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# Around the Well

The Newsletter of Concerned Catholics  
Tasmania

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## From the Chair of CCT

Happy New Year!

Having just read the *Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to the Light from the Southern Cross: Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*, I was disappointed by its tone, defensiveness and what seems to me to be a “business as usual” approach at a time which looks like a crisis to me. A good dose of Francis Sullivan helped me swallow the bitter pill (see <https://johnmenadue.com/francis-sullivan-the-light-from-the-southern-cross-a-report-on-catholic-church-governance/> for his commentary). He writes, inter alia:

*Affiliation to the institution, even to the conventional practices of Catholicism, have lost their appeal. Yes, more democratic and representational structures and procedures will help. But a more relevant and nourishing spiritual experience is imperative. (my emphasis) And the two do go together.*

*The less barriers there are to lay participation in the life and determinations of those communities, the better they will reflect the unfolding understanding of God in their lives. In real terms that means the participation of lay people in the development and communication of Church teachings and social policies. There is no other way for the Church to be relevant for the existential circumstances of contemporary people.*

*My humble hope is that this Report can set us on a path where we can.....claim a lifestyle that gives credit to the Gospel that so eagerly stirs our imaginations and desires for love, goodness and truth.*

Kim Chen

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## ...Catholicism, a movement, not an institution...

*“The Church institution is the primary organisational structure of Catholicism. It exists for people, those within and others. It is not itself an ultimate criterion of value; its value is in how it enables all of us to live well. For me, it helps to think of Catholicism as a movement, in which the institutional Church is the major but not the only, player. We all have skin in the game. Catholicism is a broad church, in the best sense of the phrase, embracing multiple expressions of human experience and reflecting the sincere aspirations of believers.”*

Extract from Kevin Liston's Paper for the ACCCR Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> Dec, *How can we in ACCCR develop a realistic program for renewal?* Kevin is the Convenor of SA Catholics for an Evolving Church.

## Regional Gatherings - Sharing the Journey: Co-Responsibility in Our Church

In late 2020, CCT organised three regional gatherings considering

### ***The Light from the Southern Cross – Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia.***

the report on Church governance commissioned by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, as recommended in the final report by the Royal Commission.

Attendees totalled nearly 200 across the three gatherings. After a reflective time, we heard some of the highlights of the report, including viewing extracts from a presentation by Fr Richard Lennan, an Australian lecturing at Boston College who participated in the writing of the Report. Fr Lennan was clear in his explanation that the intent is not to remove power or authority from anyone but to put in place structures and processes that lead to genuine co-responsible leadership with laity that will enhance the potential to grow and enrich the mission of the Church. He emphasised the 'Australianness' of the report, which highlighted its relevance to us, spoke of the particular sections regarding governance in Australia, and outlined a number of recommendations where progress can be made now at a diocesan or parish level.

The second half of the morning was spent in discussion on areas relating to synodality, leadership, transparency and accountability. Outcomes included calls for, amongst other things:

- opportunities for all voices to be heard at parish and diocesan levels including through genuine consultative bodies and Catholic media;
- leadership characterised by inclusiveness, openness, listening, transparency and accountability;
- genuine, co-responsible leadership with laity;
- an openness in financial reporting and any decision making regarding significant parish and diocesan initiatives;
- the Church to look to the secular world for models of leadership, communication, appointments and accountability;
- the recognition of the particular gifts women can bring to leadership in the Church.

The report, the full presentation by Fr Richard Lennan, and a summary of outcomes from discussions, are on our website.

## Towards synodality...

*"To walk together is the constitutive way of the Church; the figure that enables us to interpret reality with the eyes and heart of God; the condition for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time. The breath and the pace of the Synod show what we are, and the dynamism of communion that animates our decisions."*

Pope Francis

For the next international Synod in October 2022, Pope Francis has chosen as the theme: *'For a synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission.'*

## very 'doable' proposals

*"The upshot is a pragmatic array of very 'doable' proposals that any diocese anywhere in Australia could implement tomorrow. Bishops don't need to scurry to Rome for permission. They don't need to protest that Church teaching is under threat. They don't even need to question the theological orthodoxy of the report. Frankly, they should be relieved. They have before them a way out of the logjam that finds competent lay women and men locked out of serious decision making and governance of the institution."*

Francis Sullivan commenting on *The Light From the Southern Cross*

## Recent developments in CCT

The Committee of CCT met by Zoom on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> December.

**Review of Regional Gatherings: “Sharing the Journey – Co-Responsibility in Our Church”.** The report on these events is elsewhere in this newsletter. The committee spent considerable time reviewing the gatherings and considering the responses received to the discussion questions posed. The committee is keen to be faithful to these and it was agreed that we should continue working in parallel on two fronts – furthering our vision of renewal and reform wherever possible, particularly at the local (diocesan and parish) level, in step with the Plenary Council planning and outcomes from *The Light From the Southern Cross* while continuing all efforts to dialogue and consult with the Archbishop to see how this can be done collaboratively. A program for CCT in 2021 will be finalised shortly.

**Membership** 15 new memberships were approved through the nomination process. It was noted that the mailing list is now approaching 300.

**Website** The website will be used increasingly as a repository for readings and reflections to inform and support our members and other interested people.

**No Additional Subscription for 2021** Our constitution sets the end of the calendar year as the end of our annual subscription period. However, in recognition of the fact that many joined and paid their subscription in the latter half of the year, and of the rapid growth in membership and the generosity of those who have joined, the Committee has agreed that no renewal membership subscriptions would be called for in 2021. Renewed prayers seeking the guidance of the Spirit will still be welcomed!

**Around the Parishes** There were reports discussed from some parishes feeling particular challenges at the moment. It was agreed that we would survey parishes to see where Parish Pastoral Councils are in operation and offer assistance where they are not.

**Ritual of Lament** On March 2021, a service is being held in Burnie to recognise the sexual abuse suffered by so many students at Marist College over many years. The Committee discussed a series of ways in which CCT could express solidarity and support for all those who were affected. More details can be found at [www.mrc.tas.edu.au](http://www.mrc.tas.edu.au) under events – Ritual of Lament.



## Please consider membership of CCT

You are encouraged to consider supporting the mission of Concerned Catholics Tasmania by becoming a member. This also benefits us by your payment of a nominal membership fee.

There is a hard working committee, so nothing extra is asked of you as a member, unless you offer help!

**Membership and mailing lists are completely confidential.**

## Website

Our website address is at the bottom of each page. You will find there information about CCT and affiliated groups as well as readings, resources and reflections. The site is updated regularly.

## Keeping in touch

Should you have any ideas, questions or other feedback, please contact us at [hello@concernedcatholics.tasmania.org](mailto:hello@concernedcatholics.tasmania.org).

## Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR)

ACCCR had a meeting with Chairs of member groups and an ACCCR Planning Group on December 7th to discern a way forward for 2021 and beyond. Kim and Trish attended. All the member groups below participated and reported on their group and its approach to reform and renewal. These include:

Be the Change', New Zealand; Cardijn Community; Catholics For Renewal; Catholics Speak Out; Communities of the Way; Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn; Concerned Catholics Tasmania; Concerned Catholics Wagga Wagga; Concerned Catholics Wollongong; Cyber Christian Community For the Innocents; Inclusive Catholics; Rainbow Catholics; InterAgency for Ministry; SA Catholics for an Evolving Church; Toowoomba Catholics for Church Reform; Voices of Catholic Australian Laity; Women and the Australian Church; Women's Wisdom in the Church.

Papers outlining possible future approaches were presented by Marilyn Hatton, Paul Collins, John Buggy, Kevin Liston and John Warhurst.

Discussion of these showed groups were agreed that the Laity need to be proactive in leading Church renewal and to seek respectful but courageous dialogue with willing bishops and clergy.

On January 12th, ACCCR held a further Zoom meeting of its Planning Group to confirm processes and actions for 2021, the year of the Plenary Council's first

session. Trish Hindmarsh from CCT is part of this group.

### For reflection...

This article on the meaning of 'Synodality' by Jesuit Cardinal Michael Czerny is being shared with member groups of ACCCR:

[https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/church-becoming-synodal-part-1-lumen-gentium-and-inverted-pyramid?mc\\_cid=ea1050ec00&mc\\_eid=d9aee35dc0](https://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/church-becoming-synodal-part-1-lumen-gentium-and-inverted-pyramid?mc_cid=ea1050ec00&mc_eid=d9aee35dc0)

### Spiritus Domini

A recent media release from the Women's Ordination Conference (USA):

*The Women's Ordination Conference (WOC) welcomes Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter, "Spiritus Domini," that expands Canon Law 230, regarding the ministries of lector and acolyte, to include all laypeople. This shift brings the institutional Church in better alignment with pastoral realities around the world and eliminates the ability of an individual bishop to apply misogynistic theology to bar women and girls from these roles.*

*"While this is not a radical shift, the Church recognizing widely accepted practices by Catholics around the world and taking doctrinal steps to be more inclusive, is radical," said Kate McElwee, executive director of WOC.*

*"In addition, it shows that Pope Francis clearly has the authority to change church teaching in order to reflect the signs of the times and the sense of the faithful, both of which point to equality for women in the Church."*