easier to go back to the boat or to the tried and tested paths of our parents. But now is the time to walk His way, showing our true colours. Mind you, we might fall over in the first steps, and recover ourselves only slowly with mud all over our faces. But we come to answer the call, showing our true colours. John Paul II reminds us:

The purpose of being with Jesus is to go forth from Jesus, in his power and with his grace...When we walk with the Lord, we leave with him all our burdens, and this confers the strength to accomplish the mission he gives us. (#3)

1. The First Colour: The dim appearance or disappearance of Religion, church and spirituality in the public forum of contemporary, secular Australia

I was privileged to be a concelebrant at a mass being celebrated by Bishop Belo in thanks for Australia's contribution to the liberation of East Timor. At the end of the mass, Major General Cosgrove spoke. This big Australian army officer in military dress was accompanied by a translator who was a petite Timorese Canossian sister in her pure white habit replete with veil. He recalled his first visit to the cathedral three months earlier when he was so moved by the singing that he realised two things: first, the people of East Timor had not abandoned their God despite everything that had happened. Second, God had not abandoned the people of East Timor. As he spoke, I was certain that despite the presence of the usual media scrum, not one word of this speech would be reported back in Australia. It was unimaginable that an Australian soldier would give such a speech in Australia. If he were an American general, we would expect it. Here in Australia, the public silence about things spiritual does not mean that spirituality is not present animating and inspiring us. But it is only events like the aftermath of Bali that bring our transcendent faith and hope into the public gaze.

When our Prime Minister went to Bali after the bombing last October, three chaplains accompanied him. But how were they dressed? And how were they chosen? Do you remember that television image of our Prime Minister backed up by three military chaplains in military dress? I was stunned. I have spent some time in recent years visiting Indonesia aware that we Australians have been proclaiming a strong double message to Indonesia. First, it is good that government and the military be kept separate and not run together as they were

in the time of President Suharto. Second, there should be some separation between religion and the State. It is desirable that Indonesia, our neighbour, not become an Islamic State.

Last October, we did not have any Australian military based in Indonesia. No military were killed in the Sari Club bombing. Why then were military chaplains accompanying the prime minister of Australia?

My concern about this issue was heightened when I discovered that the senior Anglican military chaplain was to be the religious leader to lead the prayers at the Commemoration Service in the Great Hall of the Parliament. Why? One member of the government explained to me that it could not be the Anglican Primate because he had expressed anti-government views about increased security threats in the light of our engagement in Afghanistan. And it could not be the local Canberra Anglican bishop because he generally had different views. So why not have the senior Anglican military man? You would think that we lived in a country with an established church despite the specific prohibition of same in our Constitution. How have we got to the stage that the face of the church can be so managed by the government of the day?¹

Religion is seen to be a private affair. When there is a public affair, it is now for government to determine the face of religion that will be presented to the people. This may be too harsh a judgment. But there is evidence of this trend. There are straws in the wind, signs of the times. Perhaps we should take a stand and show our true colours. I should add that some of my best friends are Anglicans. And as Fr Peter Quilty knows, I have only the highest praise for military chaplains who do their job.

2. The Second Colour: In the confusion and the heat of the political moment, we do have something to say about the morality of war in the new world order

Having won the Iraq war so effortlessly, some Australian politicians are taking pot shots at the churches who took a strong stand against the morality of the war. Townsville is a town with a strong army presence. All the more reason for us to want to get right the morality of any war. After all it is our troops who have to face the dark moments of what happened years down the track. We would all want to assure them that they joined arms in a just cause.

After the Synod, Pope John Paul II wrote:

A large part of Oceania, particularly Australia and New Zealand, has entered upon an era marked by increasing secularization. In civic life, religion, and especially Christianity, is moved to the margin and tends to be regarded as a strictly private matter for the individual with little relevance to public life. Religious convictions and the insights of faith are at times denied their due role in forming people's consciences. Likewise, the Church and other religious bodies have a diminished voice in public affairs. In today's world, more advanced technology, greater knowledge of human nature and behaviour, and worldwide political and economic developments pose new and difficult questions for the peoples of Oceania. In presenting Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Church must respond in new and effective ways to these moral and social questions without ever allowing her voice to be silenced or her witness to be marginalized.

These were very poignant and prophetic words for us Australians as the church leadership and other civic leaders contemplated how to make heard their message on the proposed war.

In Washington and Baghdad, political leaders spent much of the last few months invoking the name "God" as if their actions were pre-ordained and justified. Such utterances confirm the prejudices of Australian humanitarian sceptics and call religious persons to a deeper reflectiveness about the relationship between divine presence and human action.

Just 14 years since the end of the Cold War and 18 months since the destruction of the World Trade Centre, we are only beginning to find ways for building and keeping the peace in a New World order. We are citizens in a democratic nation that seeks to play its part beyond its own territorial borders. After 8 years of the Clinton presidency, this is the first time that the Republican Hawks have been in the ascendancy in Washington since the first Gulf War. These are very early days in the shaping of the New World order and institutions. There has been no equivalent moment since the death of Roosevelt. Back then, Australia had an unequivocal commitment to multilateralism and diplomacy. Dr Evatt was elected to preside over the UN General Assembly. Richard Woolcott, our last representative on the UN Security Council, has recently predicted that it will be a very long time before Australia takes a seat again at that table.

Sadly, Australia has been party to a rash new theory based on militarism and unilateralism. War is no longer the last resort. The UN is no longer the arbiter of justified force in the absence of direct aggression on a member state. Compelling evidence of threat and overwhelming prospect of better outcomes are no longer necessary preconditions for war when the national interest of the world's only superpower is equated with the common good of all. We need to discern new paths to peace honouring the ancient humane principle that the child on the Baghdad school bus and the woman in the Nauru detention centre be accorded the same dignity and place in the balance of events as the child on the Townsville School Bus and the woman in the Aitkenvale shopping centre. There can be no peace while the innocent, powerless Other is sacrificed for the sake of those privileged to be nationals or loved ones of the powerful.

Though there was spirited debate and cabinet resignations in the UK because of Mr Blair's ready membership of the Coalition of the Willing, Canberra compliance with prime ministerial directives was complete. It was very troubling to hear the mixed messages from Prime Minister John Howard and Mr Tony Abbott about the increased risks of terrorism to Australian citizens. Abbott, the Leader of the Government in the House, told Parliament, "There is the increased risk of terrorist attack here in Australia". Next day, the Prime Minister told us, "We haven't received any intelligence in recent times suggesting that there should be an increase in the level of security or threat alert." Regardless of who was right, their contradictory statements provided incontrovertible evidence that there had been minimal debate, discussion and discernment within our Cabinet and political party processes prior to making a commitment to war in such novel political circumstances. The thinking was done in Washington. We signed on, presuming that our national interest and the international common good would be served by Alliance compliance.

Though most Australians will want to support our troops when they are committed to battle, many of us feel manipulated when we are told for months that their engagement is hypothetical and the reason for their engagement is the destruction of weapons of mass

destruction which could be unleashed within 45 minutes but which most probably do not exist. At a time of such flux when issues of such moment are being decided, we Christians need to remember that the resolution of these issues does not come down simply to supporting a Howard or a Crean.

We have been too layback in committing ourselves to war without a clear rationale when all service chiefs who held the key command positions during the first Gulf War had questioned the wisdom of Australia's course. The Army's General Peter Gration had reconfirmed, "My fundamental judgment that it's wrong remains." Before the war began, he had said, "I have strong objections to the coming war as both unnecessary and likely to produce unpredictable and potentially disastrous consequences. The real threat from Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is much exaggerated and that threat can continue to be contained and deterred." The Air Force's Ray Funnell (who continues to serve on the government's Immigration Detention Advisory Group) said, "It's strategic stupidity on a monumental scale." He said the rationale for war was "weak" and the timing "inappropriate". The Navy's Admiral Mike Hudson said, "It's almost immoral." The day after President Bush proclaimed war, Hudson said, "I am deeply concerned that the aggressive manner of the United States, coercing others to join them in the coalition of the willing could irreparably damage the unity of the UN."

Before the war, RSL President, Major General Peter Phillips said, "We, like most Australians, are not yet entirely convinced that we have enough to justify a ground invasion. We're trying to look to the future and just the terrible aftermath that could come from a ground invasion. We'd be looking for some reassurance that this had been thought through and was manageable." After the war, Phillips repeated, "The reason we opposed the involvement of Australian troops was entirely about what would happen after this war." The time for hard thinking and hard work about a just peace for the world has barely begun.

As we know, the Pope was always very opposed to this War. Archbishop Carroll, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has remained constant before and after the conflict. After the victory of the Coalition of the Willing, he told Vatican Radio:

I would believe myself that even though the campaign would be judged now as successful, and please God it will prove to bring about all sorts of positive things, the morality of the original decision must still be questioned. I believe that it was not clearly shown that war was used as a last resort, in other words there were still possibilities of other solutions, other than armed conflict and invasion. And I believe that the very fact of the success of the war might encourage the thinking that war doesn't have to be the last resort.

Archbishop Pell, the only Australian bishop who constantly gets national mainstream press said six weeks before the war, on 4 February 2003: "The public evidence is as yet insufficient to justify going to war, especially without the backing of the UN Security Council." He did not speak publicly again on the issue. This did not stop Prime Minister Howard at the National Press Club on 13 March 2003 invoking Archbishop Pell as being in support of the war when he was asked to comment on "the argument from the churches as was put by the Archbishop of Canterbury to Prime Minister Blair that the proposed attack on Iraq does not meet the criteria for a just war. The Prime Minister replied:

With great respect to the Right Reverend gentleman I don't think he speaks for the entirety of the Christian Church any more than, so that I'm seen as completely ecumenical, any more than the Catholic Archbishop of Canberra would speak for the entirety of the Christian Church. So

there is a variety of views being expressed. I think in sheer number of published views, there would have been more critical than supportive. I thought the articles that came from Archbishop Pell and Archbishop Jensen were both very thoughtful and balanced. I also read a very thoughtful piece from Bishop Tom Frame, who is the Anglican Bishop of the Australian Defence Forces. I agree with you that one of the seven principles that were distilled in both Tom Frame and George Pell's piece spoke of the discrimination between combatants and non-combatants.

.....

I think in relation to the attitude of the Churches, which I respect and listen to, there is a variety of views. It reflects the different views in the community. As I say, I think the greater volume of published views would have been critical, but I think there have been some very thoughtful other views and the ones I have mentioned, I certainly include in them.

This reply of the Prime Minister should have been very concerning for those of us who take our Christian obligations about war and peace seriously. Bishop Tom Frame has since published an article making it clear that his assessment of the morality of the war was contingent on weapons of mass destruction being on hand to Saddam Hussein. Despite the Prime Minister's fudging of the issue, Archbishop Pell has never given any public indication that the war was justified. The Prime Minister's word games and the Archbishop's silence have left many Catholics confused. Presumably the Prime Minister drew solace from the Archbishop's observation, "Decisions about war belong to Caesar, not the church." Maybe in this instance Archbishop Pell sees more scope for an unformed or uninformed conscience than Christians like myself are comfortable with. I daresay many Catholics, like the majority of Australians, now think the war was justified because the ends justifies the means, and we won and the murderous tyrant Saddam Hussein has lost power, if not his life.

If we are to show our true colours, we Christians have to get much better at our own moral reasoning and at discussing these moral complexities in public. Let's recall again those words of the Pope after the Oceania Synod: "In presenting Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Church must respond in new and effective ways to these moral and social questions without ever allowing her voice to be silenced or her witness to be marginalized."

Richard Woolcott who was Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade during the first Gulf War predicted before this most recent engagement that "The US policy of removing or destroying Saddam Hussein and replacing his government with a pro-American democratic administration ...is not a policy that is likely to attract support throughout South East Asia". He was right. He doubted "whether it would be in Australia's long-term interests, one of which is our standing in our part of the world, to commit Australian ground forces far from our soil".² Recently he told the Australian Institute of International Affairs that Australia needs to strike a more appropriate balance between the US alliance and engagement in the region. He has seen Australia go from being the odd man out in the region to the odd man in during the early 1990s to once again being the odd man out. But the situation is now more grave. Unlike the US and the UK, we have immediate neighbours, Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei who have Muslim majorities. We have portrayed ourselves as the deputy sheriff to the great western Christian superpower that invokes God in Christian dress whenever the stars and stripes are unfurled on the battlefield. Our deputy sheriff status in the region is no longer a matter of semantics.

I have recently returned from the Thai-Burma border. I would like to be in a position to offer inquirers in Asia a truthful explanation as to why we went to war. Was it because of weapons of mass destruction? After all that is what we were told before the war. Now Washington tells us it was only the "bureaucratic reason", not one of the substantive reasons, let alone the primary justification. Was it to liberate the people of Iraq? That is what the troops were told on their return. Was it to set down a new game plan for the Middle East? That is what we are now hearing from Washington. No doubt, there was a mixture of reasons, and we are always told not to mention the oil. But for Australia to commit troops so far outside its region, without UN endorsement, and in response to a novel US theory of pre-emptive strike makes us appear a confused, uncritical deputy sheriff in the region.

We need to have a greater capacity for civil discourse, regardless of domestic party politics, about what is in the national interest and about what is the correct international political morality for armed intervention. One could be forgiven for thinking that the real debate and discernment now goes on inside the US administration. It is simply assumed that Australia's national interest and the new international political morality are fulfilled jointly and effortlessly by simply signing up to any Coalition of the Willing when the phone call comes. Until the call comes, the Australian public is to be assured that the matter is hypothetical and there is no need for engaged discussion at the Australian end. The need for detailed consideration is so modest that Cabinet members of good will cannot even agree whether participation in the war will increase the risks to our own security.

Those of us who opposed our nation's involvement in the war feel a deep sense of shame that it came to this with such little public agitation. Those who were uncertain about our involvement in the war are besieged by a profound ambiguity. Even some of those who supported the war effort have a regretful righteousness - a sense of powerlessness that we could do no other in the face of evil than to participate in evil, hoping that greater evil could be avoided.

The supporters were presumably convinced that there were weapons of mass destruction on hand to Saddam Hussein. Jessie Street who was part of the Australian delegation for the establishment of the UN back in 1945 reminds us that the control of weapons of mass destruction has been a concern of the UN from its inception. In *Truth or Repose*, she wrote, "The United Nations at its first General Assembly in 1946 and at later Assemblies, adopted unanimously resolutions for the banning of atomic bombs and all weapons of mass destruction. The United States, the United Kingdom and France supported this and subsequent resolutions, but on one pretext or another refuse to implement it, and those in control of the United States openly boast of the bigger and better bombs which they are proliferating."³

Absent such weapons in contemporary Iraq, it is now said that we wanted to liberate the Iraqis from an oppressive dictator. That claim would ring more true if we had not been committed to keeping those who fled the dictator in detention in remote mainland locations or out in the middle of the Pacific these last three years.

3. The Third Colour: Welcoming the Stranger: the refugee and the one who is other

After the Oceania Synod, the Pope reminded us:

A Christian community is never meant to be just a comfortable place for its members. The Synod Fathers wanted to encourage the local communities to look beyond their own immediate concerns and reach out to others. The parish as a community cannot insulate itself from the realities of the world around it. The Christian community must be attentive to issues of social justice and spiritual hunger in society. What Jesus offers to his followers must be shared with all the peoples of Oceania, whatever their situation. For in him alone is the fullness of life. (#13)

One of the great social justice issues confronting Australian is our treatment of Asylum seekers who arrive on our shores uninvited and without a visa. Over 4,000 Iraqis have arrived in Australia since 1999 by boat, without visas, seeking protection from persecution. 97% of them have been found to be refugees deserving our protection. 100% of them, whether they be adults or children, whatever the trauma they have fled, have been held in detention for months on end while their claims were processed. Those who have set out by boat from Indonesia seeking asylum since Tampa have been forcibly transported to Pacific locations. Iraqi women and children are still being held in detention in Nauru while their fathers and husbands are living lawfully in Australia as refugees. Our government which has transported them to such remote detention was party to the bombing of their relatives in Baghdad, all in the name of Australia's national interest and making the world a safer and better place.

For a year, I have been visiting immigration detention centres such as Woomera, Port Hedland and Baxter every month. Every two months I go to Parliament House Canberra and meet with the political architects of this policy, thinking there must be a better way than rhetorical stand-offs in the media. The politicians are as convinced of their decency in implementing the policy as am I in decrying it.

After the 2002 Christmas fires, one detainee who offered to assist police with their inquiries was given a guarantee by senior immigration officials in Canberra. He would not have to return to a detention centre. He was moved to a motel for nine days and provided information to the police. The guarantee from Canberra was then withdrawn. He had no legal remedy and no political leverage. I thought the treatment he received was unAustralian. But on reflection, I concluded in the wake of *Tampa* that the treatment was very Australian. Asylum seekers who have arrived in Australia without visas have been used by government as a means to an end. Their detention has been used to transmit a double signal - warning other asylum seekers to take a detour to any other country but ours and luring those voters who appreciate a government prepared to take a tough stand against the one who is "other".

Last month, I met with a number of Iranians at Port Hedland who are adamant that they will not be accepting the government's offer of voluntary return to Iran. They agree with the government's own advice that though there be an Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the forcible return of detainees in Australia, "This consensus does not, however, automatically translate into cooperation by all the relevant ministries" in Iran. They quote not only the precedent of Switzerland, but also Poland. The Swiss were assured by the Iranian embassy that 100 forced returns would occur. Only one followed. Poland had a similar experience they tell me.

They are bemused that a member of the Coalition of the Willing is offering special work and holiday visas to a country which now heads the list of the Axis of Evil. They doubt that such

a restrictive bonus will be sufficient to interest Teheran in a special deal for Australia, given the thousands of disaffected Iranians in Europe.

Our treatment of these asylum seekers has been a national disgrace. If we are to show our true colours, we should demand something better from our elected leaders. But to do that we must be better informed ourselves and more engaged with our friends and neighbours, alive to our own prejudices and fears.

4. The Fourth Colour: We are just as much of the world as we are of the Church

A year ago, we had a large national forum at St Josephs College Sydney to mark the 40th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. In workshops some of us addressed the questions:

?? To what extent have we as church engaged with ourselves as the modern world?

?? To what extent have we transformed the church as people of the modern world?

In showing our true colours, we people of the church need to admit to ourselves that we are also worldly people. This has its up side and its downside. We need to start with a correct assessment of ourselves. As a group, church people in Australia are usually middle class, middle aged, from the mainstream culture in a very first world society. The presenters are still very much male, and the overwhelming percentage of participants are women. One of the good things about this Townsville Tent Gathering is that this typical profile is transcended. But we would have to admit that this profile becomes more predominant the closer we get to the regular Sunday Eucharist in our churches.

Here are the dot points from one of the workshop groups who reflected on *Gaudium et Spes* forty years on:

?? In *Gaudium et Spes* we move from a view of self, church and the world which separates all three (especially if one is a layperson) to a model of three concentric circles in which one finds oneself, in the church, which is then in the world.

?? The corollary of finding good news in the world has been expecting to find bad news in the Church. The test is not the authority of the statement but the authenticity of the action. The modern question is not "What is the authority of the speaker?" but "What is the commitment to the listener, and what is the commitment of the listener?"

?? At the time of Vatican II, there was a more positive view of the world. Now in Australia and New Zealand there is a more negative view - secular and humanist. *Gaudium et Spes* speaks about the church as a healing sacrament. How do we now work with the world as healing people? Pre-Vatican II we did not much think about our social responsibility. Now we have a responsibility to be a pilgrim church sharing our gifts. We need to stop and reflect where we might go from here.

?? Our church leaders get very upset about stem cell research but do not seem to be at all upset about the incarceration of children.

- ?? Priests are being too defensive about the present issues of sexual abuse. Are we as a church ready to receive help from the modern world? Are we still arrogant, thinking that we have all the answers? We need to look more to the signs of the times, the signs of God in the world.
- ?? All governments are now trying to be more inclusive of women. Women should be included more in all the pastoral aspects of the Church.
- ?? Many of us were brought up to be docile and obedient, expecting a strict separation of church and state, and expecting the government to be all caring. Now we are more questioning, hoping for more involvement by church in the activities of state, knowing that government has no intention of providing all the needs of civil society.
- ?? As church, are we to be an elite or an all-inclusive group? Our weekly Eucharist should give us the greatest sense of church but we do not have the sense of being the people of god with mission to the world.

In Ecclesia in Oceania, the Pope reminds us, "A new proclamation of Christ must arise from an inner renewal of the Church, and all renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion." (#19)

5. The Fifth Colour: We are a Eucharistic people

When your Acting Director of Education wrote to me inviting me to address the topic Walking His Way, he wrote, "Like the church in other parts of Australia, Townsville is face with declining attendance and participation and thus diminishing financial resources. Quite a number of parishes do not have resident priests and new forms of leadership are being trialed. With this in mind, we hope to explore some of the issues that we, as Catholics, need to address at this time in Australia as we endeavour to walk the way of Jesus who seeks to meet us in new ways."

The faithful of the Townsville diocese are at the forefront of those Catholic communities in the first world who a generation ago were assured regular celebration of the Eucharist and who now are facing the prospect that Eucharist will be an event as rare as the bishop's visitation used be in years past. How can we show our true colours as a Eucharistic people without regular participation in the Eucharist? How can a Roman Catholic community maintain itself and its identity without regular Eucharist being available readily to those community members wishing to participate? On this question, not even the Pope yet has the answer. After the Oceania Synod, he wrote about the Synod members' grave concern "that many communities throughout Oceania go without the celebration of the Eucharist for long periods":

There are many reasons for this: the growing scarcity of priests available for pastoral ministry; especially in Australia, the growth of rural poverty and the movement to cities, which leads to an ever decreasing population and the isolation of many communities. The vast distances between many islands often mean that it is impossible to have a resident priest. Many communities therefore gather on the Lord's Day for services which are not celebrations of the Eucharist; and there is a need for great wisdom and courage in addressing this most regrettable situation. I make my own the Synod's insistence that greater efforts be made to awaken

vocations to the priestly life, and to allocate priests throughout the region in a more equitable way. (#40)

More recently, the Holy Father has published *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* his Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist and Its Relationship to the Church. On the lack of availability of the Eucharist to remote communities without priests he writes:

All of this shows how distressing and irregular is the situation of a Christian community which, despite having sufficient numbers and variety of faithful to form a parish, does not have a priest to lead it. Parishes are communities of the baptized who express and affirm their identity above all through the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. But this requires the presence of a presbyter, who alone is qualified to offer the Eucharist in persona Christi. When a community lacks a priest, attempts are rightly made somehow to remedy the situation so that it can continue its Sunday celebrations, and those religious and laity who lead their brothers and sisters in prayer exercise in a praiseworthy way the common priesthood of all the faithful based on the grace of Baptism. But such solutions must be considered merely temporary, while the community awaits a priest.

The sacramental incompleteness of these celebrations should above all inspire the whole community to pray with greater fervour that the Lord will send labourers into his harvest (cf. Mt 9:38). It should also be an incentive to mobilize all the resources needed for an adequate pastoral promotion of vocations, without yielding to the temptation to seek solutions which lower the moral and formative standards demanded of candidates for the priesthood. (#32)

The Catholic community will not be long sustained by temporary solutions which take on the air of permanence. There is little prospect that the Holy Spirit is going to call many young Australian men of the modern era to the academic formation for ordination to the celibate priesthood for service in remote communities. A presbyterate of increasingly foreign nationals will prove very problematic for a Catholic community which does not accept its need for evangelisation by priests from other countries. Last night, when being driven home by one of you Townsville tent people, I was told that "the Holy Spirit has not yet shown his hand but we have seen a few of the cards." No doubt as Catholics, you will always treasure the opportunity to celebrate Eucharist in your community with an ordained priest. But if that be possible only once a year, you may be drawn back to the practices of the early Christian communities during your weekly gatherings when you take, eat and drink in memory of Him. All of us will then eagerly await further theological clarification from Popes, cardinals and bishops who exercise roles and shape institutions in ways not necessarily stipulated in the scriptures, though they be roles and institutions that have developed out of the Christian community's reflection on the scriptures in light of contemporary needs and the promptings of the Spirit over the generations.

You cannot show your true colours without expressing yourselves regularly as the Eucharistic people of God. There are no extra priests to be equitably distributed. Most communities in this diocese outside the major urban centres know that the absence of an ordained priest is not just a temporary phenomenon. The primary belief in the action of the Spirit in the assembled community and in the centrality of the Eucharist for the believing community was planted deep in Christian hearts long before the ordained, celibate priesthood was deemed essential. That primary belief will survive assertions of temporary problems and hopes that the answer lies in a more equitable distribution of priests.

6. The Sixth Colour: Even as Church, we are not without sin: Sexual Abuse

Those of you who watched last Monday's 7.30 report will be aware that not even we Australian Jesuits have escaped allegations that we have failed to deal appropriately with past allegations of sexual abuse in our schools. After the Synod, the Pope addressed the issue head on:

In certain parts of Oceania, sexual abuse by some clergy and religious has caused great suffering and spiritual harm to the victims. It has been very damaging in the life of the Church and has become an obstacle to the proclamation of the Gospel. The Synod Fathers condemned all sexual abuse and all forms of abuse of power, both within the Church and in society as a whole. Sexual abuse within the Church is a profound contradiction of the teaching and witness of Jesus Christ. The Synod Fathers wished to apologize unreservedly to the victims for the pain and disillusionment caused to them.⁽¹⁷¹⁾ The Church in Oceania is seeking open and just procedures to respond to complaints in this area, and is unequivocally committed to compassionate and effective care for the victims, their families, the whole community, and the offenders themselves. (#49)

I trust you will not judge me as one engaged in special pleading or as one boasting to have the answers if I share with you the letter that our Provincial Fr Mark Raper sent the parents, staff and students in all our schools after the 7.30 Report went to air:

You will almost certainly have seen or heard about the 7.30 Report's coverage on 23 June of sexual abuse of a student at St Aloysius' College, Milsons Point, in 1968. The programme contained serious criticism of the way in which the Jesuits have dealt with this matter.

I sincerely regret that Mr Leech-Larkin's complaint against the Jesuits has not been resolved after so many years.

I see it as important to clarify that the complaint related to the actions of a lay teacher, off school property, and out of school hours.

At the same time I am well aware of the limitations of a merely legalistic approach to complaints of abuse, and I believe that a more pastoral approach is in the best interests of all concerned, especially the victims of abuse. With this concern in mind I made contact with both Mr Leech-Larkin and his mother last week, and we have agreed to meet as soon as possible to address these serious issues.

The case is currently in the NSW Supreme Court. Subjudice rules limit what kind of public comment I can make, especially about the events of 1968. Within these limits I had agreed to be interviewed by the 7.30 Report. With considerable reluctance, however, I accepted vigorous legal advice to the effect that any appearance on the programme ran the risk of contempt of court.

I now regret that I did not agree to the interview. I believe that I could have corrected some misleading impressions that the programme may have given. Moreover, my silence has given to the public, and above all to the Leech-Larkin family, the impression that we are taking refuge in legal technicalities. That is not my intention. I have now communicated again to Mr Leech-Larkin by letter and by phone my desire for dialogue with him.

Let me assure parents, staff and students that all Jesuit schools in Australia have for some years had in place procedures and a code of conduct to prevent the recurrence of any events like those of 1968.

I take this opportunity to offer a sincere apology for any hurt that has occurred to anyone at any time while in the care of the Jesuits in Australia. I promise that, whenever complaints of any nature are brought to my attention, I will ensure that the Jesuits respond personally, promptly, pastorally, and with compassion.

These are very difficult areas for all of us. As church we must get our own affairs in order if we are to show our true colours. Quite rightly, even those outside our church communities insist that we deal with these matters with transparency and full accountability. These issues call not just for a legal approach, but also for a pastoral concern for the victim and the accused, and for a public accounting to the church community and the broader public. Lawyers have their role to play. They are not necessarily expert in public relations or in community perceptions. And they are definitely not the expert in pastoral care. It is in these difficult times that we do show our true colours. Are we people with such a concern for pastoral care that we are even prepared to risk being seen as fools for Christ, or are we so concerned with our public image and financial security that we are prepared to overlook with regret the hurt caused to children in the past?

7. The seventh colour: the aspirations, uncertainties and ways of the Young

One of my recent joys was attending the admission as a barrister of my niece Kateena in the Supreme Court of Queensland. Her mother and father moved her admission, both of whom are barristers. As if that is not enough by way of tradition, Kateena's mother informed the court that Kateena's grandfather, the previous Chief Justice of Australia was present in the court, and that her great grandfather had been a judge of the Supreme Court from 1925 to 1949. After hearing Kateena's fine academic record and legal pedigree, the Chief Justice of Queensland issued her a very warm welcome to the ranks of barristers of the Court. The most formal part of the ceremony is the swearing of the oath of allegiance to Her Majesty Our Queen. At this moment, Kateena turned towards family, winked and smiled. She was not making a political statement, regardless of her views about the republic. The Chief Justice of Queensland did not look amused. Next day, I was taking an early morning stroll by the Brisbane River with Kateena and she confessed that the greatest joys in life are sometimes expressed subconsciously and one cannot quite control one's reactions at such times. Today's young people do not decry traditions and institutions. But they do feel very free to express themselves even despite the constraints of traditions and institutions. They are not anarchists but then again they do not get too hung up on tradition and authority. This is a major challenge for the Roman Catholic Church - the Christian community most attached to tradition and authority. But the Spirit is alive and active, especially amongst the young.

Last year I was giving the graduation address at a school speech night so I asked another of my nieces who was in Year 12 what I should say. Angela wondered if I would speak about anything more meaningful than how many days of school remained before Schoolies Week and the rest of life's parties. But in her more reflective mode as a graduate of a good Catholic school, she was grateful that her school always encouraged her to discuss the issues, no matter how controversial they might be; to understand the issues, especially from the perspective of those who are different; and always to do something practical. She had profited from the extensive social exposure programs even though "they bring it all home to you and make you feel bad". Angela told me, "We want to help but we don't know how to go about it."

Angela's search for hope, energy, direction and perspective found resonance for me at that time, last November, when I heard Mark Waugh (of all people!) on the radio when he was dropped without any show of sentiment by the Australian selectors, he said, "There are a lot of people worse off than me at the moment. There are a lot of worse things happening in the world." I think Mark Waugh is on to something here. When we focus on the needs of others, our own burdens actually become lighter rather than heavier. Our perspective sharpens and our fulfilment increases. Life for ourselves becomes more liveable when we live it for others and with others. Our course in life appears clearer when we have an eye for the Other in our midst.

Your students on the brink of a whole new world with unknown possibilities. Alex Miller's latest novel *Conditions of Faith* which is set in the 1920's. The central character in the book, Emily Stanton, is at her local Melbourne beach with her parents and being courted by a visiting English engineer tendering for the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Emily's father is perplexed about her future. Let me quote a scene from the book:

At school Emily had excelled at French and Latin. After two or three worrying changes of direction at the university - her wasted years, he called them - she had at last graduated the previous year with a first in the history of classical civilizations. But instead of applying for a scholarship to one of the women's colleges at Cambridge, as he and her university tutors had advised her to, Emily postponed a decision. 'I'm not ready to decide anything yet,' she told him. Almost a year had gone by since then and still she had not resolved her situation. She had stayed in bed until lunchtime and read novels and taken long walks and gone to stay with friends. 'You're becoming intellectually lazy,' he accused her. 'You're wasting the best opportunity life is ever to offer you.' He was angry and disappointed with her. 'If you were my son, I'd compel you!' he said bitterly to her one day. She had laughed at him. 'But I'm not your son and you can't compel me.' He lost his temper and said something to her that he had wished every day since then that he could unsay. 'You're weak!' he had accused her venomously. He shifted uneasily now in his deck chair at the memory of it. 'What is it that you want?' he demanded. And she told him calmly, 'I want you to allow me to not know what I want. That's all. To take my own risks and not to do as you've done.'

You teachers are all too well aware that the members of Generation X, boys and girls, are allowed not to know what they want. They are allowed to take their own risks. They will not necessarily do what their parents and their teachers have done. Is this a counsel of despair? Or is this the modern territory where we expect to find the Spirit alive and active? They will show their true colours if we trust them and admire them despite their different take on tradition and authority.

8. The Final Prayer

Pope John Paul II reminds us that "The Synod discussions stressed that, in presenting Jesus, the Church must show his compassionate love to a world in need of healing." Showing our true colours, we can walk His way. As with so many of the Pope's lengthy documents which could not be written except with the Holy Spirit and a word processor, the best part is the prayer at the end. So let's take a couple of minutes to prayerfully reflect on the seven colours I have shown under the heading *Walking His Way*, as we pray the prayer:

?? The Disappearance of Religious Sentiment from the public airwaves of Australia does not mean that religious faith is dead

- ?? The Manipulation of Religious Communities in Australia does not mean that our religious convictions are irrelevant
- ?? The need for the Christian community in a fear-filled state to welcome the stranger, the refugee and the one who is other
- ?? The blessed realisation that we are of the world and of the church. We are the Church in the Modern World.
- ?? We are a Eucharistic people called to celebrate His presence with us now, however remote our location might be
- ?? Even as church we are not without sin, and that is not the end of the world or of the church
- ?? The young people in our midst are committed to lives of love, service, commitment and faith despite their indifference to tradition and authority when tradition and authority fail to keep up with the young and the world.

Today being the feast of the Sacred Heart and tomorrow the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary we pray:

Prayer

O Mary, Help of Christians,
in our need we turn to you
with eyes of love, with empty hands
and longing hearts.
We look to you that we may see your Son,
our Lord.
We lift our hands that
we may have the Bread of Life.
We open wide our hearts
to receive the Prince of Peace.
Mother of the Church,
your sons and daughters thank you
for your trusting word that echoes
through the ages,
rising from an empty soul made full of grace,
prepared by God to welcome
the Word to the world
that the world itself might be reborn.
In you, the reign of God has dawned,
a reign of grace and peace, love and justice,
born from the depths of the Word made flesh.
The Church throughout the world joins you
in praising him
whose mercy is from age to age.
O Stella Maris, light of every ocean
and mistress of the deep,
guide us across all dark and stormy seas,
that we may reach the haven of peace and light
prepared in him who calmed the sea.
Keep all your children safe from harm
for the waves are high and we are far from home.

As we set forth upon the oceans of the world,
and cross the deserts of our time,
show us, O Mary, the fruit of your womb,
for without your Son we are lost.
Pray that we will never fail on life's journey,
that in heart and mind, in word and deed,
in days of turmoil and in days of calm,
we will always look to Christ and say,
"Who is this that even wind and sea obey him?"
Our Lady of Peace, in whom all storms grow still,
pray at the dawn of the new millennium
that the Church of Townsville Diocese
will not cease to show forth
the glorious face of your Son,
full of grace and truth,
so that God will reign in our hearts
and we will find peace
in the world's true Saviour.
Plead for our Church
that she may have strength
to follow faithfully the way of Jesus Christ,
to tell courageously the truth of Jesus Christ,
to live joyfully the life of Jesus Christ.
O Help of Christians, protect us!
Bright Star of the Sea, guide us!
Our Lady of Peace, pray for us!

¹ On 7 August 2003, Dr Tom Frame explained the situation to me in these terms (and he is happy that I publish this explanation):

Within 24 hours of the Bali bombing, the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade and the Department of Defence requested the ministry of Christian clergy for the victims of the bombing and their families. Three ADF chaplains - one Anglican, one Baptist and one Roman Catholic - were directed to proceed to Bali immediately. This occurred on a Sunday with the chaplains having less than six hours to prepare for departure. As ADF chaplains deployed in RAAF aircraft, their departure was not hindered by customs or immigration procedures while they were under the direction of the Australian military and civil authorities who were also deployed to Bali to ensure the physical security of those Australians still on the island. In addition to their pastoral duties, the chaplains were directed to manage the mortuary area and to assist in the return of bodies to Australia. No thought was given to using civilian clergy because they were not legally accountable to any Australian authority abroad while there would have been a number of public liability issues associated with any directions they may have been given by government officials while overseas. In brief, the ADF chaplains in Darwin were available and they were sent on request. As the chaplains departed so quickly, none took robes or street clothes. In fact, the Anglican who deployed had only one change of clothes and he remained in Bali for well over one week. The chaplains also lacked liturgical resources for the subsequent service at Kuta Beach and these had to be emailed to the Australian consulate in Bali. When they left Australia, the chaplains were not told they would need to conduct any public worship nor were they expecting to be seen in uniform. This is why they 'appeared' with the PM in uniform. The ADF chaplains did a wonderful job in Bali and in Darwin and I was very proud to be associated with them.

Ten days after the bombing, the PM asked me to lead a commemorative service in the Great Hall of Parliament House. This was the third time I had been asked to conduct a service of this kind since becoming Anglican Bishop to the ADF in June 2001. I was advised by the Department of PM&C that the PM asked for me

because he had confidence in my ability to bring together all of the participants necessary for such a service; because he thought I could manage the many different agendas of those wanting to participate, because I had access to Defence Force resources and people, and because I am remunerated for my ministry as Anglican Bishop to the ADF by the Commonwealth. [In addition to my other duties, I provide pastoral leadership to 45 full-time Anglican chaplains, another 60 Reserve chaplains and 11 ordinands]. It is my understanding that the Government feels less constrained in seeking my assistance with a range of activities because it partly funds my ministry. As far as I am concerned, this funding does not require me to support or oppose any government policy or program ... and I would decline the funding if I thought it compromised my vocational and personal integrity.

Thus, the invitation to lead the service was a personal one. As far as I am aware, it had nothing to do with my denominational affiliation as an Anglican. In this respect, your parliamentary source was poorly informed. In any event, my Roman Catholic counterpart, Bishop Geoff Mayne, was incapacitated by terminal cancer at the time. In the subsequent act of worship I led, the Anglican Bishop of Canberra & Goulburn attended and represented the Anglican Church. Archbishop Francis Carroll represented the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. The chaplains who attended to the needs of those in Bali were present together with the Royal Military College Band with whom I have worked on many occasions. Although I am not entitled to offer an assessment of the liturgy, it is my understanding that those who attended believed it honoured the memory of those who died while comforting those who survived. It would be a source of great sadness to learn that my participation might have obscured the genuine offer of Christian charity and consolation that the service was meant to convey.

² R Woolcott, *The Hot Seat*, HarperCollins, 2003, pp 300-1

³ Jessie Street, *Truth or Repose*, Australasian Book Society, Sydney 1966, p. 302