

## Editorial

In this issue we welcome three contributions from the Kimberley, though the third of them is actually one step removed — as Dan O'Donovan reflects on the Kimberley situation from an ashram in India.

From Northern Territory we have one more contribution from the educational scene on Bathurst Island, this time from the boys' school — last issue staff from the girls' school presented their acculturated educational vision.

Keren Calvert, the *Nelen Yubu* secretary, produces her customary column; this time however not about former times in the 'remote' north but about a church near her home in the Blue Mountains.

On Saturday 14 September Keren and I drove up to Kincumber, near Gosford on the NSW Central Coast, to attend the main day of an Aboriginal Spirituality Weekend sponsored by Kuri-ngai Partners. About 100 people attended, mostly Aboriginal. The new bishop of Broken Bay, David Walker, took part in the opening ceremony — walking barefoot, like the rest of us, on Aboriginal ground through the redolent smoke of a gum leaves fire. In his address he reiterated Pope John Paul's challenge to the Australian church delivered at Alice Springs in 1986: 'And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you [the Aboriginal people] have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.' The day was spent in easy-going, soulful celebration of the local Aboriginal culture, mainly through the reminiscences of various elders and singing, both communal and the performances of individual vocalists. It concluded with a concelebrated Mass (six concelebrants) in the course of which some Aboriginal eucharistic ministers were formally commissioned.

Martin Wilson  
2 November 1996

# To Serve the Church

## Episcopal Ordination of Christopher Saunders as the second Bishop of Broome

Noel McMaster Csr

**O**n a hot and steamy night in February, almost a year ago, a most significant event took place in the Civic Centre in Broome. It was an event which had caught the imagination of many in the Kimberley. It had provided much talk around the town for several months. In the end hundreds of people from all over the Kimberley and beyond were involved in some way. It was the ordination of Christopher Saunders, successor of John Jobst, who had been Bishop of the missionary diocese of Broome for the previous thirty-six years.

It was a community event as well as a church one. At the initial organising meeting, the shire president, who was invited out of courtesy, forcefully made the point that this was for everybody. The Church was not going to keep it to themselves. Nor did we.

This paper, however, is not about the party or immediate celebrations. It is trying to investigate whether the ceremony was, as it strove to be, 'reflective of the faith of Catholic people of this part of the world', and whether the correct procedures were employed to achieve this. It seems fitting to discuss this in this forum since the liturgy involved people from the Aboriginal apostolate in all states, especially the Kimberley and Territory.

It is worth thinking about this event for a while, especially now that the dust has settled and life under the new administration is in full swing. There are several points to consider for those of us

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Fr Noel McMaster, a Redemptorist, has been parish priest of Kununurra, WA, for quite a few years. He has recently been appointed to Halls Creek.

involved in Aboriginal ministry that were brought to the fore in the preparation for and the actual ceremony of episcopal ordination. I would like to open these up and give my own comments, hopefully stimulating broader discussion of the issues.

The main components were:

- Introduction of the successor to Catholic Communities and invitation to participate in the ceremony and celebration.
- Emergence of the Liturgy of Ordination.
- Reception by the Catholic Communities.
- Comments on the authenticity of the process and inculturation.

## **1. Introduction of the Successor to Catholic Communities and Invitation to Participate**

After the announcement of Christopher Saunders as the new bishop of Broome, the normal administrative procedures took place. After this it was suggested that Bishop Jobst take the bishop-elect around on a tour of the Kimberley. The reason was to introduce him formally to the people of the Kimberley. Although Chris had worked in the diocese for almost twenty years and knew many of the people, he still had to be introduced because his status had changed. In their brief trip Bishop Jobst and Bishop-elect Saunders visited many of the communities of the East Kimberley, and some of the West Kimberley. The message was the same as that given by the men travelling with a *malulu* (a boy taken for initiation). He invited people to come to the ceremony and celebrate with him. It was considered by many in the tribal communities that this first part had been done correctly, and so it augured well for the parts that followed.

## **2. Emergence of the Liturgy of Ordination**

The Diocesan Administrator, Fr Kevin McKelson, formed a committee to organise the ceremony. This committee wrote to all catholic parishes in the diocese asking for suggestions about how to proceed. In Kimberley style, responses were painfully slow, but a picture of the liturgy began to build up. Tribal communities were the keenest and strongest, eclipsing all the town parishes save

Broome. This was possibly helped by the formal introduction by the former bishop.

As the weeks went by, communities sent letters, faxes and messages and a truly 'Kimberley' liturgy was emerging. It was clear that everyone wanted this ordination to be done well in both the Aboriginal way and the Catholic way. This meant that certain rites had to be performed. Interestingly, different communities and language groups favoured different parts of the ceremony, and insisted on different parts of the liturgy that they would have to do — presumably to ensure that it was done correctly.

The liturgy began as most large gatherings do, with bishops and priests lined up outside. Unlike other gatherings, something very important was happening inside before they could enter. People from the Kutjungka parish (Balgo, Malarn, Billiluna, Yagga Yagga) smoked the hall where the ceremony was about to begin. This was necessary as a ritual cleansing of the place and the people before a sacred action can take place. At the completion of this, the bishops, priests and servers were smoked. Then the procession of servers, priests and bishops moved through the hall to the sanctuary area. There was a break in the procession when all these had reached their places. The bishop-elect was surrounded by people from the Warmun Community (Turkey Creek). They waited at the foot of the sanctuary until Bishop Jobst and the co-consecrating bishops had passed. They then gave the bishop-elect to the old bishop to ordain him. This done, they returned and were seated.

The ritual cleansing continued with the *Kyrie* and water ceremony. The significance of this was brought home when people from Bidyadanga (Lagrange), Kutjungka, and Warmun stood to take part. Bowls of water were blessed by Bishop Jobst and then holy water was sprinkled on all in the congregation. During this, sorry songs were sung in the Yulparija and Kukatja languages, which are spoken at Bidyadanga and Balgo. Thus reminded of our baptism and of the life-giving water, we listened to the Word of God.

The procession of the gospel was led by Basil Djanghara, from Kalumburu. He sang in Kwini and gave great dignity to the gospel. The ancient rite of ordination had a few meaningful additions. Fr

Kevin McKelson, before reading the apostolic letter described the place of Pope John Paul and the apostles Peter and Paul in terms of *pukarrikarra* (the Dreamtime), describing the origins of the Catholic Law and the men who brought it.

The symbols of the episcopal office were local. The ring was crafted by Craig Hamaguchi, of Hall's Creek gold and Argyle diamonds. The pastoral staff (crozier) was hand-carved with a pocket knife by Roger Henry of Bidyadanga, with the help of Kees Klep. The pectoral Cross is of Broome pearl shell and pearl.

The Offertory time, such a busy time in many liturgies and becoming increasingly so, was reasonably quiet. Kutjungka and Bidyadanga people brought up paintings and a stole, Kalumburu people brought up a carving. Bishop Saunders' family presented the gifts of bread and wine.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist was as normal, with the Memorial Acclamation sung again in language. The Our Father was from Bidyadanga, the well known 'You are our Father' to the Tiwi tune. It is a lively tune, and everybody joined in the clap during the last stanza.

After the final prayer something very special occurred. Stanley Walbidi, a young man from Bidyadanga, came to the bishop with his parents, Merridoo and Agnes. He took the bishop and accompanied him to the foot of the sanctuary area. Here the four were joined by representatives of most Catholic areas of the Kimberley. The choir started the blessing song as these people surrounded the new bishop and held their hands over him in prayer. The blessing was sung in Kukatja, Djaru, Yulparija, Nyangumarta, Kija and finished in English. Slowly, as the singing progressed, hands were raised in the congregation spontaneously. It was as if everyone was assenting, adding their power to the blessing and ratifying the rite of ordination.

Stanley and his parents returned the bishop to his place after the blessing. The solemn blessing was imparted by Bishop Saunders, and the ceremony came to a close in traditional style with a recessional hymn. In what is fast becoming tradition, it was a hymn by the St Louis Jesuits.

Christopher had been given to Bishop Jobst at the beginning of the ceremony by the people of the diocese. They delivered him in the same way as they deliver a young man for rites of initiation in the *malulu* law and other tribal laws. He was given to the bishops, as they were the right people to perform the rite. After the rite, he was reclaimed, a man changed forever by the ritual performed. He was reclaimed by a significant person: Stanley was the first boy the young Fr Chris had baptised after taking up his first appointment. It was fitting that Stanley, now a young man, would assist in reclaiming the new bishop after ordination. Stanley then shared this with others of the diocese since as the blessing continued, many demonstrably gave their assent in a way that made the ritual clapping after the Apostolic Letter pale into insignificance.

The evening continued with singing, dancing and a feast outside. A great finish to a great occasion.

### **3. Reception by the Catholic Communities**

However, for many it was not over, especially the new bishop. After the visitors had gone and the dust settled, he was out completing the final phase of his transition to bishop. He visited all the Catholic communities and was welcomed differently yet appropriately in each. He had visited the communities before his ordination, and now again afterwards. He could then return to Broome to begin the day to day running of the remotest diocese in the country.

### **4. Comments on the authenticity of the process and inculturation**

The reactions to the ceremony were varied, mainly positive. This paper was written hopefully to elicit more comment, or even a realistic discussion on inculturation. One comment I heard expressed support for the ceremony but thought that the indigenised parts were the peripherals, not the core of the rite. So, in the words of another visitor to the north and now a bishop, it was 'innovative but safe'. This isn't really what inculturation is all about. Most of the liturgy was based around the *Missa Bidyadanga*, the form of Mass most frequently used in the Kimberley. This too, has come in for criticism, some regarding it as childish or in the words of a priest

# JAPULU KANKARRA

(The Father in Heaven)

Part VI: Inculturation

Kevin McKelson sac

**I**N this, my final essay, I wish to tell simply the part I played in the unfolding of the first chapter in the liturgical inculturation process in the Kimberleys, and pay tribute to those with whom I have been associated in this undertaking.

May I begin with the tributes. First, I thank the people of La Grange, now Bidyadanga, for gradually and patiently explaining to me the meaning of such words in their language as *ngarlu* and *yawi* for instance. *Ngarlu* means stomach, feeling, mind or will. In its most profound significance, it means the depths of one's spirit. The ten commandments revealed God's *ngarlu* or his will for us. To hurt our Father in heaven's *ngarlu* is to do wrong... *Yawi* means to feel sorry. Should you have fallen out with another and you wanted to be reconciled with that person, you show by word and gesture that you felt sorry for that person. In so doing you forgive that person.

Then as the people began to react sympathetically to the idea of *Japulu kankarra*, the Father in heaven, thanks to the efforts of pioneer missionaries like Fr Francis Huegel sac, we used the term to refer to God. We had then either to retain the English word God in certain instances as in the phrase 'Mother of God' (God *mili Pipi*) or invent a word for God describing him as *Rayi kankajirri karringu*, namely the Spirit who likes to be supreme or, literally, at the very top. One could go on for some length in recounting the debt incurred in such matters to the possessors of the ancient tongues. It was with such words we used to propose the stories of the bible to the people and invite them to use them in liturgical and personal prayer.

On the missionary side of things, special tribute is due to the St John of God, Josephite, Missionary Franciscan, Mercy, Our Lady of the Missions and Canossian Sisters, and to priests, diocesan, Jesuit and Pallottine who participated in the early process. A visit to Daly River and talks given by Fr John Leary msc made such an impression on the Warrmarn people, Fr Werner Kriener sac and Sr Clare Ahern, that the results of the visit occasioned the upsurge of inculturation in the eastern Kimberleys. A special tribute is due to Peter Willis and Sr Angela Morrison who pioneered ritual, musical and liturgical adaptation at Kununurra — a work that is being carried on by Fr Noel McMaster CSsR. It was there the intercultural process really began. I too had some role in writing down bible stories and Mass texts which were commented on and typed up by Sr Johanna Klep and later effectively used by Fr M Digges. We were lucky in having Bishop Jobst who after a cautious beginning in this matter, turned up one day with a mitre made of grass at a bush liturgy. Even the redoubtable Fr Hevern sac came to wear a liturgical head-band in the Aboriginal style, a practice which is fairly common these days.

A special thanks is due to Bobby Badal RIP, Sally Liki and Helen Nakamarra who helped me with crafting liturgical texts in the desert languages. The Jesuits, Fr Brian McCoy and Fr Robin Koning, have been to the forefront in liturgical initiatives at Balgo, now Wirrumanu; whilst there Fr Brian Egan has performed an enabling role in the Halls Creek and Fitzroy area. In one way or another there has been a link with La Grange in the *Coetus Caritatis*.

In the academic sphere I was initially encouraged by Bishop Bede Heather who provided me with missionary reviews from India where missionaries were asking one another and their people what role and influence Hinduism and Buddhism could have in the process of Evangelisation. In 1977-78 an introductory letter from Bishop Little opened many doors to me. To both my sincere thanks. Being a subscriber to *Sedos* over many years, I became profoundly influenced by Fr Michael Amaladoss sj who, in frequent contributions to that review, was flying the intercultural flag for all it was worth. To conclude one of the articles he had written: 'I shall limit myself to one request by way of conclusion. When you



think of cultures and religions, do not think of them in the abstract as a social scientist might do, but think of the people that embody them in their lives, and think of God calling all peoples to enter the mystery of his kingdom.'

It was also in a *Sedos* number I read and copied the Instruction of Propaganda Fidei to missionaries going to China and Indo-China, and as far as I was concerned to missionaries going anywhere, especially to the Kimberleys. It was dated 10 November 1659 (Collactanea SCPF Vol.135 p.42).

Put no obstacles in their way and for no reason whatever should you persuade these people to change their rites, customs and ways of life, unless they are obviously opposed to religion and good morals. For what is more absurd than to bring France, Spain or Italy into China. It is not these you should bring, but the faith which does not spurn or reject any peoples' rites and customs, unless they are depraved, but on the contrary tries to keep them... Admire and praise what deserved to be respected.

Others I would like to thank are Fr Martin Wilson msc for his consistent interest and concern in this matter; Fr Frank O'Loughlan then of Corpus Christi, Clayton, for giving me the texts of seven ancient Anaphora to help me frame in language an orthodox doxology to end the Eucharistic Prayer. There are no passives in the languages in this area and so we had to have active personal subjects praising the Father. So I offered a version like this: 'Moved by your Spirit, Father, and with Jesus your Son, we will praise you forever...' I thank Pat Dodson for writing to me stressing the role that song, dance and music should have in the Aboriginalisation of the Liturgy; Fr McMahon sac for providing me with a document directed to Rome, regarding the Maori Aspiration for a particular Church as provided in Canon 372, part 2.

But lest the reader be wearied by these tributes, may I now review simply how I became involved rather directly in the process together with several others whom a kindly Providence has sent my way.

I should have guessed by anticipation what was needed when Pigeon, the head stockman at LaGrange, wondered out loud and said: 'What was Father doing wearing those women's clothes?' when he saw me clad in Mass vestments.

It was only after Vatican II, and reflection on what the Church was asking missionaries what to do, that I began to simplify and translate liturgical texts and prayers into Aboriginal languages. I was then trying to keep as close as possible to the original texts. One day the priest organising the Melbourne Eucharistic Congress scheduled for 1973 came to LaGrange and asked me if I said Mass in an indigenous language. I replied, perhaps brazenly, that I did. He then said, 'That's great. We will have it at the Congress.' I was somewhat taken aback by this possibility and mentioned to Mgr Walsh that there were 200 indigenous languages spoken in Australia. 'Oh,' he said, 'I thought there was only one.' He then asked me to translate it for him, which I did. To cut a long story short, the text went through many hands, being modified in the process and improved by the inclusion of authentic Aboriginal dancing from Port Keats into the rite. Fr Morrison of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers was involved on the administrative side, but finally it got the approval *per modum actus*.

Hilton Deakin (now bishop) instructed the officiating American Cardinal how to drink from the chalice which had come from LaGrange. The die was cast. Mgr Walsh had made it possible to set in train a process of inculturation which is still going on. Bishop Jobst obtained permission to use this Congress Mass in the Diocese of Broome — which was fine enough, but this was the modified version, not the home-grown one from LaGrange.

Four years later, from 1977 to 1978, I decided to take a sabbatical during which I wanted to find instances of inculturation elsewhere so that I could make out a case for further experimentation in the liturgy, and present it to Cardinal Knox in Rome, a West Australian who was in charge of such matters there and whom I had known as a student. Bishop Jobst was supportive and gave me a letter of introduction to the Cardinal for which I am genuinely grateful. In 1977 I left Sydney en route for Bali, hoping to see in Indonesia evidence of inculturation. In flight I asked the hostess on Air Garuda for some barley sugar, as I was suffering from air deafness. 'Sorry sir,' she answered, 'we have no Bali sugar. The sugar is from Jakarta.'

Guest of the SVD Fathers in den Pasar, I was taken the first evening to a school speech night, prior to which Mass was celebrated. At the Offertory young girls dressed in traditional attire brought gifts of fruit to the altar, dancing as they came. The Mass was said in Indonesian and directly translated from the Latin. Whilst I did not have a chance to witness Mass said more in keeping with Hindu Bali culture, I understand it is quite beautiful.

In Singapore a Redemptorist Father told me that for the Chinese, red was the colour for joy and white for mourning. In Malaysia, veteran missionaries expelled from Red China told me of their great affection for the peasants of rural China. In Tokyo, a classmate from student days gave me the text of the Our Father in Japanese, basing it on the Latin Pater Noster, and indicating to me what was not culturally appropriate. On my asking him how to say 'God bless you' in Japanese, he said such a direct way of speaking was not customary. Instead he kindly wrote out for me in Romaji (Roman letters) an alternative which went like this: 'I am always thinking of you.'

However, it was not till I came to Canada, in an Oblate retirement home for aged missionaries, that a Fr Fafard omi gave me an English version of the Hail Mary which went like this: 'Mary, in you there is no dirt...You are full of consolation,' etc. At last I had found evidence of direct inculturation. It was not as if inculturation did not exist in other places where I had been. If it had been, I had missed it. It might well have been there. Had I gone to Nairobi I would have found it, as Bishop Heather wanted me to do, but alas it was not possible. Back in Canada the old missionaries would slip down to the kitchen at midnight for a snack of whale meat and perhaps a glass of grapefruit juice — May God bless them!

Eventually, after visiting Montreal and hearing of Br André and his devotion to St Joseph, an enriching experience, I went to the American Pallottines in Milwaukee where a secretary very kindly typed out the submission I would present to Cardinal Knox in Rome. Looking back I ask, and well might you too, why on earth this fuss? Perhaps I thought it was a good idea at the time. Perhaps it was my

Roman training. A certain feeling of Romanità had stuck with me and besides that was the way I was brought up.

I suppose Cardinal Knox was rather bemused, if not amused, at my coming to see him. He was quite friendly, however. I had reckoned on his being a West Australian that he could not fail to give me a good hearing, saying 'yes', or at least making some sympathetic noises to that effect.

After sounding me out and commenting on how there was not a terrible lot of dialogue going on in this matter throughout the world, he suggested I encourage participation at Mass by urging the people to join in with great gusto, singing or saying the responsorial Psalm... 'There you have participation.' He also asked me if there were a river near LaGrange. I said, 'No, there is no river but there is a creek.' Thereupon he suggested that I baptise the people in the creek and make a lot out of it. Well, at least that was something I could ponder... However, he did say there would be a liturgical commission set up in WA to deal with the matters I had brought up. He said the chairman of that commission would be the Abbot of New Norcia and I would be one of his consultants. Perhaps he was expressing a wish. But I never heard anything more about it.

Shortly before the interview was over, the Cardinal told me to wait a bit and made a Cardinalial sprint to another room (he was an agile man) and returned forthwith holding a book. It was Fr Chupungco's book on Filipino Liturgy. He gave it to me, saying: 'Study this book! You will find all that you want in there.' It was very kind of the Cardinal to give me the book and besides most fortunate. It contained the history of liturgical adaptation in the Church and set out very clearly an analysis of the relevant paragraphs and guidelines about inculturation in the decree on Liturgy. I went to see Fr Chupungo at St Anselm's, who in turn was very kind to me and agreed to read the text of the Mass. He pointed out certain places where I was mistaken, and other places which I could have made more meaningful in translation. These I would attempt to correct on my return to Australia.

On the way home Fr Eugene Stockton took me along with him to celebrate Christmas with Arab Catholics in Bethlehem. It

was most moving. I was dressed in clerical costume. On leaving for Australia from Tel Aviv the security guard at the airport engaged me in conversation about the historical significance of Jesus of Nazareth. Many Israeli took their children to the church of the Holy Sepulchre to honour a great member of their race. My fellow passengers on the flight were body-stripped and searched.

Eventually I returned to Bidadanga, rewrote my submission incorporating the guidelines from Fr Chupungo's book, and other useful items I had gained from my trip. It was then handed in and buried in diocesan archives. Fortunately however, Bishop Jobst had asked the Australian Bishops for permission to continue experimentation. Bishop Young befriended our bishop and indicated that he and his brother bishops were not really *au fait* with Aboriginal culture and that they were only too delighted to encourage John to continue with experimentation in his diocese.

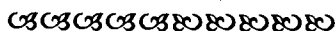
In 1994 I received the Instruction, 'Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy compiled by the Congregation for Worship and Sacraments'. Here was what the Church wanted us to do in this day and age. So why not attempt to do what the church wants us to do? The present Bishop Christopher Saunders is supportive of the project. In May 1994 the Bishops Assembly of the African Synod met in Rome. There were articles in *Sedos* leading up to the event. I was particularly struck by a theme which I picked up from reading one of them. It stated that an inculturated Church was a non-alienating church. Had we in Australia with the best of goodwill been partners unwittingly in an alienating process in our missionary work? I know if before the Council we had attempted to do what we are doing now, our endeavours would not have been well received, to say the least. But Vatican II came along offering a new vision to the Church and its missionaries in particular.

Faith is one thing. The culture in which and through which the faith is expressed is another. In no. 63 issue of *Nelen Yubu* there is an article by Teresita Puruntatameri on Group Leadership involving Aboriginalisation at the Catholic School on Bathurst Island. I was greatly encouraged by this article and wondered if the

principles she outlined could be applied in context not only to education, but also to liturgy as well, perhaps even Church structure.

Now it is for Teresita and others like her to call the tune in matters educationwise or churchwise where the culture can be helpful and the process and end result non-alienating. Go for it, Teresita!

May I end with a statement from an African Bishop: *The end of Inculturation is Love.*



## Papal Honours for Tiwi

[On Saturday 31 August two Tiwi ladies received Papal medals in a special ceremony on Bathurst Island. Elizabeth Kelantumama and Beatrice Kerinauia received the cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from Bishop Ted Collins. Instituted in 1888, it acknowledges significant contribution to the work of the Church. Bishop Collins said that both these women have been part of an energetic and confident Tiwi Catholic community. Both personally knew Bishop Gsell, the first Catholic priest to work among the Tiwi.]

Elizabeth Kelantumama, the daughter of Agau (Martina) and Uramenlugamao was born in 1920, the first daughter of the first of the '150 wives' of Bishop Gsell. She is the mother of nine children. When the nuns were evacuated during the War it was Elizabeth who was responsible for baking the altar breads and caring for the church. Elizabeth lost her husband after they had celebrated their Golden Jubilee of Catholic marriage. Beatrice Kerinauia, daughter of Louis Munkara and Kelamatuangia was born on 10 July 1922. As a young woman she worked with one of the early missionaries, Fr John McGrath, as he became fluent in the Tiwi language. She is the mother of twelve children, including three sets of twins, some now deceased. Beatrice's husband died not long after celebrating their Golden Jubilee of Catholic married life.

Elizabeth and Beatrice are among the few remaining women who took turns to care for the young girls in the dormitory during the War years. In 1975 they both travelled to Rome with some 36

others from Bathurst Island and Port Keats. They were the first group of Aborigines to have made such a pilgrimage and were given a special audience with Pope Paul VI. In 1986 Elizabeth was asked by her people to present Pope John Paul II with some Tiwi gifts when he met with Aboriginal people at Alice Springs.

Both ladies have retired in recent years from their more public role as members of community organisations. They both now live quietly and happily with their families in the Tiwi Islands.

### Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice

The cross *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* (For Church and Pontiff) was instituted on 17 July 1888 (*Quod singulari Dei concessu*) to mark the golden priestly Jubilee of Leo XIII. It was bestowed on those who had contributed in any significant way to the success of the jubilee celebration and of the Vatican exhibition organised on that occasion. It has continued to be awarded as a sign of the Pontiff's recognition of distinguished service to the church and to the papacy.

The form of the metal cross was originally stamped in gold, silver and bronze, and is today stamped only in gold (for very important presentations), or gilt plate (for normal presentations), and the images engraved on it have undergone some changes. It is now a Greek-shaped four-pointed cross bearing in its centre the images of the princes and apostles, Peter and Paul, and the words *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* and the name of the reigning pontiff. The cross is suspended from a yellow and white ribbon and is worn on the left breast.

The original cross, which was made a permanent distinction in October 1898, was a cross made octangular in form by fleur-de-lis fixed in the angles of the cross in a special manner. In the centre of the cross was a small medal with an image of its founder, and encircling the image were the words *Leo XIII P.M. Anno X*. On the reverse side were the papal emblems in the centre, and in the circle surrounding the emblems the motto *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*. On the obverse surface of the cross were comets which, with the fleur-de-lis, formed the coat of arms of the Pecci family. The cross was suspended from a deep red ribbon with delicate borders in the papal colours.

# Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final

## A Metaphor For Educational Vision

Noel Mifsud

**N**ineteen Ninety-Six is a significant watershed in my personal teaching and learning journey. It marks the end of eight years living and teaching in Remote Area Catholic Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. In 1997 I plan to leave Aboriginal community living and return to Adelaide.

This paper is a personal reflection on those eight years of teaching and learning in Aboriginal communities, from a non-Aboriginal person's perspective. I do not reminisce for reminiscence sake, although the numerous anecdotes are testimony to the richness of my experience.

I aim to unravel my emerging vision for Catholic Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory. This is a vision which transforms teaching and learning into a moral craft. I begin with a definition of vision. I have then looked at the upcoming Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final as a metaphor for my vision of Aboriginal education.

I conclude with a personal insight that visioning must include contemplation in order to appreciate the beauty and holiness that gives meaning to my commitment as a leader and teacher in Catholic Aboriginal schools.

### Vision

Vision involves building a bridge between the present and the future. We alter the present reality by imagining a better, richer more meaningful way forward:

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Noel Mifsud is Principal of Xavier CEC Bathurst Island. Educator and adventurer, Noel has lived in remote area Aboriginal communities for eight years interspersed with a year as Station Leader in Antarctica and expeditions to Asia, Alaska, Nepal and India. He holds a Diploma of teaching, Grad. dip. in Education, Bachelor of Education and will complete a Masters degree in Education in 1996. He is originally from South Australia.



For teachers to feel that they can contribute to teacher growth and instructional improvement, it is vital that they cultivate a vision of effective teaching... In short, a vision of teaching equips a leader to recognise the extent to which students are benefiting from instruction and to make constructive suggestions for increasing benefits. (Duke: 1)

Visions are a collective dream. Visions reflect values, meanings and culture. They create the future. Visions transform, empower, illuminate, articulate, nurture, celebrate and challenge. Visions are powerful agents of growth and change. It is the responsibility of school leaders to encourage vision: 'If we do nothing else other than develop a vision for our school and gain some shared commitment to that vision by students, parents and staff we have probably led as well as we can' (Burford 1993:5) Vision allows teachers to identify new meanings about their profession. Visions allow a clarity, consensus and drive in institutionalising the values of teaching.

It is the responsibility of the entire educational community to be involved in visioning:

...It is for people who see the possibility for a better life for children and youth, who dream of a better world for tomorrow for all members of their society, and who have the inner strength of their convictions and ideals, as well as the humility to know that they need to join themselves to the ideas, talents, and energies of countless others if their hopes and dreams are to be realised. (Starratt 1993:11)

It is one aim of schooling to create questioning teachers who will demand schools become places of community, excellence and meaning.

Quiet reflection is an important process in developing vision. The race to integrate educational change and reform is often frenetic. Teachers need to take time out to assess their individual and collective values and vision. Staff retreats, release time, in-service, programmed sessions with the principal, mentor and pastoral care of staff are essential tools to facilitate the process of reflecting staff.

Visions are unique or situational. (Duke undated: 62). I am weary of attempting to generalise a global vision for Aboriginal education, given that Aboriginal schools are so diverse in climate and culture. Even on Bathurst Island where we have two schools on the same campus, our visions differ.

I am not advocating visionary superiority of one school over the other. In fact our sister school contributed to our overall vision at Xavier, by providing input and advice. We do however recognise that our school culture and climate is unique.

Xavier emerged from turbulent years preceding 1992. It was my observation that the school lacked community, educational excellence and meaning for staff, students and parents in certain aspects of school life. Negative media reports, poor staff morale and a major court case involving staff and students contributed to this turbulence. Paradoxically we began school reculturing at Xavier ever mindful of the school's rich history and tradition, marked by years of dedicated service by Christian brothers and lay persons. From the heartache of these beginnings, I dared to dream. I dreamed a school where we would overcome these obstacles. Together with the school community we replaced despair with a profound sense of hope. We laughed, prayed, used ceremony and healed our hurts. We affirmed each other. We in-serviced, studied and worked long hours to build an educationally rigorous curriculum which would provide unlimited potential for staff and student growth. We sought new meanings for why we existed as a school community.

I vividly remember the day we held a smoking ceremony at the school to ward off the evil spirits of our past hurts, to remember the sacredness of our history and to welcome with song, dance and story a new vision, a new sacred space for Xavier CEC.

## **The Beginning**

The lessons we learn from history provide the foundation for creating vision. My history as a teacher of Aboriginal children in remote areas began in 1988. I was previously secure as an English and Physical Education teacher in an upper middle class non-Aboriginal private school in Adelaide. Upon invitation from a priest whom I had met at a Sydney Catholic youth convention, I resigned from my permanent job and left for remote Port Keats, 450km west of Darwin on the NT and WA border.

My initial vision was that, as a new teacher, young and enthusiastic, I was going to transform Aboriginal education. I remember thinking how I was going to introduce sport, music and

computers to the impoverished Aboriginal children. The only impoverishment I encountered was in the naïvety and paternalism of my initial vision.

My first sports lesson quickly shattered my initial vision. I remember teaching students how to somersault on a mini trampoline. Having been a gymnast in my youth, I demonstrated a near perfect somersault and set out to teach this difficult skill. The first child to attempt it performed a perfect double somersault. By the end of the lesson the students were teaching me how to perform the feat. I ended the lesson humbled. I learned a valuable lesson that visions are dynamic; they develop slowly over time.

To bring vision to fruition it is important to both act and to reflect. The latter does not imply frenetic activity. Rather it is to stop, listen, look and empathise with students so that the vision is collaborative, realistic but challenging, empathic, exciting and transforming.

### **Football Grand-Final – a metaphor vision**

Creating a truly communal vision for Aboriginal education is essential. Aboriginal people are communal by nature. Possessions are shared and community rather than privacy is the norm. On Bathurst Island the Tiwi Football Grand Final draws the entire community of around 1400 people to the main oval together with over 400 visitors from Darwin on the day. The town is deserted on this day except for the football oval. The entire focus of the year's football is culminated in this one day of celebration.

My vision for Aboriginal education parallels with startling congruity, themes from the metaphor of the Tiwi Grand Final match. My vision for Catholic Aboriginal education is that it should be collaborative, dynamic, exciting, affirming, focused, gifting, communal, motivating and contemplative.

### **The winning team – collaborative vision**

A football team relies on players, umpires, timekeepers, scorers and spectators for success. Education is equally reliant on a collaborative approach. Our vision for education must involve the entire educational community. Teachers must work with students,

parents and the local community in developing their vision statements. In remote communities organisations like the store, club, clinic and local industries are pivotal to schools.

I have sat in the dirt at community meetings where elders and young alike discuss their needs and desires for schooling. Over 300 people will attend such meetings and although no agendas are set, a wide range of issues is covered from student nutrition to cultural matters. The entire student community is expected to attend funerals, ceremonies and public meetings.

The local community should be an integral part of the school's vision. My experience has been that local industries are often sceptical of teachers and schools. Part of the blame lies with school administrators who have kept schools secret. There are not enough open days, morning teas and lunches with local industries. Like parents, local community members are not encouraged enough to visit the school and actively support education. I have seen this overcome in many ways. On Bathurst Island store owners and council workers, are invited at sports days to present trophies; industry information days are held at the school with presentations given by students and staff; open days are organised and the school runs computer and business classes for the store, clothing industry, clinic and police.

Our vision for Aboriginal education has been exclusive both in the jargon and in its vision. We are called to a more collaborative, more inclusive vision for Aboriginal education which includes the contribution of parents, local government and industry.

### **Don't rely on past premierships — dynamic vision**

A successful football team knows that to win one premiership does not mean automatic success in the next year. New players emerge, teams change and new tactics are required. In education we must continue to develop dynamic visions which meet the challenges and changes of post-modern society. When I first started teaching in Aboriginal schools I was inspired by priests and principals (nuns and brothers) and colleagues to believe that tradition and history were the foundations for creating a new vision of Aboriginal education. Aboriginal education has prospered greatly in the NT

thanks to the dedicated work of the nuns, priests and brothers. They brought a great wealth of unconditional love, educational expertise and personal sacrifice to education.

Education in the nineties brings with it a new challenge however. The numbers of religious are declining. Prior to my arrival at Xavier as Principal in 1991, most Aboriginal school principals belonged to religious orders. In 1993 the first Aboriginal principal was appointed. In 1996 we now have two Aboriginal, two religious order and one lay principal in our Aboriginal schools. Aboriginal people are inspired to develop local leadership models in schools. New models of leadership are emerging which reflects a more inclusive power sharing of leadership. On Bathurst Island leadership of one school is shared between five Aboriginal people. Our vision for Aboriginal education must reflect these changes. Localised inclusive leadership models are emerging which radically differ from previous models. To believe the unbelievable, to imagine the unimaginable is the most exciting challenge for vision makers.

### **Grand Finals are exciting – What about our educational vision?**

Football games in Aboriginal communities contain an infectious excitement. My vision for Aboriginal education aims at capturing this excitement. My four years as Principal on Bathurst Island has epitomised the incredible excitement and at times frustration that accompany principalship. School should be as exciting for staff as it is for students. Our staff at Xavier have participated in dress-up days, tours to mines, parachuting, holidays and camping trips.

I came to Bathurst finding a school financially broke, run down, staffed by an uncommitted and demoralised staff. The curriculum was disorganised and the school unstructured. In four years we rebuilt buildings, introduced a secondary curriculum, organised staff team-building camps and outings, formed staff and student councils, hired new staff, refitted all classrooms, wrote a local religious education curriculum, hired local staff, rebuilt community relations and promoted our school using brochures, cards and posters. One paragraph cannot give justice to the magnitude of change we experienced over the years. Similarly it is hard to convey the pain,

triumph and dedication of the community who worked to transform our school into a community centre which is educationally rigorous, communal, meaning-filled and spiritually and culturally inclusive.

The basis for our very first changes began with my first action as Principal at Xavier. I organised a staff in-service at an Island resort to establish a vision for Xavier. This process took almost two years to complete and involved ongoing discussions with students, parents and community members. It did however set the basis for every change which occurred. The shared vision at Xavier CEC is that: 'Our Tiwi students are the hope of the future. Together with the community, we aim to empower each other through sharing knowledge and skills, christian values and Tiwi identity.'

### **Support our players — Affirming vision.**

Too often teachers have come under the collective criticism of the media. Recent work-place bargaining agreements in the Northern Territory have seen a barrage of openly hostile criticism from the media and government alike. One critic in the NT News (Saturday 9 March 1996) claims teachers are grossly under-worked and overpaid. This may not be the majority view but it certainly is a representative one. The Northern Territory Government has been taking out full page advertisements criticising teachers for asking for a seven percent wage rise. Public criticism of teachers can only harm a positive and collaborative vision for education.

There are however, positive examples of how the community can and does support teachers. Our Darwin Catholic Education Office runs television advertisements promoting NT Catholic schools as productive, happy, educationally rigorous and communal centres for learning. In San Francisco I observed a similar advertisement. Unlike the Northern Territory's, which is aimed more at recruiting staff and students, their's focuses directly on valuing the role of teachers. The advertisement depicts a young child and a teacher holding hands with the message: 'Value teachers — they need our support.' I strongly concur!

Teachers need community affirmation. The community must value the role teachers play in working with others in educating students. I would generalise that if teachers were affirmed, valued

and openly supported then they would be more likely to reflect this affirming, supportive and positive climate in their classrooms.

### **We should keep our eyes on the ball — A focused vision:**

As a young football player the words of many coaches resonate in my mind: 'Keep your eyes on the ball.' This is very true with educational vision. We must never forget our focus: the student. My experience of Aboriginal children has led me to believe that childhood is not so much a preparation for life— it is life.

Childhood isn't a time when he (or she) is moulded into a human who will then live life: he (or she) is a human who is living life. How much heartache would we save ourselves if we recognise the child as a partner with adults in the process of living, rather than always viewing him (or her) as an apprentice. How much would we teach each other. (Ripaldi: undated).

My experiences in the bush have seen me as a Principal feeding breakfasts to children, helping them wash and dress before school, assisting parents with transport and listening to their problems. I have been called out from school to attend ceremonies. I have buried young children, attended weddings and listened in awe to students' tales of their dreaming and encounters with the spirits. My experiences are not unique in my profession, but they are critical to my vision of education. This is a vision that I am gifted to spend my days with the hope of the future. 'A doctor is allowed to usher life into the world in one magic moment. I am allowed to see that life is reborn each day with new questions, ideas, friendships.' (J. Schlatter: undated). My reflections of my Aboriginal experiences have enriched my vision, have made my vision paradoxically unimaginable and yet so tantalisingly achievable. We can and must expect our Aboriginal schools to be centres of community, excellence and meaning.

Our Aboriginal students live for the day. They are excited by each new morning. I have fond memories of children gathering at my house at 5.00 or 6.00 in the morning (Aboriginal children have a unique interpretation of time, based on the rising of the sun) asking me if it's time for school. The memory of the impromptu breakfasts at 5.00 with a hoard of children or giving the gathered masses a pre-school bush shower with the hose pipe and gallons of shampoo.

These are examples of living; schooling is life, not a preparation for readiness to live.

### **Training is essential — Visions must bring together individual talents into a term approach.**

Aboriginal people find practice a difficult concept. In most tribal activities such as hunting, dancing ceremonies and instruction there is little if any place for practice. There are many visions for the direction of Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory. Each individual community is so diverse culturally, philosophically and physically that it is not surprising that divergent visions emerge.

Anderson (undated:94) states that pioneers or visionaries who take optimistic views, risks and experiments are dependent on a number of variables for the success of their dreams. These variables include complexity of change, leadership turnover, lack of professional development, lack of role models, pragmatism and inappropriate conceptual frameworks.

The vision for Aboriginal Catholic Education in the Territory is made complex by local variables which resonate with Anderson's findings. These include:

1. The current Director's philosophy to promote autonomy, through decentralisation among Aboriginal schools.
2. The longevity of Principals in the five Aboriginal schools compared to the high turnover of directors of CEO.
3. The fact that leaders will bring to their individual schools individual dreams, aspirations and visions.

These variables mean that diverging visions for individual schools will emerge. Diverging visions are not in themselves a conundrum. Diversity can lead to robustness, if there is focused leadership to synthesise the individual threads of vision into a rich tapestry of communal vision.

Unique visions are essential if our schools are to maintain their unique identity. What is required however, is for schools to work with the Catholic Education Office to synthesise their visions (their unique school culture) with that of the Office. It is necessary to recognise a common vision for the role of Catholic Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory. The Catholic Education Office



in Darwin does nurture both the pragmatists and the pioneers who develop school visions. School communities are invited to celebrate the successes of their visions in Diocesan Educational Assemblies and Special Masses for Education. Leaders are encouraged financially to attend in-services and leadership courses such as those offered by the Australian Catholic University. A new communal vision of education is emerging.

### **In kicking for goals you sometimes kick out of bounds — Dream dreams into reality**

Each of the eight Tiwi Island football teams have dreamed of playing in the illusive Grand Final. The key to success has been in keeping this dream alive and by kicking goals! I have experienced the joy as a principal of seeing a shared vision brought to fruition. Metaphorically, I have kicked some goals! This vision was to establish Xavier CEC as the first Northern Territorian Catholic Remote Area Aboriginal school to be registered as a secondary provider.

This was a dream staff, parents and students developed since 1992, when I began as Principal and offered my vision for Xavier. Many critics in both the NT Education and Catholic Education Department stated that it could never be achieved. The official curriculum was developed, precluding on-site secondary studies except by correspondence school. Staff worked hard in researching and developing a rigorous secondary curriculum based on the NT Board of Studies guidelines. They interviewed departmental curriculum advisers and sent away interstate for curriculum guidelines. Community meetings were held outlining the proposal and inviting parents to visit the classrooms and assist students with the new curriculum. The new secondary students were affirmed at assemblies and a special ceremony was organised to dance them into their dreaming — their secondary school dreaming. As principal I worked with staff to develop the curriculum. I took classes for teachers to allow them time to work on the new documents. In-services and time off for participating staff were organised. Together the entire Xavier community worked to bring this vision of secondary education to fruition. We dreamed the dream into reality.

Always prevalent was our central vision that our Tiwi students are the hope of the future.

### **Motivation is critical — Imagine the unimaginable:**

The success of a winning footy team relies, in part, on the motivation of the coach, players and spectators. A school vision must have structures in place which facilitate motivation and affirmation of staff and students. Affirmation is more than just increasing students' motivation to learn. It is a basic human need, the right of every person involved in education. Middleton (undated:35-37) states that effective teaching must contain three essential interpersonal elements:

1. A sense of belonging
2. Self Esteem
3. Interpersonal Skills (listening, watching, questioning, researching, summarising, co-operating)

### **Conclusion**

Vision involves deep hurts, immense triumphs and gradual steps forward. In my four years at Bathurst I experienced what Manning (undated:18) calls a live encounter. I worked incredibly long hours, I prayed with sincerity, I laughed, cried and gave of my soul. My driving force was a vision for our staff and students. This was a vision that: together with the community we would empower each other through sharing knowledge and skills, christian values and Tiwi identity. This was a vision to provide professional quality Catholic Aboriginal Education. Our vision for Xavier however transcends achievement and measured success — it is spiritual. Our school vision of Xavier is alive with what Manning calls innate holiness and beauty. Vision therefore is a way of transforming teaching to a moral craft, it is an:

act at the core of which is the mystery of unfolding personhood, we see that when we teach and when we learn we are in the presence of the holy, for we are brought face to face with the creative activity of God. (Manning :19)

It is humbling to look at vision in this contemplative stance.

Paradoxically my vision for Aboriginal education has been the result of frenetic activity, rich experiences and immersion in Aboriginal community. The major insight of this paper, for me, is that after eight years of such activity, I have entered a new understanding. Vision must include contemplation. In discovering the holiness of vision, the richness in gifting others and being gifted by them, I have discovered what has kept me committed and passionate about teaching. My vision based on educational excellence and building community actually has meaning for me.

My years in Aboriginal Education has led me to rich insights into creating vision. I am challenged to developing a more contemplative approach and am encouraged to continue personal self-appraisal in order to monitor my progress and ensure that as a pioneer of vision, I continue to equate learning with living. I am committed to teaching, I am committed to others, I am committed to my faith. My vision for Aboriginal education has a firm foundation in eight years of living in Aboriginal communities. The profoundness of this experience, revealed through contemplation, will shape my vision for education in the years which are to follow.

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**The *Nelen Yubu* Staff**

**wish**

**all our Readers and Contributors**

**a Blessed Christmas**

**and**

**a Happy and Productive**

**1997**

# Thoughts from India

Dan O'Donovan

[On 14 September, the Feast of the Holy Cross, Dan O'Donovan wrote to me from Dhyana Ashram, Madras, where Thomas the Apostle is believed to have sealed with his own blood his testimony to faith in the Risen Christ. Dan is still thinking of Broome diocese, where he hopes to return after experience at the interface between Buddhism and Hinduism on the one hand and Christianity on the other at various ashrams in India and Sri Lanka. — Ed.]

Today's liturgy: '...as Moses lifted up the snake...so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that...' (John 3:14).

Reminding us of Jonah. Jonah couldn't stomach the snake's (Nineveh's) being lifted up, as a sign of hope and life to others.

Can we?

God chose to 'lift up' the snake. What could those who had been bitten, or whose relatives even had died, have thought? Putting ourselves in their place, what would *we* have thought? Crush it! It is destroying us. It 'deserves to die' (Matt. 26:66). The human response. And surely reasonable.

Yet, this snake God raised up (Acts 2:24) as salvation-medium in the people's midst.

'It displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, 'I pray you, Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tashshish; for I know that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take my life from me, I beseech you, for it is better for me to die than to live.' And the Lord said, 'Do you do well to be angry?' (Jonah 4:1-4).

We Gospel people have become, in the present century, increasingly concerned about justice. And peace, of course./ Peace meaning the harmonising of many differences. Difference is integral

to the whole, as Rublov's Trinity icon affirms in its silence. It is the mystery of life and truth, here and beyond.

Our Broome Catholic diocesan policy, with its widely-known devotedness to education, I would see as a work predominantly of justice. In this it meets well, if only in part, its evangelical call.

For, at the messianic Centre, 'justice and peace will embrace.' (Psalm 85:10) The kerygma, therefore, concerns both equally.

One can work at education to the limit of one's strength and resources, and not advance the interests of peace. That is a possibility. As is its reverse, of course. The noble work of justice has to be paired with the positive, and arduous labour of peace.

In July '97 the NATSICC convention is scheduled to take place in Broome. I was at the '94 NATSICC Darwin meeting, a soul-stirring event. There is a difference, however, between the two.

Last year occurred what history may well see as the single most momentous event to date in the encounter of the Gospel with Aboriginal life: the formation, namely, under the auspices of the National Council of Churches in Australia, of an Aboriginal Ecumenical Association. This time round, then, the NATSICC which meets in Broome will be an ecumenically conscious NATSICC.

We may be witnessing the birth of a new stage, a new mode even, in Australian Catholic mission, initiated by Aboriginal Catholics themselves.

## From the Secretary's Desk...

ONE DAY in August this year I went to see a new church in the Blue Mountains, at Glenbrook. I went there for a particular reason after reading a lengthy article which was harshly critical of an unnamed new church on the outskirts of Sydney that the writer had recently visited. I suspected this might be the church and I wanted to see it for myself.

By way of background, I have lived in the Blue Mountains for many years; it's an area I know and love. It is also an area which shows ample evidence of Aboriginal presence, including ancient artefacts, campsites and rock carvings such as the hugh Aboriginal Rock at Wentworth Falls, Red Hands cave at Glenbrook and others. Fr Eugene Stockton, archaeologist, who spent his childhood at Lawson [I love his nostalgic theme: 'the bush was my playground'] tells us he has discovered evidence of Aboriginal presence in the river flats below the escarpment, going back as far as 47,000 years.

The church I visited is built of sandstone transported from the demolition site of part of Sydney Hospital. From the outside one is struck by the great sweep of the roof which descends abruptly from a height, down into a trough, then rises above the entrance: it reminds one of the Blue Mountains range itself in the way the escarpment rises from the coastal plain.

In the very high ceiling of this church there is a long skylight featuring the Aboriginal colours of black, red and yellow — a fitting tribute!

By now, with whetted appetite, I decided to do a bit of local research into details of the construction of this place of worship.

I learned that the brief given to John King, architect for the project, was to design a building dedicated solely to religious purposes. It gives architectural expression to many of the intangible qualities of God and to the aspirations of those who come to pray here. It is not a multi-purpose building, nor is it a simple hall.

The interior is spacious and uncluttered. You could be tempted to call it stark, as the

article-writer did. The rich symbolism of its construction is somewhat masked by the simplicity of its presentation. The basic form of the sanctuary is a triangle, with the celebrant's chair at the apex and the altar and ambo at the other two points. The front of the altar carries an image worked in iron of the vision in Apocalypse 5:1-6:17, the Lamb with the scroll of the seven seals. Likewise the stone ambo, whence Sacred Scripture is proclaimed, bears an image in iron from Apoc. 4:6-11, of the four winged creatures.

On the wall directly behind the altar hangs a large wooden cross, without figure but in accordance with a strong christian tradition featuring the five glorious wounds of Christ indicated by five large ruby-like inserts. Again one might have an impression of starkness and restraint, until it is observed that when the priest stands at the altar saying Mass, his figure as seen from the body of the church, becomes the one on the cross, the *alter Christus*, uniting the sacred banquet of the Lord's supper with the sacrifice of his death, and pointing to his glorious resurrection. In fact, multiple and rich symbolism is one of the out-

standing features of this place. The cross was designed by Tom Bass.

There are no Stations of the Cross, as the writer noted, but for good reason: they have already been designed in the form of plaques to be embedded in the lawns surrounding the church; but being individually designed and costing \$1500 each, funds for this project have yet to be raised by the parish. When installed it means that people of all walks of life can make their pilgrimage at any time, whether the church doors are open or not.

The baptistry is to the right of the altar. It allows for baptism by immersion (inbuilt warm water!) and is in the image of a well, reminiscent of the dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman. It is circular to recall the womb, as well as the dialogue with Nicodemus on rebirth.

In keeping with many modern churches there are no kneelers, and the stoups though small are quite adequate.

In the northern wall the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in tasteful seclusion, the small area in front of it marked off by an open screen where adorers may pray in private at a priedieu. That



side of the church is distinguished by a large window complex, in the bottom part of which is depicted a stream of water running from near the baptistery, to just below the Blessed Sacrament, and on into the body of the church. The scene refers to the water flowing from the rock struck by Moses, as well as to the rivers in the Garden of Eden.

Presiding over the baptismal pool, the font of the river of life, is the statue of Mary, Mother of the Church. The upper part of the window will depict [still being constructed] the tops of trees, blending with living trees standing outside. Here again we remember the Aboriginal Dreamtime belief in the presence of the spirits in the treetops in these very mountains.

The doors which form part of the portal area are made of wood and glass and decorated with the traditional symbols of Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles. The glasswork was done by Paddy Robinson. Ironwork attached to the wooden sections of the main doors suggests a vine and its branches, and co-ordinates with the symbols of the apostles which are worked on the glass panels of the door.

References to fire in Sacred Scripture describing the characteristics of God, are also depicted. Local flora and fauna are included, since many of the plants cannot reproduce unless first destroyed by fire. In this image the regrowth of the bush after death in a bushfire becomes a local image of the resurrection of Christ.

The particular reason for my visit as indicated earlier, was that I wanted to verify the criticism I had read of the unnamed church, which I believe must be this one at Glenbrook. Prepared for shock, I was astonished to find myself immersed in such a rich tapestry of symbolism!

One of *Nelen Yubu's* central concerns is the enculturation of Christianity into Australian culture, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, so it was with dismay that I had read the writer's opinion of the church he had seen:

Despite its beautiful stone work, the overall barrenness of the design and the iconoclasm and starkness evident in the appointments of the new church made one wonder what role, if any, this building would play in the 'devotional' life of the Catholic community, outside the Sunday Masses.

These kinds of 'modern' churches are sometimes justified in the name of an alleged post-Vatican II need for 'inculturation' with the Australian 'ethos' which, too often, goes hand in glove with a cringing deference to national 'taste' and what passes for 'culture'. What next? With Christ taken down from his cross, and the Stations of the Cross removed, and the Mass Altar symbolically down-graded, and the presence of Christ in the Eucharist down-played, will the next stage be poker machines and electronic games, to say nothing of a beer garden and Footy-TAB, set up in the porches?

I could not reconcile the writer's words with the church I visited. Could it have been a different one he has written about? And has he missed the importance of the Aboriginal theme?

The Glenbrook church caused me no concern regarding the construction of 'modern' churches — no fear for the Church's future cohesion and survival. I was overwhelmed with admiration for the way the many threads had been so gracefully woven together. The visit evoked in me no less feeling than

would a visit to a traditionally designed and appointed church. In this church I found no rejection of traditional liturgy, doctrine or discipline, just a different and careful expression of them in a building which responded to its Blue Mountains setting and its Aboriginal history. If anything, it is close to a Cistercian tradition long maintained in the Middle Ages, particularly with reference to the worship of the Precious Wounds. And many people see the 'modern' fashion of reserving the Blessed Sacrament at the central focal point as in fact a deviation from a more ancient tradition — a deviation which churches like Glenbrook and many others have corrected.

My visit left me wide-eyed with admiration for this consecrated edifice. If ever there were a church built to respect traditional and modern worshippers, it must be this one.

The clergy and parishioners of St Finbar's, Glenbrook, NSW, are to be congratulated on their liturgically correct, sensitively appointed, new church.

**Secretary Keren**

## Bulletin Board

### Religious Involved in Aboriginal Apostolates: Founding Forum Conference Alice Springs — October 4-6, 1996 MSC Participants Report

Leo Wearden msc  
Peter Wood msc

[The following report was prepared for intra-congregational distribution by the two MSC participants. A couple of minor emendations have made it useful for general information. — Ed.]

THIRTY-THREE participants representing 23 Religious Congregations involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) apostolates nation-wide gathered in Alice Springs to discern whether it was important to form a national body which would represent the interests of the apostolate and of those involved, and if so, what form it should take and what tasks it should set itself.

Participants came from a wide diversity of apostolates and from a broad spectrum of locations, urban, rural and remote, and

only SA, Tasmania and ACT were not represented.

The meeting was facilitated by Margaret Hinchley, rsm, and followed a process of consensus decision-making through small group discussion reporting to plenary sessions for further elaboration and discernment of the issues involved.

Seven broad areas of concern were identified:

- Systems/Structures/Processes
- Awareness Raising/Attitudinal Change for Social Justice
- Personal Needs/Supports
- Institutional Church/Indigenous Cultures
- Communication
- History of Congregational Charisms
- Spiritual Transformation

From these areas various *priority issues* were elaborated:

- The necessity of ATSI involvement in the actual process of ministry within the Church, including empowerment as Church and discernment of those non-indigenous who work alongside; in general, the realisation of the

Pope's 1986 Alice Springs Statement.

- The necessity of taking seriously the prophetic role of religious, through witness, statement and action, especially in the current political and socio-economic climate, both within our individual religious congregations and in society as a whole.

- The necessity of networking among the involved religious for mutual support and information sharing, help and affirmation in overcoming isolation and alienation, and ongoing education and challenge.

The means of addressing these issues were not attended to but the decision was taken to form an interim national group which would eventually, if the project receives support, be regionally based. The initial task of this core group would be to enter into discussion with NATSIC, ACM and ACMM, ACLRI, ACBC and the Forum of Religious for Justice to obtain their input on the proposed project. The results of this consultation would be fed back to all participants for further discernment in a forum yet to be decided.

The interim core group elected is:

- Margaret Costigan rsc VIC

- Peter Hardiman cfc WA
- Nick McBeath fms NT
- Steve Morelli cfc NSW
- Kay O'Neill rsm NT
- Barbara Broad rsm WA (subject to confirmation)

The core group has the power to co-opt further members as necessary.

It was agreed that each congregation be approached to donate \$200—\$300 to help cover ongoing expenses for the group.

Apart from the value of the exercise in itself, the meeting was also appreciated for the contacts that were made and the sharing of experiences, much of which happened outside formal session times.

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principles she outlined could be applied in context not only to education, but also to liturgy as well, perhaps even Church structure.

Now it is for Teresita and others like her to call the tune in matters educationwise or churchwise where the culture can be helpful and the process and end result non-alienating. Go for it, Teresita!

May I end with a statement from an African Bishop: *The end of Inculturation is Love.*



## Papal Honours for Tiwi

[On Saturday 31 August two Tiwi ladies received Papal medals in a special ceremony on Bathurst Island. Elizabeth Kelantumama and Beatrice Kerinauia received the cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from Bishop Ted Collins. Instituted in 1888, it acknowledges significant contribution to the work of the Church. Bishop Collins said that both these women have been part of an energetic and confident Tiwi Catholic community. Both personally knew Bishop Gsell, the first Catholic priest to work among the Tiwi.]

Elizabeth Kelantumama, the daughter of Agau (Martina) and Uramenlugamao was born in 1920, the first daughter of the first of the '150 wives' of Bishop Gsell. She is the mother of nine children. When the nuns were evacuated during the War it was Elizabeth who was responsible for baking the altar breads and caring for the church. Elizabeth lost her husband after they had celebrated their Golden Jubilee of Catholic marriage. Beatrice Kerinauia, daughter of Louis Munkara and Kelamatuangia was born on 10 July 1922. As a young woman she worked with one of the early missionaries, Fr John McGrath, as he became fluent in the Tiwi language. She is the mother of twelve children, including three sets of twins, some now deceased. Beatrice's husband died not long after celebrating their Golden Jubilee of Catholic married life.

Elizabeth and Beatrice are among the few remaining women who took turns to care for the young girls in the dormitory during the War years. In 1975 they both travelled to Rome with some 36