

CONTENTS

<i>EDITORIAL</i>	(ii)
Church Model: Lumko Vision Martin Wilson msc	3
Kuri-Ngai Partners Eugene Stockton	6
Hugo Rahner's Essays (4) Dan O'Donovan	10
<i>LITTLE FRINGE DWELLER</i> <i>YUNGAROO</i> Rod Cameron osa	
Priorities for Pastoral Renewal Noel Mifsud	20
From the Secretary's Desk. . .	31

EDITORIAL

THE LUMKO INTERNATIONAL Course 14 August till 14 September at Kincumber South looks like being in place. The 40 participants have been selected. One can expect some changes brought on by unforeseeable circumstances, but the general complexus is surely established by now. There is an exciting mixture of experiential backgrounds involved. From Australia, 24; from New Zealand, 6; from PNG, 6; from Solomon Is, 3; from Taiwan, 1. Lay persons, 9; Sisters, 19, from eight different congregations (FDNSC 3, FMM 3, RSJ 3, RSM 3, SGS 3, SJG 1, DC 2, DMI 1); priests, 10 (two diocesan, four MSC, two SM, 1 SAC, 1 SVD); one deacon; one brother (SM). In Australia, 4 are from the NT, 4 from Queensland, 6 from Broome diocese and 2 from Geraldton diocese (WA), 3 from NSW, one from ACT, and 5 from Victoria. In PNG, 2 are from Eastern Papua, one from Kavieng, one from East New Britain, one from Mt Hagen and one from Wewak. The main presenter will be Fr Anselm Prior, the English Franciscan who is the present Director of the Lumko Missiological Institute in Germiston, South Africa. He will be assisted by three of us who have done the Lumko course in Lesotho, Srs Delores O'Sullivan SSPS and Clare Ahern RSJ, and myself.

In this respect it is most appropriate that this issue carries a paper about pastoral strategies by a lay person at Port Keats. Noel Mifsud writes out of a clear understanding that the church is basically the local christian community in which every person has ministerial responsibility. That's what being "christian" means! In my own paper I endeavour to outline some of the underlying theological principles and point to some practical consequences and implementations of the vision. Interestingly, at the time of writing this Editorial I am engaged in arranging with Noel Mifsud a visit to Port Keats to share some of the Lumko vision with the local staff.

Martin Wilson msc
Editor

CHURCH MODEL: LUMKO VISION

Martin Wilson msc

WHAT I FOUND exciting about the Lumko International Course I did in Lesotho during October 1987 was that it introduced me to a new vision of the church. New, that is, to me. I had heard for sure of "Basic Christian Communities" and the other names the phenomenon goes by, but I had not given it much attention. I had thought of it as a special option available in appropriate circumstances. The Lumko course showed me that the "Small Christian Communities" vision of the church was (a) ancient; (b) new; and (c) relevant to me.

Terminology

Obviously the descriptive terms one uses for these communities can be defined freely: 'basic', 'small', 'ecclesial' etc. However, one can say that there are some differences between "Basic" Christian Communities and "Small" Christian Communities as a short-hand way of saying that this new vision of church life is being implemented differently in places like South America (= "Basic" Christian Communities - BCC) and Africa (= "Small" Christian Communities - SCC).

We are told for instance that the South American BCCs can be quite large (viz. thousands of people); tend to build their own churches; disregard the old parochial centres and boundaries; found their genesis in social action and have to remind themselves of the worship and prayer dimension; use centrally prepared agenda and pre-selected biblical passages for their meetings.

On the other hand, the African SCCs are typically small neighbourhood groups, such as can easily meet together in someone's house and share the gospel together. They find their eucharistic centre in the parish or outstation church. Their basic activity is to pray, share, find their inspiration for life and action from the bible itself. They have to remind themselves that they are church and therefore committed socially: they cannot live as an enclosed prayer-group.

Ancient

The New Testament picture of the early church is of groups of people meeting together in one or other of their houses to pray together, support one another, celebrate their unity particularly in the sacred meal of the eucharist.

The Lumko vision of church life replicates some elements of the ancient form but not others. The elements that are common are smallness, neighbourhood, mutual support and group action, and particularly prayer and celebration of the memory of the Lord. The ancient followers of "the Way" are in direct line with the present-day members of the "Pilgrim Church".

New

An element that is not common regards the celebration of the eucharist. Obviously as christianity emerged from the early persecutions and became popular, houses could not cope with the needs for common worship and public churches were built. A whole complex history of "-isations" ensued: urbanisation, centralisation, clericalisation, secularisation, industrialisation... We have ended up, in Lumko's phrase, with "the gas-station church". People roll along on Sunday to fill up their spiritual tanks for the following six days of the purely secular week. Everything is assembly-line and expeditious. We whip through three bits of bible, stand up and sit down, watch (probably rather than listen to) someone express a few private thoughts on one or more of them, receive Communion and fulfil our Christian duty.

The Lumko vision wants to return to the small local group form of the early church with its elements of mutual support, local social action, reflective remembrance of Christ and the Way: in order that Christ might become a corporate reality in our neighbourhoods, viz. a local neighbourhood church. It wants Christ to be a person one meets each week, with others, in a gospel-sharing, i.e. Christ-encounter group. It wants God's word (and Word) to be presented in a social context where it can be listened to and responded to. And it wants God's word (and Word) to speak to us as incarnate in the human voices of our neighbours. As the Vatican II puts it, the bread of life comes "from the table both of the word of God and of the body of Christ" (*Dei Verbum* ch.6).

The Lumko vision seeks to retain the overall sacramental structure developed over the centuries in which the sacraments, particularly the eucharist, are functions of the larger united community. It is not opposed to the "home Mass" that became popular among us in post-Vatican times. There are times when a neighbourhood Mass is quite appropriate. However, it is opposed to the reason why we priests were promoting the home Mass idea. We did it in an attempt to bring religion back to the people: away from the elevated altar behind altar-rails. However, the people cannot really appropriate the Mass. In our present dispensation the Mass requires an ordained celebrant. A

family or group of families cannot just celebrate their christian identity with a Mass meeting in the way that they might organise a prayer meeting - or a celebration of the gospel. The home Mass reinforces the excessive clericalisation that the church has developed for itself: rather like a spider that entraps itself in excessive webbing.

Relevant

As a theological student I had learnt that the Mass is the central mystery of our christian religion. I learnt it first of all from Aquinas (IIa q.65 a.3) and had it confirmed by Vatican II (**Presbyterorum Ordinis** #5). A lot of us identified 'central' with 'basic'. We thought that any really significant christian action demanded the celebration of the Mass, as it was "the Mass that matters". It was the Mass that made us specifically Catholic. The beginning or end of the academic year, the opening and closing of chapters, conferences, workshops, the performance of any public important act should all be accompanied with the celebration of the eucharist. And what better thing could we bring to people's homes than the Mass itself!

The simple practical impossibility of supplying more than a few of these "home Masses" should have alerted me to the fallacy involved. The eucharist can well be 'central' without thereby being the 'basic' religious activity a Catholic group might perform, especially if it is one that they would want to be normal, frequent, done in their own space and time, and by themselves.

Lumko proposes gospel-sharing as the basic christian specifically religious activity. One meets Christ there. He is brought right into our homes and neighbourhoods. One meets him frequently. There is no big fuss, no need to go hunting for a cooperative and as yet uncommitted ordained minister. Lumko has developed a simple, easy to use formula to guide such gospel-sharing meetings (The Seven Steps), but one can please oneself as to how to go about it.

When neighbourhood gospel-sharing becomes the basic religious activity, a number of other modern things start to happen. Religion starts to become more involved in everyday life. The secularisation process is tempered. Lay ministries germinate and spring up in home soil. The parish becomes a body full of living cells. The eucharist regains its real power and efficacy: because the groups meet together on Sunday to celebrate their overall unity and central identification (Communion). Clericalisation is reduced and the priestly role actually becomes clarified, strengthened and humanly possible!

KURI - NGAI PARTNERS

Eugene Stockton

SISTER NAOMI SMITH has been freed by her superiors to start a project on behalf of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry (Parramatta Diocese), which could also be of service to the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council of New South Wales. The project is to draw together a group of white Catholics, with the backing of major church organisations, to offer support to the growth of Aboriginal Church.

The idea was endorsed at the AICC (NSW) conference at Morisset (2-4.2.1990). The St Vincent de Paul Society, the Knights of the Southern Cross and the Catholic Women's League have shown initial interest in backing the formation of such an organisation. While at this stage the venture is being launched in New South Wales, it might provide a model for Catholics in other states seeking to support their own state networks of the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council.

Background

In the past Catholics have enthusiastically supported the Church's mission of evangelising people of other cultures, especially by financing the work of (non-indigenous) priests and religious among these peoples. In recent decades the Church's missionary strategy has changed from an emphasis on setting up as quickly as possible self-determining indigenous churches, having their own ministry and administration and expressing the gospel and worship in forms appropriate to their culture. The Australian Church still retains much of the old missionary emphasis towards Aborigines, but chiefly as a result of Aboriginal Catholics gathering from all over Australia for the Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne (1973) and for the Papal Visit in Alice Springs (1986), Aboriginal Catholics have banded together in the AICC, initially in Queensland from 1973, and nation-wide since 1987¹.

Each state AICC forms a network of Aboriginal Catholic communities throughout the state, with regular conferences of delegates and the promotion of local and diocesan cells (often termed Aboriginal Catholic Ministry of Diocese X). Many see in this the development of Aboriginal Church, in the sense consonant with Catholic thinking. The AICC is officially recognised by the Australian hierarchy as the Aboriginal Catholic body with which it deals.

This development is severely hampered by the general poverty of the people which limits the ability of representatives to meet regularly, the ability of leaders to minister to their communities and be trained in ministry and the ability to set up a local organisational focus of ministry (as normally provided to the faithful by parishes and dioceses). The Church's funding is also limited, with the portion of the annual mission appeal retained in Australia already committed to missions of the old model, and with respective dioceses unable to fund more than a token presence.

Where Catholics in the past were enthusiastic in sharing in mission work by their donations, the proposed organisation is being set up to offer Catholics generally the chance to share in the new enterprise by Aboriginal Catholics to evangelise their own people. Such sharing can be through a range of activities which includes but is not restricted to fund-raising, while respecting the principle of self-determination which is vital to a local indigenous church.

Scope of the Proposed Organisation

With the overall aim of empowering the AICC, while respecting its autonomy and self-determination, this would embrace the following areas of activity (in order of priority):

1. Educational - members would be informed of developments in the Aboriginal community (e.g. AICC, political and social issues, research) and in turn would bridge that information out to the wider community (e.g. use of media, personal contact, lectures, diocesan CEO). Suitable material could be supplied by the AICC or diocesan ACM through an Aboriginal liaison worker, and could be disseminated to members by means of newsletter, lectures, public meetings etc.

2. Financial - subscriptions of members (individuals, families, institutions), together with other forms of funding, would help to boost current diocesan funding for the work of the AICC (local ministry by Aboriginal leaders, conference expenses, training of Aboriginal church workers).

3. Professional - individual members might be able to offer specialised expertise as need arose (e.g. journalists, PR, legal experts, accountants, researchers, fund-raisers, teachers).

A pressing need which might suggest an immediate target for the group (and which exemplifies the above three areas in

combination) is the setting up of means for the training of Aboriginal church workers (e.g. suitable location, teaching personnel, living allowance for candidates, equipment, research resources, collaboration with existing Aboriginal training institutes).

Name of the Proposed Organisation

It would be up to the members of the fledgling organisation to choose their own name. One that has been suggested is **Kuri-Ngai Partners**.

Kuri = Dharuk word for Aboriginal,
Ngai = ("ng" pronounced as in "sing") belonging to,
- for or belonging to Aborigines.

Partners = avoiding condescending note of "white support group" and suggesting people in a relationship of equality and mutual respect, sharing in an enterprise in an autonomous and self-determining mode.

Requests for further information or expression of interest might be addressed to Sister Naomi Smith (St Joseph's Convent, St Marys, 2760), or myself (Catholic Presbytery, Riverstone, 2765), until a proper office has been set up.

CHRISTIAN CARADJI

Also endorsed at the February (1990) conference of the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council was the proposal for a distinctively Aboriginal form of Church ministry, together with an outline of formation towards such a ministry.

Currently in the Catholic Church the ordinary avenues for ministry are priesthood, married diaconate and acolyte. Aborigines are generally blocked from these avenues by marital status and educational requirements. At the same time these offices do not recognise the accepted norms for leadership in the Aboriginal community e.g. mature age (e.g. 45 plus), respectability (e.g. having raised a good family, integrity, wisdom), sense of the community. I propose an entirely different kind of minister, which takes account of Aboriginal expectations but disregards requirements of marital status, formal education and denominational affiliation. It is traditional role of the **caradji** (Dharuk

for "clever man" or "man of high degree"), open to men and women and in a christian setting. As the office evolved it may embrace a succession of degrees, each with an appropriate initiation. Such a caradji would be empowered by the community to conduct services (e.g. baptisms, funerals, prayer meetings both structured and unstructured, healing services, gospel sharing), to develop appropriate forms of service, to offer pastoral counselling and leadership and generally to be a resource of wisdom in the community.

Training for the current ministries in the Church is very prolonged and embraces much detail that is not relevant to Aborigines, at the same time lacking many emphases vital to Aboriginal people. I would like to offer small groups (e.g. 6-10) a formation that would include:

1. **Spiritual Formation:** leading candidates to develop a prayer life, to open up and listen to the Spirit in the land: a graded course leading up to a spiritual experience (like the charismatics' "baptism in the Spirit"), which might be seen as the authenticating initiation. Where higher degrees of traditional initiation have been retained or revived (as the Murrawon of NSW) these might be encouraged as an integral part of formation.
2. **Aboriginality** - (both traditional and modern) - basic anthropology, prehistory and contact history, religion, spirituality, manners, storytelling.
3. **Ministry Skills** - exercise in conducting services, prayer meetings (with visits to Pentecostal meetings), gospel sharing, counselling.
4. **Christian Doctrine** - exposition of basic tenets of Christianity, freed as far as possible from European cultural expressions and employing Aboriginal analogies. Use of the Bible.

* * * * *

ENDNOTE:

1. For further details see the author's "The Sydney Church and Aborigines, 1968-1978, *Australasian Catholic Record*, 56 (1979) 127-146; "The Plight of Catholic Missions in Australia", *Nelen Yubu* 27 (1986) 20-29; "Nationwide Aspirations of Aboriginal Catholics", *Nelen Yubu* 30 (1987) 23-28; "The Pope's Meeting with the Aboriginal People", *Australasian Catholic Record*, 64 (1987) 123-132; "Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney", *Faith and Culture : Bicentennial Reflections*, Manly, (1988), 163-173.

HUGO RAHNER'S ESSAYS (4)

Children of the Moon (and Sun)

Dan O'Donovan

THE MOON has always worked on people's minds, for lunacy or moonstruck romance. Between the two lies the whole vast space of astral mysticism.

By the time Christianity came on the scene in the Greco-Roman world, natural philosophy related to the moon had already reached its high water mark, couched for the most part in religious mythology.

It will pay us then to review its main conclusions before we turn our attention to the Church's handling of this pre-existing material.

I

Lunar Beliefs prior to Christianity

Greek thought saw the moon as feminine, doubtless heir in this to earlier religiosity. It named her Selēnē, Sister and Bride of Hēlios, the Sun. Sun and Moon's interaction was seen as a bridal love-play. Selēnē, Parmenides speaks of as "forever peeping out at Hēlios' brightness."

By ordinary observation people noticed that moonlight is gentler, more motherly or caressing than the burning sun, and hence of the greatest importance for the wellbeing of organic nature on earth. She is often described as "serene" and "cheerful", in this contrasting with glaring Hēlios. Hence, says Pliny, she is a "feminine soft star".¹

A question arose: does the moon produce her own light, or does she receive her light from the sun? From the pre-Socratics on, there ran through Greek science and religion a lively debate on the subject. Even in Augustine's day, it was still by no means a

Fr Dan O'Donovan is continuing his discussion of the question of inculturation through the medium of Hugo Rahner's essays. The series started in *Nelen Yubu* no. 37.

dead issue. In a letter Augustine remarks how as a boy he had studied the matter at school: "in studiis puerilibus didici." But the view increasingly prevailed that the moon got her light from the sun - a decision of some moment, as we shall see, in patristic ecclesiology.

Plato's word at last carried the day where, in his *Kratylos*, he points to Anaxagoras as having first held the scientific opinion: "the moon has no light of its own, but has its light from the sun." Berossos' theory (which Augustine seems to have taken seriously) that the moon was a ball, half-fiery and half-dark, whose rotation gives us the impression of moon-phases, lost favour.

The Greek philosopher, Empedocles, perceived the moon as a smooth luminous mirror.

Christian Church Fathers were undoubtedly employing a colloquialism when they spoke of "putting on the sunlight". The moon "put on", "clothed herself with" the sun, as one might put on a garment, especially a wedding garment.

In this ancient cosmology Selēnē is a half-way, mediating body. Half-way that is, between the purely spiritual immutable region of the fixed stars representing the divine realm and the wholly material, the earth, subject to change of every kind.

In Pythagorean speculation on the harmony of the spheres, this view played an important role. Poseidonios and the later Platonists pressed it further: Selēnē is the "meson" (median) in the sublime consonance of the world symphony, by her position between the divine and the earthly mediating all graces and favours which stream to earth from the Conductor of the universe. Selēnē's task is thus to borrow Plutarch's expression, "synarmottein" (to act as harmoniser).

This explains also the somewhat odd Stoic notion that Hēlios is "the heart of the world", Selēnē its "liver", or the "filter of the universe". As the liver intervenes between heart and intestines, says Plutarch, so does Selēnē between sun and earth. He took this idea from Xenokrates who maintained that Selēnē was the great mediatrix between Olympus and Earth.

So there is a mysterious exchange of life-relations, via the moon, between remote and heavenly Hēlios and crass Earth. Selene quickens all that is born, lives and grows upon the Earth by dispensing about her a strange effluence; in Cicero's celebrated words: "illud nescio quid tenue, quod sentiri nullo modo, intellegi autem vix potest, quae a Luna ceterisque sideribus caeli temperatio fiat," (that superfine something, which can in no wise be felt, hardly even understood, which from the moon and other stars tempers the sky).

Folk wisdom had it, in unison with learned astrology, that the nurture of plants and animals, the ebb and flow of the tides, the physiological condition of man, minerals and precious stones, sowing and harvesting, the selection of favourable times for important undertakings, all were affected by the moon and her phases. That the flow of the tide followed the moon's rhythm; that mussels grow underwater with the moon's waxing; that seed does well when sown at new-moon time - these and many similar observations figure prominently in agricultural tracts and in medical alike, but above all in the mystery pamphlets of astrologers.

What we should note for our purpose is that we are dealing here with material which is half natural science, half mythology, but in either case probably of stronger emotive content than any other single item in folk thinking of late antiquity. In fronting up to it, especially its fatalistic bias and certain christian gnostic expressions, the Church was taking on a formidable task.

Of most special significance, however: Selēnē holds dominion over water.

This belief influenced in particular the cosmic system of the Stoics. Selēnē has dominion over water in the first place because she "feeds" on the moisture of Earth. This "feeding" it is which gives Selēnē her watery nature. But because she relates on the other hand to the sun, she receives also from Hēlios his harsh aridifying rays. These she mingles with her own earthly water and so exudes in nocturnal light that fertilising moon-damp, at once "moist and warm". Here we stand at the centre-point of Greek lunar philosophy.

In the Stoa again, Poseidonios and Plutarch draw from all this a quasi-mystical vision. Precisely in its warm-moist quality, moonlight becomes for them a generative principle. Plutarch speaks expressly of its "damp warmth", ascribing to it a "feminine fruitful moisture". The warmth which goes out from the moon is not desiccating, but mild and unhurting. He stresses (and after him, many others) that the moonlight "slowly (hērema) warms and dampens. For Pliny, sunshine soaks up the water, whereas the moon produces it: "aquas sole devorante, luna pariente." Plutarch's imitator Macrobius allows his Eustathius further to define this stoic theory of the moist-warm moonlight to which are traceable both growth and decay: it is not only from the lesser heat of the moon that its moisture arises, "but from a certain property the Greeks call *idiōma* and whatever nature is in the light flowing from it which moistens bodies and drenches them as by a hidden dew, mingled with which the lunar heat rots flesh upon which it has had time to act."

In this sense Philo speaks of Selēnēs "feminine brightness" as being like a mother; nourishing all nature with her milk, slowly and gently warming all that grows.

An idea dear to Greek culture was that of Selene's causing nightly dew. The silent descent and formation of the dewdrops on a fullmoon night suggested to Greece's mythological mind that this dew could only derive from the abundance of that same moon water-source: "on serene nights, says Pliny, when the air is still, since the dew falls neither in cloudy weather nor when there are winds." Macrobius confirms this observation, adding his own nuance: "air itself is subject to, and produces the property of lunar dew. For, when the moon is either full or coming to birth (in which case she is full on her upper side), the air dissolves into rain or else, if humidity is heavy, itself emits dew." He goes on to quote Alkman the lyricist to the effect that dew, personified as Hērē, is daughter of Zeus and Selēnē.

Selēnē composes her dew out of a plenitude of "upper" or "heavenly" water; indeed, is herself constituted by this celestial dew, as the late definition of Martianus Capella brings out: "(Luna) is a spherical and tender body made of the upper lightness of dew..." From this moon-dew comes the honey sacred to Artemis, which figures also in the Mithraic mysteries.

In Lucian, we read that the fabled inhabitants of the Moon feed on its dew.

In literature and art Selēnē-Luna was specifically associated with wells and ocean. The pearl in particular is a product of moon-dew. (cf. Part II infra).

But it fell above all to Isis, in her identification as Moon-goddess, to hold sovereignty over water and the sea - originally a quite un-Egyptian connection. In Chios of Birhynia an Isis inscription runs: "I greet you...blest Goddess and Mother, Isis of the many names, who gave birth to Heaven on the shining waves of the sea..., who rule over Earth and the sea as divine Sovereign, who are all-seeing. Many benefits have you given us."

The idea also of the moon-boat should be mentioned, closely related as it is with Moon's dominion over the waters. The Babylonians used this image; and in the Greek world it appeared as early as Heraclitos. In the Mystery-religions, the moon is viewed as a Ship of light. Plutarch observes that Hēlios and Selēnē use a boat for their journeyings, because their origin and sustenance is water.

But now we come to the weighty core of "Mysterium Lunae" - what Aristotle refers to as its "pros ton helion koinōnia" (fellowship with the sun; or communion with the sun). At the end of her monthly cycle, Selēnē descends in self-effacement for the "syno-

dos" (coition) with Hēlios in darkness. This is what we call "new moon", and is interpreted nuptially by Greek mythology.

Already the old Orphic astrology reckoned that when Zeus stood in Selēnē, this effected a motherly bearing.

Selēnē disappears in the synodos; she is changed, and dies.

But it is then she engages in a mysterious colloquy with Hēlios, the mystical language of the pythagorean spheric harmony. Departing the intercourse, she starts her rising journey of waxing luminosity and becomes the maternal principle of all growth. The stars themselves are bathed in her increasing light, giving the night sky the appearance of a flowery meadow.

In this way, what a Babylonian hymn to the Moon-god Sin had earlier announced, namely that Sin was the all-bearing Mother, passed over into Greek lore. For Plutarch, Isis becomes, in her nuptial union with Osiris, "Mother of the World." For Aristotle, Selēnē is the beginning of all birth.

Artemis, who originally had nothing to do with the moon, took on in time the aspect of Moon-goddess. To her is entrusted pregnancy, delivery and the rearing of children. She is the "Locheia", "Lucina" (from "Luna"), besought by expectant mothers. Even Macrobius' etymology of her name, (Artemis = Aerotemis), taken up by some Church Fathers, reflects the same perception.

Proclus' statement, in his Scholion on Hesiod that, in Athens, the moon's synodos was regarded as the time most propitious for weddings comes therefore as no surprise. Nor on the other hand, Chrysippos' that at full-moon, woman is best disposed for pregnancy.

ENDNOTE:

1. References may all be found in Hugo Rahner's fuller study, "Mysterium Lunae", ein Beitrag zur Kirchentheologie der Väterzeit, *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, 63 (1939) 311-349; 428-442; 64 (1940) 61-80; 121-131, upon which this present article is based.

II

AN AUSTRALIAN CASE

AS THE FISH moves to the mobility of the sea - in fact is caught into it inescapably - so must we now freely loosen ourselves, allow ourselves to sink into, swim in, a cognitive ocean: the symbolic sequence of

moon/ sea/ pearl-oyster/ woman

These four may be seen as one or as four depending on one's visual interest. Perhaps it would be best for our purpose to consider it as a single quadripartite symbol, expressive of a particular dimension of life and cosmos. It is as old as the reflexive mind, belongs to the human archetypal deposit, and so is found reappearing through all cultures.

An older male of the Bardi tribe on the northwest of Australia, (Djarinjin-Lombadina), told me some years ago that inlanders feared those who lived by the sea. I gathered it was their sea-association which caused that fear. The sea-numen in them. A sea-shell served as identification, worn around the neck. On occasion, like a guided missile, it would be wrapped in paperbark and sent along the track a wanted person had taken flight from Bardi Law. It would catch up with him somewhere, sometime, and would bring its retribution - misfortune or death. There is also the custom still alive today, of scraping the pearl-shell to dust, which is then blown in the direction of the fugitive.

We shall be considering the sea more amply in a later article. Here it is the sea-shell specifically which concerns us in context of the symbol sequence mentioned.

Mircea Eliade has covered the subject well in his book, 'Images et Symboles'¹ of which I offer here a brief and insufficient résumé.

Sea-shells, among them pre-eminently the pearl-oyster, all share in the sacred powers concentrated in the Waters, the Moon and Woman. They are emblems of these forces for several reasons: the resemblance between the sea-shell and the genital organs of woman; the sea-shell's relations with waters and moon; the gynaecological and embryological symbolism of the pearl-pregnant oyster in particular.

Says Eliade: 'In the treatise, Lŭ shī ch'un ts'iu, (third cent. BC), the moon is the root of all that is "yin"; when the moon is full...all yin things are deficient (waning). Mo-tsi (5th cent. BC), after having observed that the pearl oyster 'pang' is born without help of the male, adds: 'Therefore, that the "pang" can at length bear the pearl is because it concentrates wholly on its yin force.' 'The moon', writes Liu Ngan (2nd cent. BC), 'is the origin of yin. That is why the brains of fish shrink when the moon is empty, and why the shells of univalves are not full of fleshy parts when the moon is dead.' The same author adds, in another chapter: 'The bivalves, the crabs, the pearls and the turtles grow and diminish with the moon.'

In India, the Atharva Veda (IV,10) sings an ancient belief:

Born of the wind, of the air, of the lightning, of the light, may the shell born from gold, the pearl, defend us from fear! With the shell born from the ocean, the first of all luminous things, we kill the demons (raksas) and we triumph over the devouring (demons)...Born of heaven, born of the sea, brought by the Sindhu, to us the shell born from gold is the jewel (mani) that lengthens life. Jewel born of the sea, sun born of the cloud, may it shield us on all sides from the arrows of the Gods and the Asuras...Thou art born of the moon (Sōma), thou dost adorn the chariot and sparkle from the quiver. Prolong our lives! The bones of the gods are turned to pearl; they take life and move in the bosom of the waters. I put thee on for life, vigour and strength, for the life of a hundred autumns...

Eliade comments: 'The same mystical links that connect shells with the ceremonies of initiation, and in a more general way with the various religious rites, are found again in Indonesia, in Melanesia and in Oceania.'

For the Bardi people of Djarinjin-Lombadina already mentioned, initiation includes a symbolic death and resurrection. At the 'angu' ceremony, the boy of around eleven or twelve is circumcised. At the 'lang-langara', which introduces the great 'ul-along' initiation sequence, he gets a plain uncarved 'ridji' (pearl-shell) to wear on a human hair-belt around his waist and pendant

shell) to wear on a human hair-belt around his waist and pendant over his genital organs, in front and behind. He is then fourteen or fifteen years age. At the 'bungana' he receives pearl-shells as before but this time carved with symbolic designs, identifying his placement as initiate in cosmos and Bardi society. Often the pearl-shells are not newly acquired, but are passed down from father to son. At the 'mam-bungana', literally 'father-man', he 'gets his red paint', indicating that he has completed the main initiatory rites in Bardi Law and is free to marry.

Although the archaic symbolism of the pearl-shell and its association with the moon, water and woman, seems to have long fallen into oblivion - if indeed it was ever emphasised in Bardi Law - of its nature it still speaks, hanging there, a sacred thing, over the initiate's biological fatherhood. Away from the camp, removed from his own, he has died. Now between the two pearl shells he is reborn to live, and give lustre for his people.²

ENDNOTES:

1. *Images et Symboles*, Gallimard, Paris, 1952. English translation, *Images and Symbols*, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1969, pp.125-150: *Observations on the Symbolism of Shells*.
2. For help in this Part II, I am most thankful to Benedict Dilai, Leonard Sampi and Brother Bill Marchant. For further corroborative material on the "shell tjurunga", the reader may consult E A Worm, *Australian Aboriginal Religions*, Spectrum, Melbourne, 1986, pp.28-29; 151-152.

* * * * *

LITTLE FRINGE DWELLER

She flashes smiling eyes at everyone.
She is too young to know the bitterness
for as yet she has not seen the edge of sorrow.

Her eyes behold a world that holds no hope.
She listens to the language of the camp
and is condemned to verbal poverty.

Her grandad sits beside a sawn-off stump
too sad to share with her his broken dreams.
His life has been a cold and moonless night.

Some twilight people try to show the way
but they themselves are groping from within
and what they have to share is not enough.

Rod Cameron osa

Fr Rod Cameron osa is one of the Aboriginal ministry chaplains in the Cairns diocese. He is a wellknown poet.

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YUNGAROO

Lighthouse Mountain in North Queensland carries a column of white stone 20 metres high. It is sacred to the Aborigines who called it **Yungaroo** meaning **Owl**. It is seen from the Mulligan Highway near Mt. Molloy.

* * * * *

The Dreaming Owl was watching from the hill
in his column of white rock gleaming in the moon,
looking for meaning in each throb of time.

The Sacred shines in all that I now see,
but the great discovery is to discover it in me!

Shine Yungaroo beyond these eroded hills,
and awaken the dream that sleeps in impoverished places.

Glow like a friend along dark streets of sorrow
and be present where the Sacred seems to die.

Shine Yungaroo beyond this lonely hour
and let my solitary thinking wing the night
to reach the hearts of all who long to see
the Sacred shining.

Rod Cameron osa

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PRIORITIES FOR PASTORAL RENEWAL

Noel Mifsud

PASTORAL RENEWAL involves a process of discerning prioritised goals for a parish/diocese and the strategies by which these goals are realised. This involves prayerful and careful discernment of the available resources, especially the talents of the parishioners and the predictable obstacles to be overcome.

Renewal occurs in the context of each individual and unique faith community. Thus the process and planning for renewal must reflect the individual nature and unique needs of the local parish.

One of the key theological insights that has re-emerged in our time is that the great universal Church is a communion of local Churches...We are called to be Church here. We are the witnesses to God's salvation in this particular place and time. (Faulkner 1985:2).

A truly local renewal should reflect a truly local vision.

There is however a common call as Christians for a renewal which calls the faithful to a profound deepening of their faith in Jesus.

The person of Jesus, leading us to the Father through the power of the Spirit, is always the foundation stone of any parish. Jesus is the axis around which all the energies of the community should revolve. (Treston 1985:7).

This a collaborative call to ministry.

This paper aims to highlight what I perceive to be the major priorities for Pastoral renewal in my parish of Port Keats. It

Noel Mifsud is the Deputy Principal of the OLSH School at Wadeye (Port Keats) N.T. His article "Can a Person Survive his own Death?" appeared in issue 42 of *Nelen Yubu*.

strives to interpret our parish's unique and immediate needs for renewal. In doing so I aim to provide a response to the challenge of Vatican II which calls for a reappraisal of the dignity of people in the Church and of their ministry in the world.

The first step in prioritised planning for renewal is to discern the overall vision for what we are planning for. We must contextualise our concept of parish community. In order to achieve this we need to appreciate the history of parish needs. "...Each group has its unique story and interacts in certain ways according to the people in the group and past experiences." (Treston 1985:8). Port Keats is no exception.

Port Keats, or Wadeye as it is also known, is an isolated and remote Aboriginal settlement approximately 225 kilometres southwest of Darwin. The indigenous people are made up of three main tribal groups namely: Murrinh patha, Murrin gnar and Murrin jabin.

The population of almost 1400 includes approximately 70 Europeans who remain in the town for an average of three years.

The majority of Aboriginals have accepted Christian worship and a belief in Catholicism since the mission began in 1935. The old people called the Catholic Faith the "new way". Their own traditional beliefs were known as the "old way". Elders have told me that there were times when they spoke about returning to the old way. They had arguments about this.

Today the Elders are still arguing. Many Council meetings debated this issue with the outcome generally favouring the new way. Boniface Perdjert (1977) a local Aboriginal deacon speaks of one such meeting.

There was a meeting...At this meeting my father (Elder of the Murrinh patha people) and two other old men stood up against others on behalf of the "New way". They said the "Old way" was too dangerous for young people. It was clear for them that the two ways would not go together.

The old ways began to die out during the infancy of evangelisation in Keats.

The Catholic Church since Vatican II has addressed the way in which evangelisation and the Christian Gospel are related. In Pope Paul VI's letter "Evangelisation in the Modern World" he writes:

What matters is to evangelise man's (and woman's) culture and cultures not in a purely decorative...but

in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots in a wide and rich sense which these terms have in **Gaudium et Spes** always taking the person as one's starting point and always coming back to the relationship of the people among themselves and with God. (Arbuckle 1985:336).

This calls for a living gospel, where faithful in community see in their everyday lives the relevance of their life as communities of faith, liturgy and love.

The relationship between the Christian message and culture calls for inculturation. This is "...an insertion of the Christian life into a culture: an ongoing process of reciprocal and critical interaction and assimilation between them." (Arbuckle *ibid*). If the Church of today and tomorrow is to heal the existing split between Church and culture then inculturation must be a key priority for renewal. It is logical therefore that, in attempting to heal the split between the old (traditional/cultural) ways and new (Christian) ways, a vision for the Church of Port Keats emerges.

The **vision** is empathically expressed in the following words of Boniface Perdjert (1977):

It is up to the Christian apostle, with delicacy and skill to tune these two wave lengths together, so that the resultant harmony may be recognised by the Aborigines as truth, the truth that sets him (and her) free.

This is a vision which inspires and commissions the people of Keats to experience a complete evangelisation of their traditional culture.

This is a contemporary vision which seeks to address the urgent needs of the Church in Keats. This is a Church which is losing their traditional religious faith. This is a Church in which many are not challenged by the "new" faith. This is a society in which there is no sharp demarcation between secular and spiritual life. As a result this is a Church where chronic social problems have robbed them of identity, dignity and self-assurance.

Materialism is fast becoming the only alternative compromise between the old and new way in Keats. Alcoholism is rife and the town is besieged by rioting and an unprecedented crime wave. Thousands of dollars a day are squandered on card gambling and on chartered "grog flights" flying in liquor. Children

Priorities for Pastoral Renewal

go hungry and the town waits in a perpetual state of unrest and violence.

This is not intended as an emotional response to the social problems of Keats. I have identified these issues because they affect us directly as members of the Church. We are the Church. Through baptism we become the Church's presence to the world.

Lay persons do not belong to the Church, nor do they have a role in the Church. Rather through baptism they are Church, and in union with Christ, their mission is the mission of Church itself. (Doohan 1984:24).

We are a bridge between Church and world and this gives me hope. I firmly believe that the renewal program I am proposing can and will be a reality if we accept our call to a ministry of action and be open to the gifts of the Spirit.

Archbishop Leonard Faulkner (1985) empathically summarizes this hope:

When we are most vulnerable and empty can be the place where God can act most powerfully in us. When we are the weakest then we are the strongest. All that we really need for this new vision of Church is prayerful silence in our lives and warm loving hearts in building this community of faith.

This paper will discuss in detail how the aim of creating prayerful silence in Keats is a key component in the process of determining realistic and achievable priorities for pastoral renewal.

One major **goal** emerging from the vision of renewal in Keats is identification of the key components of the Keats culture. By culture I refer to "...a frame of common meanings and values, resident deeply within the consciousness and unconsciousness of a group and finding flesh in structures and institutions." (Arbuckle 1985:336). These components are the very elements which must be considered in the development of a truly Aboriginal and Christian theology.

A truly Aboriginal Christian theology must identify the language of their people, their signs and symbols.

So I must recognise, I must use the things of God that are in my culture, I must use them in his serv-

ice...God has asked us to love him with whole mind, heart and soul. So I must give myself to God as an Aborigine. This is what God wants or else he would not have made me what I am. (Perdjert 1977).

This is the heart of effective evangelisation which penetrates the spirit and soul of Aboriginal belief.

Not all of the traditional Aboriginal culture is compatible with Christian Gospel values.

I want to make it clear that I am aware of the bad things in traditional religion. It was not something full of good things. I do not want to paint it the wrong way. Even the Dreamtime figures had their vices and their very human failures. But their traditional religion did give my people a deep awareness of the spirit and things of the spirit.

Our primary **objective** then is to recognise the aspects which are appropriate and discern how they can be incorporated into daily worship.

The specific **strategy** for reaching this objective is to establish small groups within the community to discuss the issues I have raised. A possible agenda of items could include any one of the following questions:

How does one discern the true meaning of a Port Keats Aboriginal theology? What does the "Old way" (traditional religion) mean for our people today? How do we combine the old and new ways? Having discussed the nature of a distinct Aboriginal theology, how do we best express this theology in everyday life and in worship? How is the Church at Keats actively engaged in following Jesus? How do we actively participate in the wider universal Church and share our aboriginality?

These questions are only a starting point for open prayer, dialogue and action. It is the basis for the **first priority** of the renewal program. This priority is for a small group of interested people to form and discuss the implementation and practicalities for establishing small group meetings.

The primary function of this pilot group is to plan the format, venue and specific aim for subsequent meetings which discuss the meaning, direction and expression of faith in the Church community of Keats.

Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity called for a co-responsible and collaborative Church. This is a Church

which helps and affirms each person to know that he or she really matters, that he or she has a word to speak and an action to perform for the faith community and community at large.

Mindful of this decree the pilot group is challenged to ensure that the community is fully represented at the small group meetings and that equal voice is given to all. It is necessary therefore to briefly consider the existing structures for group meetings in Keats.

Meetings of town, council and religious importance are conducted in the council chambers by representatives of the four major language groups. At present the council consists of fourteen members. There is an equal representation of men and women. Two non-Aboriginals (the local priest and town clerk) also have a vote on the council. The council discusses matters raised in "splinter group meetings", prepares documents and drafts policy statements, and reports back to the community at open general forum meetings for approval.

The splinter groups consist of tribal and interested groups throughout the community. These include:

1. **Women** meeting in specific tribal groups and also as a gender-based group in the "women's centre". This group was a direct response to a select group of women who expressed a need to discuss local issues of major importance independently from the men. Their reasons for this were twofold. Firstly to share the right to voice their opinion on local matters. (In their traditional culture women are subordinate to male decisions.) Secondly the women felt that they needed to express an "alcohol free" view on matters of town importance.
2. The **Non-Drinking men** who since the 1988 alcohol riots in Keats have formed a splinter group in decision making.
3. **Language groups** synonymous with Camp groups. The Elders and ceremonial leaders, (all male) voice their tribal opinions at the Council and open public meetings.
4. Deacon Boniface Perdjert and the local priest, **religious** sisters and brothers work collaboratively with both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups in policy making. (At present there is no formal meet-

ing or gathering of non-Europeans for policy making although all are welcome at the general open meeting).

Each splinter group must be committed to the pastoral renewal of the whole Church community. This is a collaborative effort in which all are actively involved in discerning the nature and presence of a truly local Church in Keats.

St Paul's letter to the Romans (12:8-9) affirms the dignity of differing roles within our ecclesial community:

We have many parts in the one body and all these parts have many functions. In the same way though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body.

We must all strive to affirm one another in our ministry of renewal. This is the essence of a collaborative and co-responsible Church.

The pilot group and splinter groups will establish their own priorities for renewal based on what they perceive to be their immediate needs for the Church in Keats. Following is an example of one possible priority and consideration of the resources required to bring this priority to fruition.

This **second priority** proposes that the liturgy celebrating the Eucharist at Mass could be more meaningful and relevant to the Aboriginal faithful if the distinct elements of the ceremonies held at Keats were incorporated into worship. These elements include Dreaming figures, totems and traditional song and dance.

The people of Port Keats have a strong belief in the Dreamtime figures. These figures formed the world, gave them laws and ceremonies and are the source of their life spirit. Each child at birth is given a totem dreaming figure which identifies them with their clan, their tribal history and physical geography. Boniface Perdjert (1977) further explains the nature of the dreaming figure:

We find it easy to see in Christ the great Dreamtime figure, who more than all others gave us law and ceremony and life centres, and marked out the way we must follow to reach our true country.

It is through ceremony, through song and dance and painted bodies that the traditions were handed down from generation to generation.

The ceremony of the Mass, the ceremony of the sacraments and the ceremony of the liturgy should find a ready response in Aboriginal ceremonial tradition. The Keats ceremonies like the Christian ones involve groups in a group participation. There are tribal and ceremonial leaders who lead the ceremonies. There are many ceremonies (such as initiation and the Punith or circumcision ceremony) which have long rituals. There is therefore a spirit of dialogue possible between the Gospel and the symbols and ceremony of the Aboriginal people.

The point of divergence however is that the Christian ceremony often lacks meaning for the Aboriginal. The theology, symbolism and language of the Mass is not tuned to the Aboriginal mind. It is clearly a western orientated expression of faith. "The Western and Hebraic cultural forms in the Eucharist with which we are familiar have sometimes proven a difficulty in other cultural surroundings." (Leader, 1973, Jan.) Clearly the ceremonial worship of the Mass must be made more relevant for the Aboriginal worshippers.

One possible solution is the substitution of ritual song and dance for the spoken Scripture stories. This is an essential start for a culture in which dance and music are the height of cultural and artistic expression. The dances would relate to dreaming stories which parallel Gospel stories and would be sung in the vernacular of the worshipping tribe.

The Elders both male and female would assume the responsibility of ritual leader and could narrate through stories or songs the meaning and message of the dances. These leaders would provide their own "sermon" spoken in Murinth Patha, the Aboriginal "lingua franca" of Port Keats. In this way the Aboriginal community would have an alternative to the difficult language and vernacular of the Gospel.

Masses could be held in each of the four camps or alternatively each could rotate on a four-weekly basis so that each tribe and language group have equal opportunity to fully share in the meaning and participation of the Mass. Men, women and children should be encouraged by the tribal Elders to participate in these "Gospel readings" so that the dances and their meanings are not forgotten from one generation to another.

This second priority is faithful to the first three constitutions produced by the Second Vatican Council. (Crotaers 1986:11).

It addresses the first constitution of the Church by revealing a new direction and image for a truly Aboriginal church. This is a Church in which the people of God actively participate in their unique expression of the sacrament of the word.

It addresses the second constitution of the liturgy by promoting active participation in the celebration of the Mass.

It is faithful to the third constitution on revelation in its aim to encourage a deeper and more meaningful access to the Holy Scriptures.

Finally, this priority challenges the Church of Keats to be faithful to the challenge of Vatican II's call to inculturation and growth in faith, hope and Christian charity.

In developing these two priorities for pastoral renewal I am mindful of the **resources** available to our community. The people of Keats are the prime resource for change in our Church. God has blessed each Aboriginal with the gift of their aboriginality. He has blessed each European with the opportunity to share their tradition in a spirit of unity with their Aboriginal neighbours.

This vision for renewal draws upon God-given and Spirit-inspired leadership. This leadership challenges the Church to face the present and future demands of "The Church".

In Port Keats we have been gifted with such leadership in every tribe. They are worthy of mention not simply for their inspiration to the community but as recognition of the value of these leaders as key resources for the **implementation** of renewal.

Deacon Boniface Perdjert belongs to the Kardu diminin clan. He is the Murrinh-patha Tribal leader who is already leading his people to renewal through his inspiring literature and personal example of following Christ as an Aboriginal. His spirit, expertise, experience and desire for a renewal have been the primary source of inspiration for this paper.

Theodora Narndu of the Kardu yek Nangu clan of the Murrinh-patha people is one of the new breed of female community leaders. Her voice and personal crusade against alcoholism in Keats have distinguished her as a woman of deep faith and action. She would be a natural leader in open council meetings as well as a member of the pilot group committed to action.

Geraldine Jabinee is of the Kardu kura thipmam clan and Murrinh kura thipmam tribe. She has already sought to bridge the gap between the old and new way as the first female eucharistic minister in Keats.

Pius Tchimbukur is an Elder in the Marringar tribe and Kardu darrinpurr clan. He has been instrumental in the organisation of

Priorities for Pastoral Renewal

traditional liturgical song and dance. The Thanpa, Wangka, Lirrga and Parlga dance and song groups have provided meaningful explanations to the spoken word of the readings and Gospels.

These people are not alone. There are other concerned members of the Church who contribute to the life of the Church. These include those whose quiet prayer and humble example of living exemplary Christian lives inspire others to a renewal of the heart.

We are the Church. All of us have a worthy and significant contribution to make to the life of the Church. The prime motivator and resource ultimately is Jesus Christ who leads us to the Father. Finally we must acknowledge the presence and guidance of the gifts of the spirit who leads us to renewal.

In conclusion I wish to point out that in establishing priorities for renewal I have intentionally aimed for a specifically Aboriginal renewal of Church. I believe that the Aboriginals have the first priority as permanent citizens of Keats to experience the presence of Jesus in an aboriginal way. The local Church of Keats must have a distinctive local emphasis. This does not in any way deny non-Aboriginal people their role in the Church. As Europeans we too have a part to play in the realisation of a truly local vision Church in Keats. We must all be open to work together for renewal.

The enormous challenge of bringing to fruition the vision statement of the Church of Port Keats is daunting. It is possible with time, prayer and hard work to discern the presence and practice of an Aboriginal theology which is truly a Christian Gospel theology.

When this is done and only then will the Aborigines fully participate in the life of the Church and make their enrichment to the life of the universal Church.

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From the Secretary's Desk...

News from Sr Colleen Kleinschäfer rsm, who is working with the Aboriginal community at Wilcannia, NSW, and wrote: "Good news! Two men and two women started their Teacher Training at Deakin Uni. in Geelong this year. So, little hopes are beginning to show through." Great news, Sister!

And Fr Rod Cameron o.s.a., Mareeba, Qld. writes: "My work with the Aborigines continues. I have had an unusual request. The Theosophical Society in Brisbane has asked me to speak at their meeting on June 29, 7.30 pm, in their building at 355 Wickham Tce. The building is in National Heritage so it alone is worth coming to see! My talk will be on 'The Dreamtime and Christ.' It is freely open to the public." Perhaps some Brisbane readers may care to attend. Wish I could!

Fr Dan O'Donovan is now at Wyndham, WA, where he is looking forward to taking up parish reins again after recent hospitalisation.

Fr Eugene Stockton, formerly of Kingswood, has been appointed to Riverstone parish, NSW. He is still involved with Aboriginal issues in this state. Recently he was spending a bit of leave at his home in Lawson, and I went

to visit him late one Sunday afternoon. Lawson is only 12km from Leura, but it took me an hour and a quarter to reach his house! Every Sunday thousands of cars return to Sydney from the Blue Mountains, and with the glorious weather we've had here lately, our beautiful tourist area has been chock-a-block. It was bumper-to-bumper all the way down the Great Western Highway, stopping and starting, with rude men in other cars swearing and pushing in where they had no right to go. Quite terrified, I just sat it out wishing I could cast off into the bush till it eased up, but knowing from experience that it takes hours for the congestion to dissipate, besides which I was getting hungry. And all in the cause of collecting Fr Eugene's article for this issue of **Nelen Yubu!** Fr Martin Wilson please note.

As I sat alone in my car during that small trauma, I thought of the time we had gone out bush on Melville Island for a run. We crossed the 17-Mile Plain then thought we were heading for Goose Creek, a remote river where barramundi abounded. Passing Pickatarimoor, we drove into very rough country where there were some black bush orchids which I wanted to get. We soon spotted them but had to climb trees, were bitten by

green ants, nearly fell out of the high branches, and even attacked a few with shots from a crossbow which worked very well. Finally we sank gratefully down to earth for a cup of billy tea, then headed off for Goose Creek, which we never reached.

I don't quite know how it happened, but somehow missing the right fork in the old road we tore along through thick undergrowth with great hordes of spiky grass collecting in our radiator-guard as we tried to follow the sun. It was hot and steamy and in amongst those tall trees one couldn't tell if we were going in circles. After some calculation however we shuffled on to a more promising track and could hear a distant roar of cars, so headed in that direction, emerging on to the Snake Bay road to the tune of a great lane of cars and trucks going back to BI and Pularumpi from footy at Snake Bay. It was almost impossible to cut into the line of traffic until a kindly Tiwi pulled up and let us join the queue. Then instead of being a slow crawl like my Lawson trip, we all pounded along at a terrific bat, risking hitting buffalo, wallaby and horses, but everyone had to keep up with the mob or be crushed to death. I'm not sure which of those two traffic snarls scared me more, but it was good to get home to Pularumpi and cook

up some frozen barra for tea to calm frazzled nerves.

A recent review in **News Weekly** of Fr Worms' **Australian Aboriginal Religions** advised readers that they could obtain a copy of it by contacting us. Over 30 people sent cheques for this book which has been out of print for many months. We had to return all cheques with an explanatory letter. There will be another edition forthcoming, but the date of publication is as yet uncertain.

Very sad news from Bathurst Island of the loss of four people by drowning in the Apsley Strait. Our sympathy goes out to their families and friends, and all at Nguiu.

In the last four months I have made three trips to Melbourne where a beautiful little grand-daughter, Anna Louise, was born on 27 February. Great joy in our family! Actually, as soon as this issue goes to press I will go back yet again to lend a hand to my busy daughter and to fend off efforts by Robert, aged three, who tries to express love for his little sister by presenting her with iron gaspipes, bricks, raw potatoes and many crushing, suffocating hugs.

Best wishes to you all.

Secretary Keren