



## OFFICE FOR CLERGY LIFE AND MINISTRY

### Report of National Meeting

DIRECTORS OF CLERGY LIFE AND MINISTRY  
MacKillop Place, North Sydney, 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011

#### Conference Theme

*“Compassionate Mentoring: Companioned by God”*

**PRESENT: Bishops:** Brian Heenan (Rockhampton) and Justin Bianchini (Geraldton), **Directors:** Brian Ahearn (Geraldton), John Allen, (Sale), Terry Bell (Sydney), Peter Bianchini (Perth), Greg Bourke (Melbourne), Kerry Crowley (Cairns), John Daly (Rockhampton), Ian Dempsey (Adelaide), Frank Devoy (National Director), Simon Falk & John Armstrong (Canberra-G), John Girdauskas (Hobart), Paul Gooley (Lismore), John Healy (Military); John Ho (Wollongong), John Kelleher msc (Darwin), Kevin Kiem (Maitland-Newcastle), John McGrath (Wagga Wagga), Brian Moloney (Broken Bay), Michael O’Callaghan (Parramatta), Dave O’Connor (Brisbane), Patrick O’Regan (Bathurst), Chris Reay (Sandhurst), Barry Ryan (Ballarat), Emmanuel Sakr (Maronite), Jeff Scully (Toowoomba), Rosanno Soriano ms (Armidale), and Rod Ward (Townsville).

**Council Members:** Deacon Tony Aspinall (Sale), Mrs Cheryle Davies (Brisbane); **Visitors:** Bishop Peter Cullinane (Palmerston North NZ), Frs Daniel Doyle and Kevin Clark (Christchurch NZ).

**Special Guests Thursday:** Ross O’Brien, Vince Redden, Martin Ashe, Michael Morrissey.

**APOLOGIES:** Frs Brian Mathews (Port Pirie); Olex Kenez (Ukraine), Ibrahim Sultan (Melkite); Paul Cashen, Mrs Carmel Crawford, Mr Kevin Croker, Sr Sue Richardson. Broome and Bunbury do not have a Director.

#### ORGANISATION:

The Conference was organised by the SA/NT WA Provinces.

#### MONDAY EVENING MEAL AND OPENING LITURGY

At the evening meal the national Director welcomed the visitors and new members: Bishop Peter Cullinane (Palmerston North, NZ), Dan Doyle and Kevin Clark (Christchurch, NZ); Frs Greg Bourke (Melbourne), John Ho (Wollongong), Michael O’Callaghan (Parramatta), Brian Ahearn (Geraldton) and Simon Falk (Canberra-G); John Healy (Military, first national gathering); and Ros Soriano (Armidale) who joined the gathering last year.

**The opening Liturgy** at 8pm was led by Fr Peter Bianchini and followed by a welcoming and supportive address by Bishop Brian Heenan, a member of the Council and recently appointed Chair, Bishops Commission for Church Ministry.

**TUESDAY** 19<sup>th</sup> July. Morning Prayer, Dave O’Connor; Chair, Ian Dempsey

#### Session 1: The Quality of Mentoring: A Reflection by Fr Brian Yates

*Ian Dempsey welcomed Brian Yates: a senior priest of the Archdiocese of Sydney ... out of ‘retirement’ for these conference sessions. Brian was ordained in 1958, had various appointments, but most significantly he is known and respected for his compassion for priests and students; for his role as Spiritual Director at St Patrick’s Seminary, Manly, for his work in leading retreats across Australia and New Zealand, and especially as founder of Galilee House, a haven for priests in Bondi, Sydney. Today he remains mentor to so many he came in contact with over 50 years of priesthood.*

#### Fr Brian Yates. Reflections:

For 16 years, Brian led Galilee House, which cared for 23 nationalities over time, and which provided 12,000 bed-nights. Some priests came for a day, others for a year or more to a place simply ‘open-ended’ in intent, where priests could spend time simply ‘to be’ or sort themselves out. In essence, **Galilee House:**

- was a 'place of waiting'. *Waiting* was the sign on the door - we spend life waiting;
- was an environment that was *non-judgemental*; people there were not permitted to engage in judgement but respect totally the unquestioned dignity of the other;
- was a *space for people to tell their own story*; the Gospel is telling our own story as part of the autobiography of God (Anthony Kelly).

Brian outlined his appointment history. Following difficulties with polio, he became chaplain at Rosebay Convent (on invitation from Rev Mother McGuinness) in 1963. But "the guts of the story is that I was **homeless**" and this experience led to an insight to establish "Galilee", where priests could be at 'home' and move ultimately to effective ministry. He then addressed the following issues:

A genuinely developed **intimacy**, asking: who is my spiritual confidant; who can I disclose my innermost concerns; what are my support mechanisms; what community supports me; what are the 'no-go' areas?

The '**crucial other**'. In a survey years ago by *Lumen Vitae* (journal) of 150 priests who left priesthood, and 150 who remained, the common denominator for both groups was the essential support of 'the crucial other'. As Directors with a pastoral role, we may well be called to be 'a crucial other' to priests in need. To be aware of this is so important, even in the face of priests who are "*reluctant revealers, cautious confirmers, or emotional evaders.*"

The importance of **the 'comma'** (',') in life. Things that happen in life don't have to be full-stops ('.'). Our own heart is the place where another priest can live / express his story, where each of us deals with our own issues ... as 'a gentle comma' rather than a full-stop; each of us ought be open always to other's stories, whereby we act as gentle commas.

On '**discernment**', Brian drew on Cardinal Clancy's Old Testament interpretation: it refers to the Hebrew word *ta'am*, meaning 'taste' as in 'to feel', 'to experience', 'to know in your gut', (and having little to do with food); it's to do with gut perception, good sense, wisdom.

In response to the question, how did you survive support-wise at Galilee House? Brian insisted on **prayer**. He highlighted, also, an essential lifetime membership of a **fraternity**. Those he cared for at Galilee also were naturally supportive, genuinely intimate.

### **Session 2, 11.00 am. Group Discussion:** *How has what you have heard affected you?*

This involved a 25 minutes discussion and feedback:

- Does any diocese have a similar resource to Galilee given that the St Peter Centre and Encompass no longer exist?
- Broken Bay – what qualities are needed for a PP's role? Not all priests will be appointed PPs;
- Lower levels of depression exist; priests who suffer with it impact on the effectiveness of a diocese; how do we help without appearing to make their depression worse?
- Comment from Sean Salmon FMS (USA) that the psychosocial levels of seminarians remain the same for the duration of seminary life – hence the critical importance of continued growth; strategies for development programs;
- Importance highlighted of providing a broad support base, giving 'suffering' priests permission to take space that is needed;
- Melbourne offers a good strategy for medical health, including a free check-up;
- A number of directors spoke of the importance of support groups and of regular get-togethers for meals.
- 'Away-from-pressure' hospitality is available and encouraged at Darwin Cathedral presbytery.

### **Session 3, 3.30 pm. Discussion:** *What is your experience of mentoring: What do I do well; What new initiatives?*

- The issue of **acculturation** of overseas priests was raised. While the bishops had requested, approved, and supported the development of two documents on acculturation (2005 and

2008), the documents were not always acted on. Effective implementation of these programs depends on each director urging and assisting his bishop to implement them as a matter of justice. Frs Noel Connolly and Tim Norton are prepared and very available to assist dioceses around Australia; it's only a matter of asking.

- John Ho spoke from his own experience of the critical need for **well prepared mentors** as part of the acculturation process – one of the first responsibilities for an effective acculturation process has to be the professional preparation of mentors. Rockhampton has just undertaken a positive process of acculturation; it resulted from two mentors acting highly effectively. Directors were advised of the importance of spending detailed time preparing parishioners for the arrival of these priests.

**5.15pm Mass was celebrated by +Justin Bianchini**, ending the days formal activities.

**WEDNESDAY** 20<sup>th</sup> July. Morning Prayer, Brian Moloney; Chair: Brian Ahearn

**Session 4: Companioned by God : *Listening to God; Listening to one another.***  
**A Reflection by Fr Brian Yates**

- Brian reflected on how we might see “God, us, and others.” preferring the order of St Bernard of Clairvaux: “**self, others and God.**” Personal growth is ultimately a product of a lifetime of interpersonal exchange of self with others and God. A mature love of self is critical if it is to be given to others, as the maxim has it, *nemo dat quod non habet* – no one can give to others what they haven't got themselves.
- When St John spoke of the **light** – and God's “let there be light,” we are reminded that heaven is light: that in heaven we will possess that light, be full of light.
- When looking for God we need not ‘go for a walk’ in search of Him, as **God** is actually **here in the heart** – we are called to that realisation and to move from head to heart. When Thomas Merton spoke often of one's inner harmony and unity, he was inviting us to experience of what we already possess! How often do we pray during the Eucharist; are we really at prayer or passing through formalities? Anyone can say prayers; we must be still and calm, and be present to oneself and God. It is by faith, contemplation and meditation, and sacred scripture that all people will come to know the living God within them.
- Use of the **imagination**: There is a great need to *imagine* what we want to become, as the imagination helps create the dreams and hopes that lie within us. We need also to be aware that the true self is what I am, the false self is what I think I ought to be. In accepting one's true self (and searching for God) one needs to understand that God has already found us and is within us.
- Composing **one's own Gospel**. Brian suggests that when we preach we ought invite or persuade people to compose their own gospel, to find a handful of scripture texts (five or eight scenes from the Gospel) which become one's ‘own’ gospel – to write a Gospel according to (...). What Gospel would you choose for your own funeral?
- Speaking of deep respect for all, Thomas **Merton** reflects that because of the incarnation and resurrection “no one should ever die like a dog in a ditch” – because Jesus has been here. Whether we like it or not Christians are deeply involved in Christ's world because we are walking the same earth that Jesus walked on.
- Philosopher Ken **Wilber**: 1) where were you before your parents were born? – “before you were born I knew you in the womb” – we are all part of the history of life; 2) where will you be in a few hundred years – “I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.”

- God is **madly in love** with you, exactly as you are. It is a wonderful friendship; it carries the true meaning of intimacy. Each one of us is a *word spoken by God!*
- Quoting Karl Rahner: beware of the man who has no devotion and doesn't pray.

After discussion, Brian took questions from Directors.

To the question, what reading had he chosen for his funeral? Response: those taken them from the Mass of the Feast of the North American Martyrs. In response to the question about articles he had written, Brian said that he had written a few in the *Faith and Culture Series* from Manly Seminary (Catholic Institute of Sydney); he had also written "Imaging Celibacy," published some time ago in *American Review for Religious*.

At the end of the session, John Armstrong thanked Brian.

### **Session 5: John Kelliher facilitated discussion**

John invited the group to build on what Brian had shared, particularly Brian's journey on the contemplative road. Companioned by God meant listening to the heart:

- A contemplative attitude is important in our ministry. Being attentive to the movement of God is so important;
- What is it that God wants to bring to my attention? What is going on in ourselves? What is it that God asks of us? Acknowledge it;
- John mentioned two books - *Temptation and Discernment* by Segundo Galilea, a diocesan priest from South America. What are the demons in our lives and in our prayers; the book identifies twelve demons which are explained in it. The second book was *Just Ministry* by Richard M. Gula. He also mentioned the movie, *Oranges and Sunshine*, a reminder of the 4 virtues: justice, fidelity, self-care, and prudence.

Directors were invited to discuss: the good we find in our parish; the good we have done ourselves. Two further questions were discussed: what do I do well? What are some new initiatives?

It was suggested that clergy life and ministry be extended to the seminaries; visit students and get to know them; keep them in touch with what's happening in the diocese.

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After this session concluded, and departing from the scheduled program, **Jeff Scully** addressed the group re the forced resignation of **+Bill Morris**, asking the question - to whom should we go; does the group have any advice? Ian Dempsey (Conference organiser) explained that, given the nature of this group (each director representing his bishop) the appropriate action would be for each director to express his concerns to his bishop but also to offer personal support to +Bill. Given the fragile history of Clergy Life and Ministry in the mid-1990s (and given that it is not a 'free association' like the NCP or the ACCC), it risked its future by pressurizing the ACBC with an official letter. If any director wished to take the issue further they were asked to let Peter Bianchini know and time would be made available at the next session. While there was considerable empathy in the group, no request was made for further action.

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The AFTERNOON was free for Directors to visit the City and enjoy an evening meal.

**THURSDAY 1.** 1<sup>st</sup> July Morning Prayer. Chair: John Healy

**9.15am Session 6: 30 Years as Bishop & Vat II: Bishop Peter Cullinane (NZ)**

Bishop Peter expressed his gratitude for the invitation to be present at this national gathering. In offering his thoughts, he was not speaking on behalf of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops or their Conference.

- By way of introductory remarks, Peter explained that it was the hope of the second Vatican Council that **dioceses** be of a size that allowed bishops and clergy to be close to one another. In this regard it was decided to divide two New Zealand dioceses in 1980: Auckland was divided, establishing the Diocese of Hamilton; Wellington was divided, establishing the Diocese of Palmerston North. Bishop Peter became the first Bishop of Palmerston North in 1980.
- The concept or consciousness of a 'diocese' *per se* was not always uppermost in people's minds, but in more modern times it is a significant entity, which has brought all closer together, in closeness to Christ and his disciples.
- Being the **first bishop** of the diocese had some blessings. Starting from scratch means that there is not so much baggage to carry, with significant opportunities for initiative. Five deanery pastoral councils were established, rather than one diocesan pastoral Council.
- **Maori** integration was not always easy. The Maori missions were led by religious orders with their initial strengths. Diocesan priests rarely had effective training in this missionary work and were at something of a loss when called on to serve the Maori missions.
- On looking back, one is confronted in a more profound way by **mystery**. Mystery tends to have a place not only in success but also in failure – as one ages, one tends to be more mindful of those moments when one gets it wrong. He mentioned the mystery in his appointment (as is true of ours) as a boy from the back blocks of New Zealand. Nevertheless, one must be always mindful of the privilege inherent in mystery.
- +Peter spoke of priests as '**prophets of faithfulness**'. While many priests left, many remained, and with the power of God, something wonderful is happening here with those so faithful.
- The Bishop mentioned the advent of **collaborative** ministry. We simply cannot do it all on our own. Pope Benedict has spoken clearly of **co-responsibility** at every level, not just 'helping Father' but responding out of one's baptism.
- The Bishop remarked that there is within the church a certain **clericalism** which is not so subtle. In the ordinary context of daily pastoral life in dioceses, priests, bishops and laity should all be seen on the same footing, and all should take a stand to ensure this. In the two decades prior to becoming a Bishop (the 60s and 70s), +Peter's adult education role brought some distressing stories of how priests had blocked opportunities for lay ministries.
- There is no gift as significant as the **gift of trust**. +Peter was driven always to trust his priests so that in the end one doesn't convey the impression that the bishop is more of a policeman than pastor and brother to his priests.
- There have been any gratifying things: lay involvement, and a general sense of **gratitude and generosity**. However, while the Bishop plans to hold a prayer symposium like Brisbane's two years ago and lay people are breaking their necks to get there, so far there is not the same enthusiasm from the priests.
- Bishop Peter explained that he had both national and international **roles**: he was as President of the NZ Bishops Conference for a number of years. Internationally, he was a member of the Liturgy's ICEL Commission.

Challenges for the Church:

1. We need to be **a church to the world**. He quoted Archbishop Rowan Williams saying: *what is needed is for the church to be what it is meant to be; a living model of renewed social relationships based on a renewed relationship with God.*

2. We need to deal with the problems posed by **secular ideologies** which permeate Catholic thinking: one's thoughts are shaped more by such ideologies than by the Gospel;
3. The essential need for renewal: meaning **conversion, contemplation, and compassion**;
4. We have fine lay people, thinking Catholics, upset by the **Church's *modus operandi***; if we continue to appear to be pushing the boundaries backwards these people will walk away from the Church;
5. We need to be **led by the Spirit** – to be led by a desire for a more intimate Christian community; being at home, being inculturated, into the church and experiencing positively the mystery of faith;
6. In response to the suggestion that perhaps **Christianity has played itself out**, Pope Benedict commented (see *Light of the World, the Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times*, by Peter Seewald and Pope Benedict, 24 November 2010):

In Brazil, for example, there is, on the one hand, strong growth among the sects, which are often very dubious because, for the most part, they promise only prosperity, external success. There are also, however, new Catholic awakenings, a dynamic of new movements, for instance, "Heralds of the Gospel", young people who are seized by the enthusiasm of having acknowledged Christ as the Son of God and of bringing him into the world. As the Archbishop of São Paulo tells me, new movements are being formed there constantly. And so there is a force of new life and awakening there.

Or we could think of what the Church means for Africa. There, in the confusion and destruction of wars, she is often the only thing that always remains; the only refuge where there is still humanity; where something is being done for people. She is committed to the proposition that life can go on, that there can be care for the sick, that children come into the world and be raised. She is a vital force that again and again creates new enthusiasm and then develops new ways.

Less clearly but nevertheless unmistakably, we find here in the West, too, a revival of new Catholic initiatives that are not ordered by a structure or bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is spent and tired. These initiatives come from within, from the joy of young people. Christianity is perhaps acquiring another face and, also, another cultural form. It does not hold the command post in world opinion, others rule there. But it is the vital force without which even the other things would not continue. In this regard, thanks to what I myself am able to see and experience, I am quite optimistic that Christianity is on the verge of a new dynamic.

7. Bishop Peter spoke of the **courage** called for by which the Church is big enough to let the **Spirit's mission shape its identity**. He quoted Hans Urs von Balthasar:

"[The] Church will suffer the loss of its shape as it undergoes a death, and all the more so, the more purely it lives from its source and is consequently less concerned with preserving its shape. In fact, it will not concern itself with affirming its shape but with promoting the world's salvation; as for the shape in which God will raise it from its death to serve the world, it will entrust (that) to the Holy Spirit. ("The Three Forms of Hope," by Hans Urs von Balthasar).

Questions followed:

In response to the question: why do some of the young ignore Vatican II? +Peter remarked that the young don't have a problem looking back because they have not experienced the difficulties and pain we experienced with the past.

As for new movements wanting to create a new church, +Peter explained that they were reacting to looseness and relativity – he expressed a preference for the use of the word 'renewal' rather than 'reform of the reform' which tended to be misleading. To the suggestion that they were aggressive and lacked a certain respect for the local church, he suggested the importance of discovering what is good in them, as a way of altering that behaviour.

With regard to the new translation of the Mass, +Peter said he acknowledged the richness of the new translation where such richness occurred. However, the prayer of the Church must always become the prayer of the people.

When asked about his new book, he said it is entitled: “Openings to Renewal: Letters to the Church” and was being published from Adelaide via John Garrett Publishers.

### 11.00am Session 7. Regional Discussion and Reports (3 initiatives):

- WA SA/NT: directors meet annually in different dioceses; the acculturation of overseas priest is on the move in Perth; Darwin diocese hopes to unite all with a diocesan pastoral plan.
- VIC/TAS: directors meet in Carlton, Melbourne – the time has been extended by one day; Greg Bourke was welcomed, and John Monaghan replacing Barry Ryan; clergy health care and acculturation remain significant issues; the death of +Joe Grech continues to impact.
- NSW/ACT: this group comprises 13 dioceses (one from W- Forbes); Broken Bay experiments with 2 lay pastoral leaders running parishes, and asks what qualities are required to become parish priests; there are questions re the health and well-being of priests; future planning is occurring, particularly Parramatta and Wollongong; Broken Bay is planning a Synod and Wollongong an Assembly.
- Queensland: meet at Santa Teresa in Ormiston; the Archdiocese plans to invite priests of Queensland to a regional gathering to listen to Richard Gula. Continuing concern on the resignation of +Bill Morris; mention made of the importance of ‘Veritas’ for Qld priests.

### Session 8: Thursday afternoon, 3.30 pm

#### (i) Cheryle Davies, Clergy Healthcare

1. Cheryle thanked the gathering for the invitation to speak. The clergy health care coordinators have had four (4) annual gatherings; 18 dioceses are now represented (20 coordinators were present); the group has doubled in recent years.

The topic of the annual meeting was: “Walking the Talk on Health and Well-being”. Cheryle quoted US statistics on burnout and depression: 73% of diocesan priests; 35% of religious orders; less again for the monastic clergy, 20%. We need to keep talking about the unique areas of stress in priests’ lives.

- The gathering looked at: what’s in place for us; where are the **support systems**; what is the accountability process.
- Five speakers were invited to the gathering: Bishop Benjamin, speaking on changes as one gets older, the cor dreams and desires to be a man of God; Dave O’Connor, on the big picture from a full-time Director; Anthony Randazzo, the Rector of the seminary; Michael McKeaton, a parish priest in Brisbane; and Frank Devoy, who drew together the salient features of these talks as they apply to healthcare.
- The health care coordinators need to be freed up to do what they are appointed to do; they **need backup** from the directors of clergy life and Ministry to carry out their roles effectively. The role is not an end in itself but supports other diocesan programs. While there are different models of healthcare diocese by diocese, care needs to be taken on how this process grows. There needs to be a lot of listening and learning. Good health care is about **holistic** healthcare, if not the role may not be sustainable.
- Some **practical things**: 1) Know your medical history (see the credit card size medical history card offered in the Brisbane Archdiocese; 2) Have a bright coloured folder with medical data in it; also containing documents giving power of attorney and enduring guardianship; 3) The importance of the Veritas support system in Brisbane was highlighted – the need to duplicate this across dioceses; 4) The need for our priests to have an opportunity to tell their story (a

simple statement by the priest on an A4 page, prompted by a few questions that Cheryle's group has put together to draw out that rich history.

## (ii) Frank Devoy, Director's Report

1. Frank thanked the SANTWA provinces for preparing the conference and all speakers.

2. Issues under discussion by the Council for CLM:

- The preparation of Directory on the Diaconate is being put together by Fathers Paul Cashen and Philip Marshall in consultation with Paul Simmons and Frank Devoy;
- The Council's letter to the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry, raising issues about the effectiveness of seminary formation particularly, was referred by ACBC's Permanent Committee back to the Council and the Seminary Rectors. Frank explained that this was a somewhat ineffective way of dealing with the issue as the Rectors carry out directions of their bishops. The critical issues raised remain in a *cul-de-sac*.
- Frank indicated that he had sent a letter to all Local Ordinaries offering a programme of preparation for those priests who have been appointed parish priests to the first-time;
- There was an urgent need expressed for serious planned renewal for clergy in view of the many and complex problems facing them; sabbaticals needs serious encouragement;
- There was a lengthy discussion about the often poor relationship between parish priests and pastoral associate; these people (also housekeepers, secretaries) can be frozen out of a parish by a new PP who simply doesn't want them. It was suggested there be a diocesan contract; a properly conducted diocesan-based process of interview / selection rather than parish-based; also the appointment of an ombudsman for sorting out grievances.

3. For the benefit of new directors, Frank explained the structure of the Bishops Conference, its Bishops Commission for Church Ministry, and the lines of accountability for the Council, the National Director, and for this National Group. Frank provided a brief history of the St Peter Centre (1982), the Ministry to Priest Program (1985), and the subsequent establishment of the present structure (1992, commencing in 1993).

iii) **Daniel Doyle and Kevin Clark** addressed the gathering on their pastoral experiences; they also provided an update on the state of the diocesan and Christchurch City following the earthquake.

## iv) Meetings for 2012:

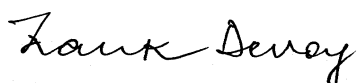
**National Meeting 2012:** 2nd July – 6th July 2012 at Mary MacKillop Place.

### **Regional Meetings 2012:**

NSW/ACT: 16 -19 January, Baulkham Hills, to be confirmed;  
Q;LAND: 23-26 January at Santa Theresa Spirituality Centre, Ormiston;  
SANTWA: 30 Jan-3 February, place to be confirmed;  
VIC/TAS: 6-9 February, Carlton.

This session was followed by **Mass** led by **Bishop Peter Cullinane** in the MacKillop Chapel

At the special Thursday Evening Dinner the Directors honoured the Golden Jubilarians: Ross O'Brien, Vince Redden, and +Peter Cullinane by Frank Devoy; while Martin Ashe and John Armstrong were thanked by Dave O'Connor, and Michael Morrissey by Kerry Crowley for their years of service as Directors to their dioceses, the Regional / National gatherings.



**Director,**



**Office for Clergy Life and Ministry**