

# CONTENTS

## *EDITORIAL*

- IMAGE OF JESUS IN AUSTRALIAN CULTURE 3  
Frank Fletcher MSC
- NORTHERN TERRITORY CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES COUNCIL 11  
Martin Wilson MSC
- HOUSE OF BREAD* 18  
Dan O'Donovan
- REPORT: ORIENTATION COURSE 1983 20  
Murray Johnson
- AN APPEAL 28  
Dan O'Donovan
- NOTICE: ABORIGINAL APOSTOLATE PROGRAMME 30
- SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE 31

## EDITORIAL

WITH A CHANGE of location in July from Daly River to Pularumpi, Melville Island, for the NYMU staff and the disruption such a move via truck, barge and plane causes to ordered programs, *Nelen Yubu* is badly behind schedule this half-year.

Two other factors are involved. One is the plan we conceived in a bid towards economy, of doing our own typesetting on an electronic typewriter. The theory was sound. Last issue and this one have been typeset by ourselves, but only at the cost of immense problems to our secretary, Keren. Either our new machine is defective or our local power supply is too irregular. Probably a combination of both. Hopefully a remedy will soon be found, but whatever it is we have saved, it is not time.

The second factor is that people in the field have been slower in offering articles than they used to be. We repeat the invitation expressed in our March editorial. In these circumstances Fr Dan O'Donovan's *Appeal* is timely and we are glad to print it. We thank him for his strong, active support since the periodical began — and this time in particular for a fine Christmas poem.

When we first adopted formal printing of *Nelen Yubu* we had been advised to charge \$10 annually but, wisely or not, we decided to set the price as low as possible. Rising costs of paper, postage etc. in the meanwhile make even a belated acceptance of that early good advice imperative. A subscription notice at the end of this issue notifies that the fee becomes \$10 in 1984.

The two of us who constitute the *Nelen Yubu* staff wish all readers the season's greetings!

Martin Wilson msc

Editor

# IMAGE OF JESUS IN AUSTRALIAN CULTURE

Frank Fletcher MSC

[This interpretative essay was prepared by the author, lecturer at St Paul's National Seminary, Kensington NSW, for a September 1983 meeting of JIPPAC, an association of MSC formation personnel working in Japan, Indonesia, the Pro-vice of the Pacific Islands, the Philippines, Australia and the Central Pacific. It was an MSC 'in-house' production and as such is immediately relevant to the members of this Society who provide the clerical staff of the Aboriginal 'missions' in the NT. This is particularly the case in view of a proposed MSC conference on the Aboriginal apostolate. I believe the essay will be of wider interest, especially to religious communities and lay Christians associated with the MSC Society in the Aboriginal apostolate. For this reason I do not hesitate to publish it in this periodical. I have omitted one section regarding entrants into the MSC Society as being of only particular relevance.

— Editor]

MOST OF THE IMAGES of God and Jesus Christ proposed in this essay as influential in the Australian scene can be disputed. I welcome such discussion. I would propose that the older images at work within Australian Catholicism 1860-1950s have been: 'A Hard God'; the God of Order; Our Divine Lord.

## A Hard God

This title is taken from a well-known play about an Irish-Australian Catholic family in the mid 20th century. (Peter Kenna, *A Hard God*, 1974.) Australian Catholics in 19th century and up to World War II were mainly Irish or of Irish descent. Many came as convicts or came out from Ireland free but poor, ill-educated and with little religious instruction. A leading historian of Australian Catholicism describes the decision of the Irish bishops in Australia after 1860 to transform 'an ignorant and apathetic laity into a religious people' (O'Farrell, 1977:109). They were determined to force their flocks 'to be free — free from apathy and carelessness and easy ways and from

the impulse to resist the will of the clergy' (p.210). Many resisted but in large measure the policy succeeded. 'Australian Catholic culture', he writes, 'was a culture which found tolerable, welcomed even, a tough religious line, a religiosity which emphasised duty, obedience, loyalty, hard rules, the black of sin, the white of purity. . . [a religion] better [than others] because it was harder, more united, utterly self certain. . .' (pp. 211-212). It was exemplified, he writes, by the Redemptorist missions in parishes all over Australia with hellfire sermons and strict moral demands. It was into this religion of 'the Hard God' that the MSCs came to Australia and in early 20th century also preached missions in parishes. As a child I heard the evidence of my grandmother and other ancients that MSC preaching was like a new religion, a figure of Christ that gave hope and mercy.

I should note that as the 20th century progressed there was a mellowing of the harshness and that there was a lot of faith and devotion among the mass of 'good Catholics' under this regime. Of these 'good Catholics' the historian, O'Farrell, quotes an MSC priest, Fr M D Forrest writing in the 1920s: 'The "good" Catholic segregates himself from the "bad" as he would from Protestants' (p.211).

### The 'God of Order'

The 'utterly self certain "Church" set out clear rules for life and had a firm answer for every question whatever its complexity' (p.212). Reason and Order were completely on its side and were pressed into use for the conversion of Australia. Dr Leslie Rumble MSC was the leading exponent of this as he answered questions on the radio from 1928-1968.

### 'Our Divine Lord'

In religious discourse the emphasis was more on the divinity of Christ rather than on the Jesus of the Gospel and the application of his attitudes to the Church and the culture.

Australian culture's attitude to the figure of Jesus Christ must be characterised as a general *indifference*. But if the mass of Australians are indifferent to Christ, what of those we can call the 'creative minority' who carry the idealism and reflection of the nation? Of this creative minority we can say that in some Christ can be discerned in their search for genuine humanity and justice, without his being named; in others of perhaps scientific or scholarly bent, he can be discerned in their search for the Logos in the irrationality of the world of nuclear threats and Australian hedonism, again without his being named.

Australians' general indifference towards Christ dates from the beginning. Australia was founded by Englishmen of the Enlightenment,

quite agnostic. In Australia today and for quite some time the norm has been unbelief: only 22% of Australians are church-goers, only 9% of young adults. There has been no Australian religious figure who has caught the popular imagination across the land.

As regards the *creative minority*, I believe Jesus Christ can be discerned in their search for genuine humanity and justice. It seems fair to generalise that the Australian ethos is characterised by a desire for genuineness, fair-play for all, broad-minded humanity and a repugnance to moralising and religious fanaticism. Australian literature reflects a humanist search for spiritual experience. Further, Australians carry a secular idealism for social justice around the world but especially for the suffering of Australia's own Aborigines. The Aboriginal community is a sacrament within Australian culture, the place of heartbreak where oppression is made visible.

I believe that, in the creative minority, Jesus Christ can be discerned in their search for the Logos in an irrational or vacuous world. Many of the creative minority are profoundly disturbed by the irrationality of world politics, by the imminence of nuclear disaster, by the heedless superficiality of much of Australian life. They are seeking the Logos, especially those of a scientific, scholarly or philosophical bent.

### **Effect of Vatican II**

Australian Catholicism since Vatican II has taken a cautious turn towards Jesus of the Gospels.

The confusion, enthusiasm and reaction to Vatican II in the Australian Church are far from settled. Vatican II swept away the legitimacy of the older images, but 'the God of Order' and 'the self-certain church' are still potent at all levels of hierarchical church. Such circles blame the forces unleashed by Vatican II for the decline of the Australian Church. It is estimated that church attendance dropped from 55% to 37%: it is much lower among the 18-40 year olds. Even though there has been a general religious decline in Australia in this period, the decline in 'practising Catholics' has been far greater. There has been a big drop-out among the migrant people who have come to Australia in millions since World War II, and relatively few of those people have involved themselves in leadership roles within the Catholic community. How much is that due to the weakness of the church in the lands from which they came, or is it due to the narrowness of the Australian Church? Today over 50% of the Australian Church originate from countries other than Ireland and Britain. The failure of multi-culturalism in the Australian Church is serious. The drop-out has been particularly notable also among the poorer classes. The Australians of Irish descent became

largely middle class in the growth of wealth in Australia in the 50s and 60s. The well-attended parishes are generally middle class; the church-going in the poorer class parishes has fallen away. Finally there is the decline of church-going among young adults. Even after a Catholic schooling the big majority do not persevere: they find the church without interest. A considerable number of Catholics join sects: their spiritual yearnings are not satisfied in the church. A number turn to drugs.

In the post-Vatican II era the church has turned cautiously towards Jesus, human as well as divine. The scriptural emphasis in the new liturgy has directed preaching in this direction. It is much more consoling and human than in older times. But the vague presentation of 'Jesus in the Gospels' has uncovered lacks in the Australian Church. These lacks I would sum up as concerned with *religious experience* — for the interpersonal language now commonly used in preaching Jesus, supposes religious experience among the faithful; with *Christian community* — for the Gospel context supposes genuine community among disciples; with *social challenge* — for the Gospel challenges the social patterns of living both of the church and of the culture and the Gospel preaching appears unreal if christian social action is not concretely proposed.

In case this appears too pessimistic, we must note that 'good things' are happening in many places in the Australian Church for there is a creative minority. However, so far it is not such a force as would stir a religious revival in the Australian culture.

### Creative Minority

For the creative minority within the Australian Church Jesus is a dynamic figure. I would characterise the figures of Jesus as: Jesus, friend and saviour (= religious experience); Jesus, at the centre of our sharing (= community); Jesus the Logos, judge of our church and our culture, Jesus of the poor (= social challenge).

*Religious experience.* There are a number of movements in the Australian Church, e.g. the charismatic movement, directed retreats, introduction to forms of prayer etc. which have awakened people to their religious experience. There is a hunger for religious experience among many laity, especially among women and among youth. Many find these a personal foundation for believing and for discipleship. They turn to the scriptures and come to some understanding of the humanness of Jesus, of the loving presence of his Spirit, of his redeeming power in their life; 'He is my friend, whatever my sins and weakness'.

*Social challenge.* There are a number of varied movements struggling to mediate the Gospel to the world's irrationality and

suffering, to the injustices and superficiality of Australian culture, and to the Church herself. Though some outstanding people are contributing in this area, I think we have to say that it remains outside the mainstream of the Australian Church's effort.

Jesus is not perceived within the church generally as seeking to transform the church and the culture. For example, only a minority have become aware that we have long been enmeshed in a middle class viewpoint. The Aboriginal question encounters the biases of middle class Catholics as much as those of Australians generally. Sister Veronica Brady (see *A Crucible of Prophets*) believes no genuine discipleship is possible in Australia without a recognition of Jesus as Suffering Servant in the Aboriginal people. The best of youth, however, are responsive.

We face a long journey to find the Jesus who was free within his own culture and his religious tradition and who challenges every culture and every situation of the tradition that claims to follow him. Tertullian expressed it: 'Jesus proclaimed himself as the truth, not as custom'. For those who have made this journey, Jesus is Logos and Judge, a man of the poor.

These three general movements within the creative minority are not to be considered as progressive stages, but rather as mutually complementary among themselves. That is to say, there are numbers of priests, religious and laity enthusiastic at one of these but unaware of the other two. For example, concern for religious experience and community are mainly taking place in the middle class sectors of the church rather than among the poor. It will be noticed also that these three movements may correspond to what we have proposed as the direction towards Jesus Christ in the general Australian culture. The search for genuine humanity involves spiritual experience and community. The search for justice and for the Logos correspond to the social challenge of the Gospel, concern for the poor, concern to make sense of the Gospel in our culture.

### Relevance to Australian MSCs

How is Jesus Christ seen by MSCs in Australia today? I would summarise in this way:

- The turn to Jesus and the Gospel in the Australian Church has been taken up enthusiastically by MSCs.
- The experience of the personal love of Jesus Christ has touched a significant fraction of the province and renewed their spirituality.
- There is a growing openness to the communitarian and social demands of the Gospel.

*Turn to Jesus.* Many MSCs find a resonance between the Gospel Jesus as merciful Saviour and the MSC charism. Father Founder's [Fr Jules Chevalier] Good Shepherd image is recalled. At the pastoral level there are testimonies to the way it touches and encourages people. I would suggest, however, that in spite of so much good effect, the lacks within the Australian Church as described in the previous section, restrict the full efficacy of this MSC pastoral style.

*Religious Experience — 'Jesus as my Friend'.* A good fraction of the province have done directed retreats up to 14 days (in special Institutes). For many this renewed the experience of the personal love of Jesus: it also renewed their spiritual living. They no longer preached a 'notion' of love but tried to share their own experience. The proclamation of a love that has transcended the experience of sin and weakness became more convincing. It has led also to a deeper love of the scriptures, especially the Gospels, an awareness of the role of the Spirit of Jesus, and a discovery of their own heart. Bishop Cuskelly's fourfold steps: to enter into one's own heart and thence to the heart of Jesus, seemed to capture their experience. For many the 'spirituality of the heart' has appeared more contemporary than the older devotion to the Sacred Heart. For a few, St Francis de Sales, spiritual father of St Margaret Mary, has offered an experiential understanding of the way of love.

*A growing openness to the communitarian dimension.* A number of MSCs have entered into movements such as cursillo, marriage encounter, parish renewal, Antioch and begun to develop the communitarian dimension in liturgy and parish life. This requires an openness to the gifts and ministries of the laity. The work is, perhaps, only at an initial stage — as it is in the whole Australian Church. To have Jesus as the centre of our sharing requires MSCs to be in touch with their own inner selves and free enough to trust and to share. The *Documents of Renewal* [preparatory papers for reformed Constitution] seemed to give an encouragement to this aspect of our spirituality. Fr Frank Andersen has become well-known through the country for his developments in liturgy and song in accord with this spirit. Fr Michael Fallon likewise has opened up the scriptures to great numbers and encouraged a vision of church as community.

*A growing openness to the Jesus of the poor,* to the transforming figure of Jesus the judge of both his church and the culture. We must admit that we MSCs are not recognised as leaders in the concern for social justice in Australia and for dedication to the poor. A number of diocesan priests have been prominent in this area and the Sisters of Mercy appear outstanding among the religious. As regards the media

and providing formation for the ministry towards justice and peace; the Jesuits and the Columbans are notable. Our parishes in Australia itself are mostly middle-class — though the parishes in Northern Territory generously endeavour to serve the Aboriginal fringe-dwellers. Our schools are middle-class and have been described in news papers (unfairly) as wealthy schools. Our men in the Aboriginal missions and in PNG live dedicated to their people and share their poverty in many ways.

The MSC ministry to the Aboriginal community is of particular significance, for, as I have said, the plight of the Aboriginal community is a sacrament within the secular Australian culture. Our solidarity with these people is truly a preferential option for the most oppressed people of our land. Our MSCs went to the Aboriginal missions in the name of charity and evangelisation. But in these times we are recognising what the possibility of an Aboriginal church means for the Australian Church and the Australian culture. For us MSCs the Aboriginal ministry could be a touchstone for the authenticity of all our MSC ministries within Australia. However it has not yet become so. Indeed the *New Constitutions* presents the option for the poor in more emphatic terms than we would have found it for ourselves in the Australian context. The response of the province to this option is, so far, tentative and uncertain. Some would argue that it is nothing new, just what we have always done. They seem to believe that to say anything else is to be disloyal to the past.

Our formation programs have for some time included some experience of work with the disadvantaged and needy. However we could not say that we have presented 'the discovery of the face of Christ in the oppressed, the poor and the unimportant of this world' to be an essential part of MSC spirituality as stated in *New Constitutions* (p. 22).

*Christ as Logos.* In the past we MSCs had some noted priests who took up with the creative minority the task of finding Christ as Logos in Australian culture viz. Frs D'arcy Morris, Leo Dalton, P J Ryan, L Rumble. We have had a desire to provide men of perception who would mediate the Gospel to our culture. The Australian Church is mostly presenting Jesus in mythological terms as if there were few questions or difficulties about this. We MSCs have the organs to take up these questions: our theological magazine, *Compass*, *Nelen Yubu*, the popular magazine *Annals*, spirituality institutes, an adult education centre (Chevalier Institute), our seminaries, schools and parishes. Perhaps, as we become authentically alive through growth in community, religious experience and solidarity with the poor, we may be able to present a transforming figure of Jesus within Australian culture and put the Gospel into authentic forms. I believe quite a number of MSCs feel the urgency of this.

NELEN YUBU

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KENNA, Peter  
1974

*A Hard God*, Sydney, Currency Press.

O'FARRELL, Patrick  
1977

*Catholic Church and Community in  
Australia: A History*, Melbourne, Nelson.

# NORTHERN TERRITORY CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES COUNCIL

**M J Wilson MSC**

THE SIXTH NTCMC was held in Darwin at Bakhita Village 11-13 October 1983. The first had been called in 1969 to enable the church's missionary work amongst Aboriginal people in the NT to respond to a quickening tempo. On the social side governments had suddenly re-discovered Aboriginal people and had begun a system of financial support and new administrative measures that were going utterly to change the living conditions of the Aboriginal population. On the ecclesiastical side Vatican II had given a new direction to missionary work, a direction that was later reinforced and spelt out in some detail by the 1974 Synod of Bishops and the resulting Apostolic Exhortation of Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

By a constitution whose drafting had begun at the 1969 inaugural meeting and was formally accepted in 1973 the Catholic Missions Council was due to be convoked every second year. After 1969, meetings were held in 1971 and 1973. The 1975 one was postponed to 1976 as the MSC Australian province held a special apostolate conference, 'MSC in NT' at Daly River during August 1975. The fifth occurred in 1979. This 1979 meeting was unusual in that it comprised all the clergy and religious involved in mission work in the diocese and omitted elected representatives of the lay missionary staff and of Aboriginal men and women of each of the four 'missions'. It was in effect a 'Missionaries' Council'.

At the 1979 meeting the feeling that the Council needed to be reformed was translated into a resolution that the Standing Committee draft a new constitution. The 1983 meeting was convoked already in terms of the re-drafted constitution which had refashioned the Council after the model of the 1979 meeting. The Council was no longer to be called the 'Northern Territory Catholic Missions Council' but the 'Northern Territory Catholic Missionaries Council'. The 1969 Council had envisaged that there would be quite a lay presence at the NTCMC: one elected representative of lay missionaries and one of the Aboriginal people from each of the four missions (Bathurst Island, Daly River, Port Keats, Santa Teresa).

Regarding Aboriginal representation it is interesting to note that the 1969 meeting expressed in its first resolution a consciousness of 'the need to involve the Aboriginal people in such a way that they gradually become personally responsible for their own way of life.' Consequently it looked for the representation I mentioned earlier, which was formally established in the 1973 constitution. An amendment at the 1976 Council doubled the lay Aboriginal representation (one man, one woman from each mission), gave Aboriginal clergy an 'ex officio' status and provided for special representation of Aboriginal Sisters. The redrafted Constitution used at the 1983 meeting continued the special provisions for Aboriginal clergy and Aboriginal Sisters, but made 'three representatives of Aboriginal or Parish Councils' a possibility. The sole Aboriginal clergyman in the NT is Deacon Boniface Perdjert, and nowadays there are only two Aboriginal Sisters: all these three persons attended. The special acolyte at Pularumpi, Peter Brogan, was also invited and attended. No other Aboriginal representation was called for.

Since the days of the inaugural Council lay missionaries have ceased to exist as a recognisable group in the NT. There is only a scattering of individuals who still call themselves such. A number of lay helpers were invited to the 1983 Council: three from 'Mission Headquarters' in Geranium Street, Darwin, and the headmaster from Port Keats school.

In all there were 39 participants at the 1983 Council: Bishop O'Loughlin, Fr M P Fyfe (Episcopal Vicar for Missions), five priests-in-charge of mission parishes, two Provincial Superiors and two representatives of Provincials (FMS, CBC), one Regional Superior (Sr P Ryan FDNCS), eight Sisters- or Brothers-in-charge of religious communities (or their representatives), two elected MSC Brothers, two elected Sisters, two priests representing the northern and southern regions of the diocese, the four Aboriginal persons and the four lay helpers I mentioned earlier, and finally a number of other invited participants (three priests, two Brothers, two Sisters).

### Theme

The Standing Committee had set a very general theme for the 1983 Council: 'the Church's role in the Aboriginal apostolate today'. The Council itself had the task of giving precision to its topic. The first half of the Council was taken up with this task, apart from opening procedures on the first day and a presentation on the general theme by Peter Carroll of the Chief Minister's Aboriginal Liaison Unit in the first session of the second day.

The method chosen assured that the Council's program was self-determined, but at the cost of leaving little time actually to work

through it! Each participant was invited to speak for a maximum of five minutes on his/her views, hopes, personal stance etc. Most took advantage of the opportunity. Towards the end of Day 1 the Council met in set groups and in plenary session to discuss possible themes. During Session 2 of Day 2 the Council members were presented with a voting paper setting out ten possible topics arising from the previous discussions. One topic (No. 10) was obligatory, and members were asked to indicate three other themes, with the idea that No. 10 and two others at least would be given the Council's attention in the remaining 1½ days of the Council meeting.

The topics with the number of votes each received were as follows:

Possible Themes	Votes
1. Formation . . . . .	18
2. Language and liturgy . . . . .	19
3. Proper function of priest on mission . . . . .	9
4. Alcohol . . . . .	20
5. Problems associated with self-management . . . . .	10
6. Appropriate catechesis . . . . .	12
7. Adult education/leadership training . . . . .	15
8. Witness of Church personnel to Aborigines . . . . .	5
9. Evaluating depth of Catholic life/sacramentality . . . . .	3
10. Format of future Council meetings/ revised Constitution	

As a result the Council determined to discuss Alcohol (topic 4), Language and Liturgy (topic 2) and Formation (topic 1). Topic 10 was a necessary part of the program.

**Procedure**

The Council treated each topic by an initial discussion in open forum (¼ hour); small group discussion (½ hour); presentation of the results of group discussions in plenary session (¾ hour); preparation of a Council statement by a small drafting committee; discussion of the draft statement, amendments etc. in plenary session; possible rewriting; final vote on statement as a whole.

The procedure was expeditious, but as Day 3 went on it became more and more obvious that there was insufficient time available for

## NELEN YUBU

reasonable treatment of all issues. The last statement (Formation) suffered a rough passage and the future format of the NTCMC was left in the hands of the newly elected Standing Committee. General indications were that the future Council would need to be more widely representative of the diocese, less exclusively 'missionary' in the narrow sense given to 'mission' in NT Catholic terminology.

### Other Items

*Standing Committee:* During Session 5 of Day 3 the Council elected a new Standing Committee, viz. Bro. Cletus Read FMS, Terry McCarthy, Fr John Leary MSC, Fr Tim Brennan MSC. As substitutes (being runners-up) Sisters P Ryan FDNSC and A Barron FDNSC (equal votes) and Bro. N. Feeney CBC were indicated. It was moved and accepted that one of the two Sisters (themselves to decide on the occasion of each meeting) should be a member of the Standing Committee. — Before the vote the Council chairman had directed the Council's attention to the advisability of wide representation on the Standing Committee, so it was anomolous that as a result of the ensuing vote the bulk of the new committee are or will be residents of Nguu, Bathurst Island. One advantage will be that it will be uncommonly easy for the Standing Committee to convoke a meeting!

*Anglican presentation.* Canon Barry Butler, Chairman of the Church Missionary Society, addressed the Council on its general theme Day 3, Session 1.

## NTCMC STATEMENTS

### STATEMENT ON ALCOHOL

This Council requests the Bishop to appoint, as soon as possible, a suitable group comprised of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

1. The function of this group will be:
  - a To do as much as possible to support and encourage existing Aboriginal alcohol programs (including Alcoholics Anonymous, Alanon, Alateen);
  - b To establish an alcohol awareness and sensitivity program throughout each local community;
  - c To seek funds through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Department of Health, and Catholic Missions.

2. With regard to activities, the group will be accountable to the Bishop (minutes on request). Financial accountability will be through the usual agency of Catholic Missions.
3. The group will normally meet 4 times a year (experience may indicate less or more).
4. The group's function will be to do whatever else in the opinion of the group is appropriate to deal with alcohol problems.

## STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE AND LITURGY

'...anyone who is going to encounter another people should have a great esteem for their patrimony and their language and their customs... Let missionaries learn languages to the extent of being able to use them in a fluent and polished manner. Thus will they find more easy access to the minds and the hearts of men.'

*Ad Gentes* No. 26.

This Council believes that the ideal is for the missionary to learn the language of the people to whom he or she is missioned. The missionary's efforts to learn the language will lead him or her to a deeper relationship with, respect for, and understanding of the people who in turn will respond more positively when they perceive this genuine appreciation of a most significant aspect of their culture. The missionary new to a particular settlement should be expected to make a reasonable attempt to master the language and should be provided with the assistance necessary to facilitate this undertaking.

'Evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete lives.'

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 63.

This Council recognises the need to use the local language, signs and symbols to the greatest possible extent in the Church's catechesis and sacramental presentations. Every effort should be made to analyse and to present biblical and theological concepts or liturgical practices in words and symbols that are relevant to, and understood by, the local Aborigines.

This Council realises the uniqueness of the Aboriginal apostolate

in the gamut of the Church's cross-cultural missionary endeavours. In particular, it is conscious of the comparatively small populations that comprise discrete cultural and language groups. It is conscious too, of the difficulty of learning Aboriginal culture and language and the absence of many institutions where relevant Aboriginal languages are taught. Consequently, it urges those in positions of responsibility to be mindful of these factors when deploying personnel and determining durations of appointments.

### Recommendations

1. That the authorities responsible for the selection and preparation of new missionaries should be informed by the Episcopal Vicar for Missions that it is desirable for new missionaries to be given adequate time in the location to start learning the language before they take up duties.
2. That the priest-in-charge of each mission be responsible for ensuring that a language-learning program be prepared for each mission, and be made available to newcomers to assist in the language-learning process.
3. That part of orientation programs be devoted to instruction in language-learning techniques.
4. That the priest-in-charge of each mission establish a committee to assist in the development of local liturgy and that this committee be charged with the maintenance of suitable records of translations etc. for future use, and that in the case of important material copies be forwarded to the diocesan archives.

## STATEMENT ON MISSIONARY FORMATION

### *Preamble*

In accordance with the Church's directives (Vatican Council, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*) and in view of the special conditions of missionary work amongst Aboriginal people in the diocese of Darwin, we make the following recommendations regarding the preparation, cultural and social orientation, spiritual and personal development of missionary personnel:

### Recommendations

- 1.0 That those in formation in a religious congregation who

## NT CATHOLIC MISSIONARIES COUNCIL

appear as likely candidates for the Aboriginal apostolate be given the chance of assessing their suitability by a short term of contact and work experience in an Aboriginal milieu;

- 1.1 That lay persons hoping to work in a missionary mode amongst Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory be encouraged to undertake a suitable pre-service course such as those provided by the Pallottines and PALMS.
- 2.0 That soon after arrival at their apostolate centre (e.g. mission station), missionary personnel take part in a brief induction process of, for example, two or three days.
  - 2.1 Such an induction process would be the responsibility of the existing missionary community in conjunction with the Aboriginal community.
- 3.0 That all missionary personnel be encouraged to take part in a more general orientation course within the first year for cultural, social, missiological and spiritual orientation.
  - 3.1 This course could either be conducted on site or at some appropriate centre.
  - 3.2 It would last normally for two weeks or more.
- 4.0 That each local missionary community meet regularly to review its apostolic endeavours and its overall effectiveness as a team.
- 5.0 That after some five or so years of missionary experience, missionary personnel be encouraged to deepen their theology of mission by attendance at one of the longer courses offered, for example, by the Aboriginal Apostolate Programme, the Pacific Mission Institute, the East Asian Pastoral Institute or similar institutions.

HOUSE OF BREAD

(in Hebrew: *Bet' lehem*)

Me and my man had a ruby stone  
we found in the creek called Biljur's Bone,  
round as a pearl and pure as wine  
but wondrous in the full moonshine.

The old man had a dream that said,  
Look and you'll find a house of bread.  
He told me, Come, and rolled his swag,  
I put the stone in my dilly-bag.

(That time we starved for a bite to eat.  
Days since we'd caught a scrap of meat.  
Even the dog looked like he'd die.  
The bush was still and the pools all dry.)

Two days we walked and never spoke.  
The third, the old man saw some smoke.  
The dog sniffed and began to run.  
We reached there by the setting sun.

A damper cooked on ashes red  
was the only sign of a house of bread.  
The man looked up, we saw his face,  
and knew for sure this was the place.

We greeted him and then sat down.  
He broke the bread and gave it round.  
He passed around his can of tea,  
then said to my old man and me:

'Happy the dream that led you here  
where hunger is gone, and gone is fear.  
You see this bark and boughy shed?  
It holds the God who is Living Bread.'

We followed him in, (the dog went first).  
Through a hole in the bark the moonlight burst.  
There was a woman and a sleeping child.  
Out of the depths the ages smiled.

## HOUSE OF BREAD

I reached and got the ruby stone  
my old man found at Biljur's Bone  
and laid it on the little black chest  
of Living Bread, the God of rest.

It caught fire under the moon's full light  
driving the shadows and the night,  
driving the pain, driving the woe.  
And every people saw its glow.

Dan O'Donovan

Kalumburu

REPORT: ORIENTATION COURSE 1983

(Nungalinya College)

Murray Johnson

AT SUCCESSIVE ANNUAL MEETINGS of Community Advisors, called by the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Aborigines have asked that non-Aboriginal people sent into communities should be given some form of orientation, a preparation for living with Aborigines.

For a number of years, Nungalinya has provided such courses as part of its Development Studies program, with particular emphasis on helping people who have begun work in traditionally oriented Aboriginal communities. At the 1982 Community Advisors meeting, the Nungalinya course was recommended as one appropriate to the needs of communities.

The 1983 course was held June 6 - 17. Thirty-five people enrolled, twelve responding to the normal College advertising and twenty-three coming under the auspices of the Sydney-based Aboriginal Apostolate Programme. Nineteen of the thirty-five work in the Northern Territory, the remaining sixteen were from either NSW, WA or Queensland. Of those working in direct and regular contact with an Aboriginal community or group, a small majority work with traditionally oriented people, the rest with non-traditional or urban Aborigines.

Courses in the previous two years had concentrated on work with traditional Aborigines, with Fr Martin Wilson of the Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit presenting sessions on culture and religion, and various representatives of Church and Government providing information concerning services to Aboriginal communities.

---

Murray Johnson was course co-ordinator, being then the staff member of Nungalinya College in charge of its Community Development department. He has since become rector of Christ Church Cathedral, Darwin.

## REPORT: ORIENTATION COURSE 1983

The course for 1983 was as follows:

- June 6 8.30-10.00 **Introduction** (Murray Johnson)  
- to the College, to the course, to the people we work with.
- 10.30-12.00 **Introduction** (Martin Wilson)  
- to traditional culture and religion.
- 2.00-3.00 **Introduction** (Eugene Stockton)  
- to Prehistory.
- June 7 8.30-12.00 **Department of Aboriginal Affairs** (Reg Holdsworth)  
- on working with Aborigines.
- 2.00-3.00 **Visit to Museum** (Eugene)
- June 8 8.30-10.00 **Do's and Don't's** (Murray)  
Basic rules for living with Aborigines.
- 10.30-12.00 **Alcohol Use and Abuse** (John Leary and Terry Djiniyini)  
Problems associated with drinking.
- 2.00-3.00 **Community expectations** (Terry and students)  
What communities expect of visitors and workers.
- June 9 8.30-3.00 **Kinship and social organisation** (Martin and Terry)  
Moieties, sections and sub-sections.
- June 10 8.30-10.00 **Office of Aboriginal Liaison** (Ian Pitman)
- 10.30-12.00 **Division of Community Welfare** (Myron Pentz)
- 2.00-3.00 **Kinship** (Martin and Terry)  
More on relationships, especially on marriage.
- June 13 **The Churches and Aborigines**
- 8.30-10.00 **Uniting Church** (Robin Nance and Terry)
- 10.30-12.00 **Anglican Church** (Bishop Ken Mason)
- 2.00-3.00 **Catholic Church** (Martin)
- June 14 8.30-3.00 **Traditional Aboriginal Religion** (Martin and Terry)  
Belief and ritual
- June 15 8.30-9.00 **Social Analysis** (Murray)  
Introduction to a way of looking at a society
- 9.00-10.00 **Northern Land Council** (Rosemary Tipiloura)
- 10.30-12.00 **Sacred Sites Authority** (Bob Ellis)
- 2.00-3.00 **Dept. of Mines and Energy** (Ian Lewis)

June 16	8.30-12.00	<b>Christianity and Aboriginal Religion</b> (Martin)
	2.00-3.00	<b>Learning Processes</b> (Stephen Harris) Comparing Traditional and European ways of learning
	3.30-4.30	<b>Revival</b> (Terry) History of Arnhem Land Revival and its effects on Aborigines
June 17	8.30-9.15	<b>Social Analysis contd.</b> (Murray)
	9.15-10.00	<b>Values</b> (Martin)
	10.30-12.30	<b>Group discussions</b> - course evaluation
	2.00-3.00	<b>Final plenary</b>

(The Aboriginal Apostolate participants also arranged extra sessions after hours - times for reflection, video presentations and sessions with Don Carrington - Aboriginal theology - and the Summer Institute of Linguistics.)

### **Evaluation**

The opinions of the course participants are ultimately more important than those of the course co-ordinator. The collected evaluations of the participants are at the end of this report.

It is clear from those evaluations that the course achieved its purpose. There are several obvious reasons.

The College's relationship with Nelen Yubu, although still fairly informal, has been strengthened to the point where both College and NYMU benefit. From the College's side, Martin Wilson's participation has given our Orientation Courses a much needed and very valuable input on traditional culture and religion.

Contributions from visiting speakers were, on the whole, of a very high standard. Representatives of government instrumentalities were people of long experience and, in each case, were the appropriate people to talk about the work of their respective offices. — It is important that contact with those people be maintained, not only for future courses, but for any possible contributions that can be made by Nungalinya or its course participants towards a more enlightened approach by government to its work with Aborigines.

We were extremely fortunate to have Terry Djiniyini available for the course. While non-Aboriginal people can give the facts, their presentations are always 'from the outside'. Aboriginal people, giving the same facts, do so 'from the inside'. Terry's many contributions 'from the inside' were a big factor in the success of the course. — It is vital that Terry be available for Orientation Courses and the timetable for future years should be arranged accordingly.

The presence of Fr John Leary and Fr Eugene Stockton was

another factor. John's long experience in the Territory has given him a wealth of knowledge and understanding. His comments in many sessions were always helpful. Eugene's sessions on prehistory helped to put the present into historical perspective. His later informal contributions to the course were valuable. — If the relationship with the Aboriginal Apostolate Programme is to continue, then it is likely that John and Eugene will be involved in future courses. If, for some reason, that relationship does not develop, it is suggested that John Leary, because of his proximity to Darwin, be invited to participate. It is, of course, recommended that all efforts be made to retain and develop the relationship with the Aboriginal Apostolate Programme.

The group itself was a significant factor. There is no doubt that the commitment of each person, to Aborigines and therefore to the course was very great indeed. The group very quickly attained a unity, due largely to the fact that most of them lived in. Some of those who came in daily may have felt a little left out, although it seemed that efforts were made to include them in discussions.

The group was sensitive to the fact that so many new people could have easily overwhelmed the small number of resident Aboriginal students and their families. This did not happen and the contact between Aborigines and course participants was extremely positive.

All comments about the College as a place to live were positive. The ability of office and kitchen staff to cope with an extra 27 residents helped to create the right atmosphere for a successful course.

It is clear that there is a continuing need for orientation courses. Although there is room for improvement, this year's course has shown that Nungalinga can help to meet that need. Regardless of the outcome of discussions within the College over the future of the Development Studies program, special consideration should be given to ensuring that orientation courses continue and that relationships created through the 1983 course are developed.

## ORIENTATION COURSE

### EVALUATION

#### 1. What were your expectations of the course?

Better understanding of Aboriginal people, their customs and culture.

Understand relationship of Aboriginal culture to Christianity.

Understand relationship between Aborigines and Europeans.

Understand Aboriginal aspirations.

Learn Aboriginal expectations of white workers in community.

## NELEN YUBU

Learn to be a bridge between cultures.

Time to examine/clarify different ideas, experiences, attitudes.

Need to discover/clarify personal direction.

Gain further knowledge for career/vocation.

Meeting tribal Aborigines.

Review knowledge previously acquired.

Learn guidelines for living in a mixed community (European-Aboriginal-Coloured.)

(Three people had no expectations.)

### **2. Were your expectations met? not met? exceeded?**

Majority of people said their expectations were met or exceeded.

Those who expected time for dialogue felt that the course did not meet that expectation.

Another commented that the course was not analytical enough, did not fully explain past failures in work with Aborigines.

### **3. What sessions did you find most helpful? least helpful?**

Three people reported that they thought everything was helpful.

In order, the following sessions were most helpful:

do's and don't's

sessions on traditional culture and religion

Aboriginal learning processes

Sacred Sites Authority

community expectations

theological session

Northern Land Council

Government departments

pre-history

social analysis

session on Arnhem Land revival

alcohol use and abuse

Office of Aboriginal Liaison

Churches sessions

Least helpful:

Division of Community Welfare

DAA

Churches sessions

Department of Mines and Energy

pre-history

4. **What aspects did you find most helpful? least helpful?**

Most helpful:

- consciousness-raising elements in most sessions
- broad range of issues
- the large number of resource people
- diversity of the group
- wider understanding of the churches' role
- museum visit
- Aboriginal input
- Government and ecumenical input
- practical examples of communicating with Aborigines

Least helpful:

- bureaucratic view of Aborigines and the division between government departments ('but we did learn a lot about their attitudes');
- long sessions
- outside noise often a distraction
- some lectures too detailed
- out-of-course-hours discussion led to a lack of immediacy in class discussions

5. **What was the most significant thing that you learned?**

Whites assume that Aborigines can't make decisions.

The possible role of whites is to discuss the implications of choices being considered.

Christianity is important and provides coping mechanisms.

We can't become anti-white.

Christianity will be compromised by attempting to accommodate Aboriginal religion.

There is a need to see Aborigines as people not the object of an academic exercise.

Aboriginal religion is authentic and has a congruence with Christianity.

Inter-relationship of all aspects of Aboriginal society.

There is a need for disciplined reflection, evaluation, patience.

Significance of loss of language and kinship for East Coast Aborigines.

Richness and beauty of Aboriginal culture.

The Church must rethink its role, especially re paternalism.

Aboriginal race is so ancient and highly developed.

A great deal more work is being done in Aboriginal Apostolate than realised before.

The importance of land to Aborigines.

My attitudes vital if I am to operate effectively.

Whites must adjust.

We still have a lot to learn.

6. How did you find the College as a place to live? as a place to learn?

Most comments positive. Some points were made for consideration for future courses with a large number of participants:

the problem of external noise  
the need for a quiet place for after hours study and writing, such as the library.

7. For future courses

What part(s) of the course should be:

retained?	all
deleted?	none
extended?	Churches — more about present policy, do's and don't's alcohol use and abuse community expectations Aboriginal religion social analysis education — learning processes
shortened?	one session for government departments with <i>panel</i> of speakers same for churches' presentations kinship

Suggested additions:

Aboriginal theology; more Aboriginal input (beyond NE Arnhem Land); some input on non-tribal Aborigines; values; Health Department; Aborigines and social change.

8. Any other comments

When one day is devoted to one topic, three morning sessions preferred.

There is a need to have a whole (if skeletal and simplistic) sketch of any particular subject, rather than a well-drawn part which would require much further study on the learners; part.

The well produced handout notes greatly appreciated.

More time for talk-back in lecture time.

**Course Co-ordinators:**

The Revd Dr Martin Wilson, Anthropologist; Director, Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit.

The Revd Murray Johnson, Co-ordinator of Development Studies, Nungalinga College, Darwin.

**Assistance from:**

The Revd Terry Djiniyini, Lecturer in Aboriginal Studies, Nungalinga College, Darwin.

Sister Pamela Barker, Aboriginal Apostolate Programme, Sydney.

The Revd Eugene Stockton, St Patrick's College, Manly.

The Revd Fr John Leary, Priest, Bathurst Island, NT.

**Visiting speakers:**

Mr Reg Holdsworth, Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs, Darwin.

Mr Ian Pitman, Director, Office of Aboriginal Liaison, Chief Minister's Dept., Darwin.

Mr Myron Pentz, Asst. Director, Division of Community Welfare, Dept. of Community Development, Darwin.

The Revd Robin Nance, Training Officer, Aboriginal Advisory & Development Services, Uniting Church, Darwin.

The Rt Revd Ken Mason, Anglican Bishop of the Northern Territory.

Ms Rosemary Tibiloura, Training Officer, Northern Land Council.

Mr Bob Ellis, Director, Sacred Sites Authority, Darwin.

Mr Ian Lewis, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, Dept. of Mines & Energy, Darwin.

Dr Stephen Harris, Bi-lingual Education Program, Dept. of Education, Darwin.

## An Appeal. . .

This is an appeal.

For solidarity in Jesus Christ and the ecclesial sense. We need one another. At this time we need all our inventive resources exposed to one another's light, which is the Spirit. We need to invite and urge creation, and greet it heartily as it comes.

At present, I believe we are blessed with abundant reserves of generosity and ability here across the north. These are God-given, for our energetic use. Grace present, in our poverty, to redeem. They are the Incarnation mystery here, at work, now.

We cannot do without a common forum of open, healthy expression and exchange. Lack of such a forum, in these fast-moving times, would be symptomatic of demoralisation, uncertainty, the senescence of those who are 'without hope' (Eph 2,12): the paganism still in each of us trying to kill us and stamp the resurrection out of life.

Two things urgently call to our discipleship in this new time.

One is already there, but at present threatened, like a baby struggling to live but not being fed. This is the *Nelen Yubu* quarterly, put out by Martin Wilson supported and so ably helped by Keren Calvert. It *has* to survive. It would be greatly to our shame if we were to allow it to die. Without a medium of this kind, we can hardly think and work together. With it, we can meet, interrelate, interact and show ourselves truly as Church.

Martin has clearly said that *all* materials will gladly receive consideration. *Nelen Yubu*, he feels, could be much enriched by the less academic type of article or personal reflection, perhaps the occasional poem. The narrative style of diary or storytelling is easier to digest than plodding theology, which nevertheless must also have its place. Who, with a little bit of effort, could not build us up refreshingly by letting us know of something which has inspired him or her? She or he would find moreover that their effort would be more than repaid by the joy which life-bearing brings with it.

So, please consider giving here, as you give so liberally in many other directions, for love. It is imperative that *Nelen Yubu* survive.

The second, and equally indispensable, urgency for our northern Church now has not yet come to be. Only a firm conviction of its need will bring it about. At this stage, we *have* to meet together ecclesially, through authoritative representatives, to plan and carry

out concerted action. From Queensland to the Kimberley, our involvement, the social pattern, and our questionings, are roughly homogeneous. Yet, at present, while engaged in a common evangelical mission, we never meet to unify and co-ordinate our efforts. In this we are less wise, in our generation, than the children of this world (cf. Lk 16,8).

Missiology today is calling not merely for concerted local strategy, but positively for 'geo-strategy', i.e. a concerted 'Kingdom' strategy over the world. We would be taking a first step in this direction by deciding to organise a north Australian 'summit' of our leaders the bishops and a vocal informed representation of committed catholic christians. (Eventually, one would envisage an inter-church conference).

If this does not come to be, and soon, we will remain sporadic, weak, ineffectual. Grace will be obscured in us, for all our dedication.

Dan O'Donovan  
Kalumburu

## NOTICE: ABORIGINAL APOSTOLATE PROGRAMME

THIS MISSIONARY FORMATION PROGRAM sponsored by the CMSWA under the executive direction of Sr Pamela Barker FMM is holding two formation programs in view of the Aboriginal apostolate.

**Course 1.** *Continuing Formation Course:* for people who have been involved for some years in the Aboriginal apostolate. Suggested areas for attention: primal religions, scripture related to the apostolate, mission spirituality, prehistory, areas of Aboriginal studies, catechetics, basic christian communities, structural social analysis, models of Church in mission and ministry, self-awareness programs.

18 March - 12 May 1984  
Mt St Mary's Centre  
247 Great Western Highway  
Katoomba, NSW 2780

**Course 2.** *Orientation Course:* mainly for people who have recently become involved in the Aboriginal apostolate. Limit: 15 participants.

20 May - 9 June 1984

Participants take part for the first two weeks in the orientation course organised by Nungalinya College, Darwin. (NYMU has been associated with this course of recent years — cf. report of the 1983 course in this issue.) The last week is spent separately at Daly River Centre, Daly River, NT.

For details, cost, application etc. write to:

Sr Pamela Barker FMM  
Aboriginal Apostolate Programme  
PO Box 108  
Balmain, NSW 2041

## NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

- \* To keep pace with rising costs, the annual subscription fee will go up in 1984 to \$10 for a year's subscription (4 issues).
- \* There are a number of subscribers in arrears. We feel that *those substantially so should be erased* from the subscription list in 1984, unless we hear from them.
- \* If you have not yet paid your 1984 subscription, please cut out the form below (or attach an appropriate note) and enclose it with your remittance.

NELEN YUBU Subscription 1984

We enclose in payment for subscription in 1984: \$10.00

and in settlement of arrears as notified by

account already enclosed with issue No. 15: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \$ =====

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_