
Around the Well

The Newsletter of Concerned Catholics
Tasmania

No 31 1 December 2023



...a haven of mercy

From the Chair of CCT

In 1963 John Kenneth Galbraith said, "The modern conservative is engaged in one of man's oldest exercises in moral philosophy: the search for a superior moral justification for selfishness." Personally, and for many fellow travellers, our focus is "other": Jesus Christ, neighbour, family, friends and those we encounter along the way.

While I find the outcome of the Referendum deeply disappointing, the need is to keep the embers burning so the spirit of the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* can be revisited and hopefully the fire rekindled. We are resurrection people; new life and hope can spring forth. We should encourage those we engage with to look to "other" and use their "critical thinking" skills to sift the wheat from the chaff when it comes to statements in the media.

Archbishop Porteous's support (see [here](#)) for Warren Mundine's call to indigenous peoples to "forgive the Australian nation" as a means of moving forward is profoundly disappointing. How can we be forgiven, if we are not contrite? As the Council of Trent getting onto 600 years ago proclaimed, contrition is "a sorrow of soul and a hatred of sin committed, with a firm purpose of not sinning in the future." Our Archbishop had a chance to call for both compassion and contrition from us. He seeks forgiveness from the very victims of systemic and sustained abuse over three centuries demonstrating a meanness of spirit to which Galbraith points.

On a different note, Frank Brennan's homily on the Solemnity of Christ the King (see [here](#)), gives a helpful reflection on the Synod thus far and the differing perspectives of some of the Australian participants, which suggest the next phase of the Synod will be less consensual and abstract.

As we journey through the time of anticipation that is Advent, may I take this opportunity, on behalf of the CCT Committee, to thank you for your interest and support through 2023, and to wish you, your families, and your communities a blessed, peace filled and happy Christmas. We look forward to seeing you at events in 2024.

Susan Chen, Chair

"This, brothers and sisters, is the Church we are called to "dream": a Church that is the servant of all, the servant of the least of our brothers and sisters. A Church that never demands an attestation of "good behaviour," but welcomes, serves, loves and forgives. A Church with open doors that is a *haven of mercy*. "The merciful man (sic)", said John Chrysostom, "is as a harbour to those who are in need; and the harbour receives all who are escaping shipwreck, and frees them from danger, whether they be evil or good; whatsoever kind of men(sic) they be that are in peril, it receives them into its shelter.

Brothers and sisters, the General Assembly of the Synod has now concluded..... We have listened to one another and above all, in the rich variety of our backgrounds and concerns, we have listened to the Holy Spirit. Today we do not see the full fruit of this process, but with farsightedness we look to the horizon opening up before us. The Lord will guide us and help us to be a more synodal and missionary Church, a Church that adores God and serves the women and men of our time, going forth to bring to everyone the consoling joy of the Gospel."

Pope Francis, Homily at final Synod Mass

...an understanding and kind friend, and companion on our journey

We were saddened to hear of the death of a great friend of CCT, Sister Margaret Chandler SSJ.

Sister Marg Chandler was professed as a Sister of St Joseph in 1962 and spent the first part of her religious life as a primary and secondary school teacher in Tasmanian Josephite schools. She then gained professional qualifications and her ministry expanded into the areas of spiritual direction, professional supervision, counselling, family ministry and adult faith formation. In 2001 she moved to MacKillop Hill Spirituality Centre at Forth and coordinated a busy programme that brought many spiritual formation opportunities to the North West of Tasmania in particular.

Marg committed energy, strength and practicality to her ministry, and she will be remembered by many as an empathetic, understanding and kind friend and companion on their journey. Her enquiring mind and avid reading kept her up to date with all things spiritual and ecclesial. As a woman of strong faith fully committed to the Catholic Church, she enjoyed being an active friend of CCT.

CCT will miss Sr Margaret's support and presence amongst us. May she rest in peace.

With thanks to Sr Carmel Jones SSJ for providing the above.

Following up on the Synod

For Catholics vitally interested in the processes, progress and possible outcomes of the recent Synod session in Rome, the following two offerings from the Parramatta Diocese will be of particular interest.

Christopher White, Vatican reporter for the National Catholic Reporter (NCR) was invited to Australia by Bishop Vincent Long after the recent Synod in Rome. Christopher has covered the Pope's visits abroad during the past ten years as well as the Francis' pontificate generally, including the past three Synods.

Lecture: Will our Faith have Children? Reflecting on the Synod. [Here](#).

Conversation on the Synod with Geraldine Doogue. Access it [here](#).

You may also be interested in *Franciscan Bishop implements Jesuit Pope's synodal vision in Australia*, looking at a committed approach to synodality in one diocese. The article, from *National Catholic Reporter*, can be seen [here](#).

...the task of all the People of God...

“Vatican II, accordingly, urged the church to be ever attentive to the movements of the revealing and saving God present and active in the flow of history, by attending to “the signs of the times” in the light of the living Gospel. Discernment of the signs of the times in the present seeks to determine what God is urging us to see—with the eyes of Jesus—in new times; but also urging us to be attentive to the traps—where we could be being drawn into ways of thinking that are not “of God”. These traps could lie in being anchored exclusively in the past, or exclusively in the present, or not being open to the future fulness of divine truth to which the Spirit of Truth is leading the church. Discerning the difference between opportunities and traps is the task of all the faithful—laity, bishops, and theologians—everyone, as *Gaudium et Spes* 44 teaches: “With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage.”

Fr Ormond Rush, speaking at the Synod

Recent developments in CCT

The Committee of CCT met by Zoom on Tuesday 21st November.

2024 Planning The committee has commenced preliminary planning for 2024. The AGM will be held in March (date to be determined) in Launceston. The guest speaker will be Dr Sandy Cornish, someone who has had a close involvement with the Synod process.

There will also be regional gatherings focusing on areas of topical interest. With 2024 being the time of the second half of the Synod, we can expect that there will be a chance for us to come to engage with, and respond to, related documents from the Synod organisers. On its past record, we cannot rely on the archdiocese to provide these opportunities for formation and guided discussion on synod matters.

The Committee will be having a Reflection Day in February.

Refugee Issues The complex situation in this area following the recent High Court decision is being exacerbated by the politicizing advocating for a solution that will again take away many of the rights of the detainees. There is a Josephite petition calling for a Royal Commission into the Australian detention processes.

The Voice Referendum The Committee discussed the result of the referendum and its disappointment in the lack of leadership from our local church. Whilst the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) "resisted giving a direction on how Catholic people should vote" (which seems to CCT to be a statement of great naivety on their part – people were not looking for direction and would not necessarily follow it! They were looking for the guidance of Catholic social teachings) it was pleasing to note that a few bishops recognized that, although the ACBC said the referendum "involved no direct violation of a moral absolute or conflict on a matter of faith" and that they would therefore not "give direction", those few bishops still came out in support of the Yes campaign, seeing it as supporting justice, human dignity and true reconciliation.

The Committee resolved to write a letter to NATSICC and to Rodney Dillon expressing our disappointment in the referendum result and offering our support.

RE Curriculum A small group of retired senior Catholic educators has written to the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards & Certification (TASC) Board expressing concern about the proposed senior secondary Religious Education curriculum, one which significantly reduces the scope of study and would limit some course choices in other areas. CCT has received a number of concerns from teachers regarding this.



Membership of CCT?

Please consider supporting the mission of CCT by becoming a member. Membership and mailing lists are confidential.

During Advent we pray...



For peace – in our hearts, in our families, in our communities, and in our world

For joy – that it be spread widely, and that we will be perpetrators of it

For hope – that it will inspire, encourage and empower us

For faith – that never forgets the true meaning of Christmas

AMEN!

Recent developments in CCT (cont.)

Gender Diversity The Committee resolved that it would support ACCCR in the push to support legislation that bans Gender Diversion Therapy.

Synod CCT continues to be underwhelmed by the coverage of an historic Synod in our archdiocese.

Next Meeting The next meeting of the committee is on Monday February 5th

ACCCR News

The Voice, post Referendum ACCCR is developing a statement for the website to demonstrate solidarity with those who voted yes and to express support for any state and territory actions to provide voices and treaties. We encourage people to work with the already existing groups to further justice for First Nations Peoples.

Requests for support from us

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN, found at: <https://www.ican.org/>)

NSW Bill to ban Gay Conversion Therapy.

Formalising ACCCR – Incorporation. Since ACCCR have considerable funds kept for us at present by CCCG, which is an incorporated body, it was decided that we explore possibilities for incorporation of the Coalition itself. A lawyer who has worked with WATAC will be approached for advice.

Affiliation with We Are Church International and Spirit Unbounded. Christina Reymer from *We are Church New Zealand* and ACCCR Exec. Member, has agreed to be our representative on both groups. Her recent association with both while in Rome during the Synod qualifies her well for this and we are grateful to her willingness to serve. ACCCR is seeking opportunities to network with lay and reform groups in the global south. It may be possible to link with groups associated with *We are Church International* and *Spirit Unbounded*.

Future Webinar In early February ACCCR is planning to offer a post-Synod webinar with Ormond Rush.

The Plenary revisited...at least in some dioceses!

In 2023 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) prepared a kit to guide parishes/dioceses in local implementation and now have conducted a review in early November of what has happened so far nationally. The group charged with the review, wrote a [Letter to the People of God – Reflecting on the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia](#), which explains the review, with examples of good implementation practice in some dioceses and parishes thus far. Our Archdiocese is not there!

CCT members may remember that we [wrote](#) to Archbishop Julian in July 2022 following the Plenary asking how he intended to begin implementation of some of the recommendations of the Plenary Council. His [response](#) was that "it would be precipitous and imprudent to advance further discussion on matters which may yet be subject of further changes". So, it seems from the letter that some other bishops have chosen to be 'imprudent' in that they have had the courage to move ahead, particularly in those areas where approval from Rome is not needed (such as with diocesan councils, which are already expected in Canon Law), diocesan assemblies and regional pastoral discernments.

Tasmania has again been quarantined from any initiative that challenges the status quo.

...not where we expect to find Him

The Christmas story reminds us once again it was not man's (sic) idea that the Son of God should be born in a stable. And so, the first thing we learn from Jesus' birth is that the Lord will not always be found where we expect to find Him.

We tend to look for Him in the nice, the clean, the warm. We expect Him to be in churches and in the Bible and in hymns of praise and in Christmas cards which have Scripture verses on them...and if these are the only places we search for the Lord, then we're not looking in the stable.

James F Colaianni – lay Catholic theologian