



EDITORIAL

THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF *NOSTRA AETATE*

In the closing weeks of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI promulgated *Nostra Aetate* or *The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*. This groundbreaking document, while only very short in actual length, was the subject of considerable discussion at the Council, presented a major shift in the way the Church views other religious traditions and paved the way for significant interfaith dialogue over the past forty years. As we approach this important anniversary we would do well to reflect on something of the history and the content of this teaching of the Council.

"When in November 1960 the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU) members and consultors met for the first time, the President, Cardinal Augustin Bea SJ told them they were to undertake 'the question of treating the Jews not on its own initiative, but at the express command of Pope John XXIII.' He added that, foreseeing difficulties, the Pope requested that even the fact of initial discussion and drafting be treated *sub secreto*." (1)

Thus, John XXIII's intention had been to produce a document that specifically dealt with the vexed question of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. There was initially opposition to this from a number of quarters and plans to write a separate document or to include a statement in the Decree on Ecumenism were rejected by November 1963.

The Secretariat decided to widen the scope of the document to incorporate all non-Christian religions and the revised text was accepted in principle at the end of the third session in

1964. Between the third and fourth sessions the document was further modified until it was finally accepted in October 1965.

"What emerged on 28 October 1965 was the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* in which for the first time in history a General Council acknowledged the search for the absolute by non-Christian races and peoples, and honoured the truth and holiness in other religions as the work of the one living God. It was the first time also that the Church had publicly recognized the universal presence of grace and its activity in the many religions of mankind, giving glory to God especially for his enduring faithfulness towards his chosen people, the Jews." (2)



Pope John XXIII (1959-63) who called the Second Vatican Council and initiated the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

The document opens with recognition of the bond of unity, which exists between all people as they search for answers to life's questions. "Ever aware of its (the Church's) duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, it reflects at the outset on what people have in common and what tends to bring them together." (*Nostra Aetate* 1)

It acknowledges that people find these answers, and therefore a program of life, in the various religious traditions of the world. In what might be considered the key statement of the document, it declares: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women. Yet it proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way the truth and the life (Jn 1:6) ... The church, therefore, urges its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions." (*Nostra Aetate* 2)

The third section speaks of the high regard, which the church has for Muslims. While identifying what is shared between Islam and Christianity, it also acknowledges the disputes and conflicts of the past and calls for a change of attitude. "The sacred council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding." (*Nostra Aetate* 3)

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Subscriptions

\$10 per year, post free. Triannual bulletin of the Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations. Feedback and articles for publication are welcome.

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The section dealing with the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is significantly longer than the others and details the strong bonds between the two. These bonds, of course, imply the need for much closer ties. "Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be achieved, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions."(Nostra Aetate 4)

The divisions of the past are strongly rejected. The church "deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-semitism levelled at any time or from any source against the Jews." (Nostra Aetate 4)

The document concludes with a strong call for mutual respect and understanding among all peoples. "We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God's image... Therefore, the church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination

against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion."(Nostra Aetate 5)

As we come to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* let us take up the challenge it offers. Especially in our present era of globalization and international conflict, there is even greater need for dialogue between people of all faith traditions to promote understanding, respect and a recognition that we are all children of the one God.

FOOTNOTES:

- (1) STACPOOLE., A. (ed) *Vatican II Revisited By Those Who Were There* (1986, Winston Press, Minneapolis) p 220
- (2) *ibid* p 220

COMMISSION NEWS

Commission Report

In line with other official bodies in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, the Commission for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations is reviewing its role and looking at long-term planning in the context of the priorities established at the 2003 Archdiocesan Synod. To begin this process the Commission met for a full day on Saturday, 19 February at St Paul Theological College, Banyo and has followed up with meetings in March and April. Once the directions have been clarified, new processes and structures can be put in place to fulfil the Mandate.

New member

At our first meeting this year we welcomed Luke Plant to the Commission. Luke is Field Officer for Brisbane Vocation Office, and Youth Coordinator for Emmanuel Covenant Community. He has been working with young people for eight years, in a number of different areas of Church life. He has also been a member of the Commission's Young Adult Sub-Committee. As well as all this, Luke was recently married. Our congratulations and best wishes go to Luke and Emma.



Catholic Jewish Subcommittee

This Sub-committee also welcomed a new member in Leo Bradley. Leo has had a keen interest in Judaism for some time and particularly in Jewish liturgical music.

The group has a busy year planned and that is well underway.

The Palm Sunday (20 March) edition of *The Catholic Leader* carried an article by Veronica Ross on the celebration of Passover. It pointed out that this is a uniquely Jewish celebration and should only be celebrated by Christians as guests of the Jewish community.

By way of follow-up to this, Cantor Garek Fysch of the Beit Knesset Shalom Synagogue at Camp Hill led a Demonstration Passover at St James Hall, Coorparoo on 13 April. Fifty people from Catholic parishes, schools and Archdiocesan offices were joined by members of the Synagogue and given a wonderful opportunity to experience the way members of the Jewish community celebrate Passover today. A visit to a synagogue is planned for later in the year.

Interfaith Subcommittee

The members of this group continue their work in providing in-service opportunities for teachers of Religious Education. Michael Chambers and Trish McGrath led an excellent workshop on "Nostra Aetate" (The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" – see Editorial) on 9 March as part of the Brisbane Catholic Education Religious Education In-service programme. A second event, focussed on the senior Studies of Religion syllabus will be held on 11 August.

Margaret Naylor

Catholic Muslim Subcommittee

Plans are underway for a number of events this year. These include a visit to a mosque and a guest speaker presentation. Keep a lookout on our website www.bne.catholic.net.au/ecum for further information.

POPE JOHN PAUL II TRIBUTES

The international response to the death of Pope John Paul II on 2 April has been truly amazing. Condolences have poured in from political leaders across the world as well as Heads of many Christian Churches and leaders of other faith traditions. Representatives of over 150 countries and many religious communities attended the funeral in St Peter's Square on 8 April. All this speaks volumes about the impact that John Paul II had on people of all political and religious persuasions and on the progress that has been made in building strong ecumenical and interfaith relations. Below are some samples of media reports, which highlight the late Pope's achievements in these areas.

From: National Catholic Reporter – The Obituary of Pope John Paul II by John L. Allen Jnr, 3 April 2005
<http://ncronline.org/>

John Paul was inarguably an ecumenical pope. His 1995 encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, is recognized as a charter of the movement for Christian unity. The pope's personal commitment to unity even sometimes pushed ahead of the theology; on several occasions, for example, he gave pectoral crosses to visiting Anglican bishops, even though technically Catholic theology does not recognize the validity of their ordinations.

John Paul reached out to the Orthodox more than the Reformation churches in the West. He spoke often of the need for Christianity to "breathe with both lungs." He made a special point of trying to improve relations with the Russian Orthodox Church, seeing it as the key to putting Eastern and Western Christianity back together again. His hopes were, however, largely dashed. The Orthodox apparently feared being swamped by papal primacy more than they welcomed doctrinal solidarity, and the pope's long-cherished dream of a trip to Moscow went unrealized.

When it came to non-Christianity religions, John Paul wanted good relations but not at the price of doctrinal confusion.... On the other hand, John Paul convened interreligious summits in Assisi three times, in 1986, 1993 and 2002. Each time he did so over stern opposition from conservatives, including some in the Vatican.

He also expanded the boundaries of Catholic doctrine on religious pluralism. Vatican II had been the first council to speak positively of other world religions, praising them for elements of "truth and grace" they contain. But the council did not explain how those elements of truth and grace got there, whether they reflected divine inspiration or were simply the fruits of a human search for God. John Paul opted firmly for the first solution, speaking dozens of times about how the Holy Spirit works in and through all of humanity's religious systems. The pope's record on this point is an enormous, and little-appreciated, contribution to Catholic theology.

From: Houston Chronicle – John Paul II changed the Papacy by Tara Dooley, 2 April 2005 www.chron.com/



Some observers consider John Paul's ecumenical and interfaith efforts to be his most important contributions to church history.

"Despite (his) broad conservatism, he has ... initiated the single most important change in the history of Christian religion, which is the reconciliation between Christians and Jews," said James Carroll, a

Catholic and author of *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews: A History*.

The change began with the Second Vatican Council's document *Nostra Aetate*, which recommended mutual understanding and respect and insisted that Jews "should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God."

During John Paul's pontificate, this former priest who had grown up around Jewish families and lived in Nazi-occupied Poland made historic overtures to the Jewish

community, said Rabbi A. James Rudin of the American Jewish Committee. "It was clear he was bringing to this not just his head but his heart," said Rudin.

In 1986, John Paul became the first pope on record since St Peter to enter a synagogue, where he declared that Jews had an "irrevocable covenant with God." He visited the Auschwitz concentration camp, established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1994 and asked for forgiveness for Christians who did not do enough to impede the slaughter of Jews during the Holocaust. In 2000, he went to Jerusalem's Western Wall, offering a piece of paper with a prayer for forgiveness and friendship.

"He will occupy a permanent place of esteem in Jewish history," Rudin said. "He took the paper of the Second Vatican Council and gave it life, gave it legitimacy."

John Paul hosted peace conferences of religious leaders, and in 2001 in Syria became the first pope on record to visit a mosque.

From: Anglican Communion News Service 8 April 2005, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/>

For Australians, the co-Chair of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) and a member of the International Anglican Roman Catholic Commission on Unity and Mission (IARCCUM), Archbishop Peter Carnley, Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, said he would remember the Pope as a person of profound spirituality and Christian conviction, and as a steady friend

and supporter of ecumenical work. "John Paul II," he said "was realistically aware of the challenges to overcome, but took the adventurous step in his encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* to invite other Churches to suggest ways in which his papal office might be made more amenable to other Christians."

POPE JOHN PAUL II TRIBUTES

From: The Lutheran World Federation – Lutheran World Information www.lutheranworld.org/News, Geneva, 16 October 2003 (LWI)

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the pontificate of Pope John Paul II today, Bishop Mark S. Hanson, president of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has commended the Pope's significant contributions to the ecumenical movement, and urged that the day be marked by "committing ourselves to pray and work for justice and peace in the world, and greater understanding among people."

In a statement issued today, Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, cites the pontiff's personal support for the October 1999 signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) between the LWF and Roman Catholic Church. He commends the Vatican's commitment to making the JDDJ "come alive" in congregations through prayer and study between Roman Catholics and Lutherans.

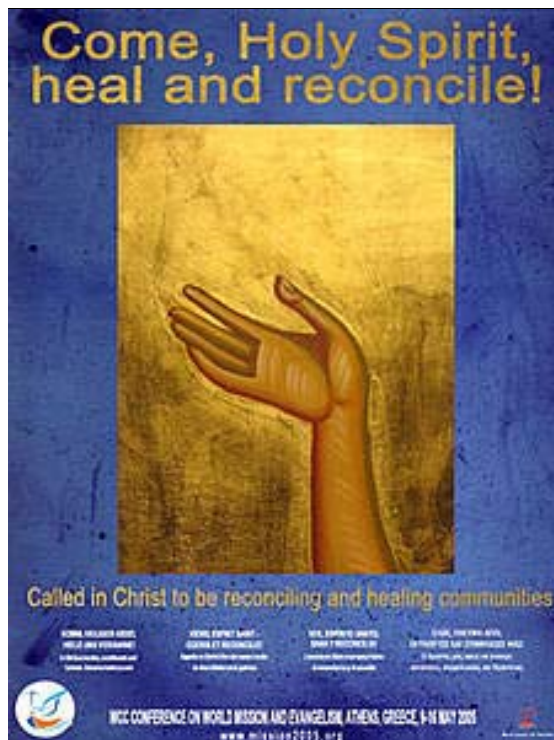
MAJOR ECUMENICAL EVENT:

THE CONFERENCE ON WORLD MISSION AND EVANGELISM

To be held in Athens at the invitation of the Church of Greece, this is a major international meeting of more than 500 representatives from all continents and all major churches and denominations. Scheduled to take place from 9-16 May 2005, the conference is being organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The main aim of the conference is to provide a space for Christians and churches to exchange their experience and think together about priorities in mission and the future of Christian witness. The conference seeks to empower participants to continue to form healing communities in celebration and witness, reconciliation and forgiveness.

The theme of the conference "Come Holy Spirit, heal and



reconcile!" is a reminder that this mission does not belong to us, but is the mission of God, who is present and active as Holy Spirit in church and world.

Coming from WCC member churches and the Roman Catholic Church as well as Pentecostal and Evangelical churches and bodies, the participants include young people, women and men working at the frontiers of Christian witness, church and mission leaders, theologians and missiologists.

There have been 12 such ecumenical mission conferences since 1910. This will be the first time such a conference is held in a predominantly Orthodox context.

Website: www.mission2005.org



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www.bne.catholic.net.au/ecum/newsletter2.php

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BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

Every second year the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations, part of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, arranges a conference for all the Diocesan Commissions. Normally it is hosted by a capital city, however this year it was decided to divide the Commissions into five groupings. Brisbane hosted the other Queensland dioceses.

The Queensland gathering was held at the Fr Kevin Aspinall Centre, Upper Mount Gravatt, commencing on the evening of Friday, 18 March and continuing on Saturday, 19 March 2005. Participation consisted of delegations from Brisbane, Rockhampton Toowoomba and Townsville, including Bishops Brian Finnigan and Brian Heenan.

The opening address on the Friday evening was presented by Mons. John A Radano of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Western Section). Mons. Radano was visiting Brisbane at the invitation of Archbishop Bathurst (see report page 6-8). This was a public lecture and dealt with the history and current status of dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches.

Saturday began with prayer prepared and led by the Rockhampton Commission.

Fr Gerard Kelly of the Catholic Institute of Sydney presented two sessions on the National Covenant signed at the NCCA Forum in Adelaide in July last year. The first session, entitled *"The Catholic Church and the Australian Covenant"*, provided a very clear synopsis of the history and development of the Covenant and its multi-lateral, multi-dimensional character. It stressed its significance as an agreement between *churches* and as a public acknowledgement of the communion which already exists.

The second session, *"Keeping the Covenant Alive"*, focused on the implications of the Covenant, both at national and local level. It highlighted the importance of Part C of the document in providing the invitation to

explore further means of cooperation. The Covenant dimensions, especially of mutual recognition and common certificates for baptism were raised as practical initiatives to take forward. Those present welcomed the opportunity to explore some of these issues with Fr Gerard.

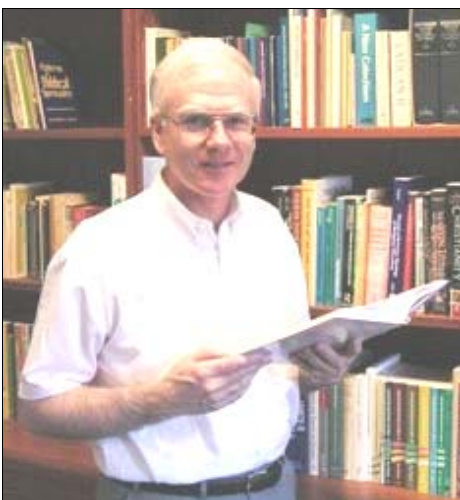
Della Lopez, Margaret Cox and Robin Tweney then shared the story of the Stanley River Covenant. They told of some of the difficulties encountered, but mostly of the joys experienced in working together. Their talk reinforced the notion that covenants were possible at local level and provided considerable encouragement.

The after-lunch session was an opportunity for the four dioceses to share what has been happening, particularly in the Interfaith area, and to learn from each other's experiences. Reports from each Diocese on both ecumenical and interfaith involvement were presented. This time of sharing was welcomed by all and considered extremely valuable.

Margaret Naylor



Della Lopez, Robin Tweney and Margaret Cox (from Stanley River) at the Biennial Conference



Fr Gerard Kelly



Delegates at the Biennial Conference: (from left) Matthew Quaiffe-Ryan (Rockhampton), Len Horner (Townsville), John Browning and Jane O'Shea (Rockhampton), Sr Patricia Blundell (Brisbane), Kathy Shanahan (Toowoomba)

MONS. JOHN A. RADANO VISITS BRISBANE

From Monday, 14 March to Friday, 18 March this year Brisbane was privileged to have the presence of Mons. John A. Radano to deliver a series of talks on a number of the international dialogues between the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian Churches. Mons. Radano is head of the Western Section of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and is specifically responsible for the Roman Catholic Church's relations with the Reformed (World Alliance of Reformed Churches) and co-secretary of that dialogue. He is co-chairman of the international Dialogue with Pentecostals, and also principal liaison person between the PCPCU and the Faith and Order Commission of World Council of Churches. What follows is a summary of those talks.

"A General Overview of Ecumenism Today from a Catholic Perspective" (14 March)

Mons. Radano's first presentation gave an overview of the state of ecumenical endeavours today, particularly regarding the Catholic Church. Christians have always had difficulty in maintaining unity – from the earliest, St Paul's letters tell us this.

Our divisions are a burden to our Christian witness to the world.

The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity works within the Catholic Church to raise the awareness of Catholics to ecumenical issues, gives priority to ecumenical formation within the Church, provides an information service, works with Bishops' Conferences, and seeks responses from clergy and laity on various ecumenical issues.

Outside the Catholic Church, the Council works with other denominations in dialogues, provides common witness by entering into the life of other Christian Churches through invitations to important functions, joint studies of history and so on.

International dialogue involves the Catholic Church both bilaterally (with one other Church) and multi-laterally (with a number of other churches.)

At present the Catholic Church is involved in eighteen bilateral dialogues.

Mons. Radano spoke on some of the more recent achievements in the ecumenical movement that involved the Catholic Church:

- A new relationship between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches,
- Some agreement on the Faith Order Document on Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (a multi-lateral dialogue with the World Council of Churches),
- Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran and Catholic Churches,
- The establishment of Pentecostal-Catholic and Evangelistic-Catholic dialogues,
- A model for the healing of historic memories through the Mennonite-Catholic dialogue,
- And in the Anglican-Catholic dialogue an ARCIC document on Mary to be published soon.

Some new ecumenical developments in the 21st Century include:

- Changes to the World Council of Churches,
- The formation of a global Christian forum,
- The reconfiguration of the ecumenical movement to provide funding for similar projects within various denominations, given that the Christian 'map' is changing.

Mons. Radano concluded by saying "in the 21st Century we share degrees of unity, which are not perfect, but are on the way." Quoting Pope John Paul II, he said, "From unity in diversity, we seek unity in the apostolic faith. Our ultimate goal is full, visible unity among all the churches in God's kingdom."

Hilary Scarce

The Relationship Between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (15 March)

Approximately forty people gathered at the McAuley Campus of Australian Catholic University on Tuesday, 15 March to hear Mons. Radano address the topic of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Mons. Radano's talk was focused around five topics: an overview of contacts between the Catholic Church and the WCC, the question of membership of the Catholic Church in the WCC, the joint working group between the Catholic Church and the WCC, the studies and activities of the Faith and Order Commission and finally, the renewal of the WCC in the twenty-first century.

In his overview of the contacts between the Catholic Church and the WCC, Mons. Radano treated the 'pre-history' of relations from John XXIII's establishment of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity to WCC observers at the Second Vatican Council and Catholic observers at the WCC assembly in India. He then briefly

discussed the building of relationships during and after the Council.

Regarding membership of the WCC (the Catholic Church is not a full member of the WCC), Mons. Radano talked about two serious theological and profound problems. Firstly, the WCC is a fellowship of national members whereas the Catholic Church is universal and different in structure to the members of the WCC. Secondly, the size of the Catholic Church presents a problem: it is twice as large as the 347 members together. Its proper representation, then, would need serious deliberation. It was noted, however, that the Catholic Church is more involved than are many member churches.

Mons. Radano then discussed the workings of the consultative forum between the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity with particular reference to its shared studies in the last six years.

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MONS. JOHN A. RADANO VISITS BRISBANE (continued)

The Relationship Between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (15 March)

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The significance of the 1982 Faith and Order document 'Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry' (BEM) featured in his discussion on the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. In particular, Mons. Radano spoke of the regard with which John Paul II held this document for ecumenical dialogue.

Finally, Mons. Radano discussed the renewal of the WCC in the twenty-first century. He informed us that a special commission has been established to look at participation

of the Orthodox churches. This commission has been established to deal with the suggestion that the WCC is 'western' and decidedly protestant in its ethos.

In a little over an hour, Mons. Radano provided a fascinating survey of the WCC and the developing and active role of the Catholic Church in relationship with it.

Michael Chambers

Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue (16 March)

Mons. Radano presented an outline of the history and current status of Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue since the Second Vatican Council at the Aspinall Centre, St Bernard's Parish, Upper Mount Gravatt.

The first renewal of contact between the two Churches commenced with the invitation issued by John XXIII to the World Lutheran Federation to send observers to the Second Vatican Council. Lutheran theologians and pastors were among the group of observer Churches that had representation at each session of the Council. A number of these theologians and pastors made a significant contribution to Council documents through participation with some of the Roman Catholic Bishops in the study sessions that were held in the evenings outside of the Council itself and in the discussions held between sessions. Through their mutual sharing with the Roman Catholic Bishops they introduced changes in language to the documents on ecumenism, on the Church and religious freedom.

Since that period a vigorous dialogue has been ongoing between Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches. Subjects for dialogue have included authority in the Church, ministry in the Church, the primacy of the Bishop of Rome and justification. In 1998 the two Churches reached an agreement on justification and signed the Joint Declaration at Augsburg in 1999, bringing to a conclusion one of the most central disputes of the Reformation era.

Dialogue between the Churches continues on a number of fronts. One of the great signs of the increased sense of common purpose has been a joint invitation from the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches to enter into dialogue on the Joint Declaration on Justification and other elements of potential agreement. Each of the agreed statements, and now joint invitation to work toward common purposes, are signs of hope on the journey toward full visible unity between the Churches.

Anthony Gooley

Dialogue between the Roman Catholic and Reformed Churches (17 March)

Representing 200 churches and 76 million people worldwide, it is understandable that Mons. Radano described the WARC – World Alliance of Reformed Churches – as an 'Ecumenical movement in itself.'

After 400 years of separation, Presbyterian observers were present at some of the sessions of Vatican II but it was not until 1970 that approaches were made to the WARC to begin more formal discussions.

As with dialogues with churches of other Protestant traditions, Mons. Radano stressed the need for both the Roman Catholic representatives and those of WARC to 'do history together'. Only through a process of 'review and reassessment' can there be a healing of memories so that together we can proclaim Christ to the world.

After Pope John Paul II's visit to Scotland in 1982 and subsequent talks with the Presbyterian Church, a statement was issued overturning points from the Westminster Conference and the Heidelberg Confessions on matters of interchurch marriage, monastic life and the place of the Mass in the Roman Catholic tradition. It was acknowledged that the views expressed in these documents do not reflect current Roman Catholic teaching and are no longer valid.

Using the Christian church of the Patristic era as a model, both WARC and Roman Catholic representatives have found points of convergence on the nature and purpose of church. The church as a 'Creature of the Word' and as 'a sacrament of grace' have been recognised by both churches. One of the key issues of the Reformation – Justification – has also been discussed. Mons. Radano indicated that WARC is investigating the possibility of a joint declaration with the Catholic Lutheran statement on this issue.

The place of the church in the world and recognition of Christ as mediator are points of convergence in both traditions through which WARC and the Roman Catholic churches can be a common witness to the Kingdom of God.

Trish McGrath

MONS. JOHN A. RADANO VISITS BRISBANE (continued)

Dialogue with Evangelicals and
Pentecostals (18 March)

A little known and appreciated ecumenical endeavour was a particular feature of the talks presented by Monsignor Radano. The Monsignor addressed the dialogues that have taken place between Catholics and Evangelical and Pentecostal churches since Vatican II. It may surprise some to hear that at the international level of dialogues the Catholic Church first engaged with Pentecostal churches in 1972 and Evangelical churches in 1977. More recently a dialogue was initiated with World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance) in 1993.

The respective partners in these dialogues have not always lived easily with each other. There have been prejudices on both sides. However, the dialogues between these various churches over the last forty years have grown in mutual understanding and appreciation of the many aspects of faith they have in common. The Pentecostal – Roman Catholic International dialogue has gone through five phases since 1972 around issues like: confessional identity, the relationship between faith and experience, communion and evangelisation.

Similarly the Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue has addressed the areas of mission, evangelisation and communion.

There was much more of interest in the Monsignor's address. However, he concluded by addressing a particularly hopeful emerging feature of international ecumenical dialogue. The emergence of the Global Christian Forum looks toward forging greater unity between a greater number of Christian churches and communities in the 21st century. This Forum is seeking to bring the Christians together from around the world to in a more informal atmosphere. This is not to exclude the need for rigorous dialogue. Rather, it is to create an open space in which representatives can gather to foster mutual respect and explore and address together common challenges.

The ecumenical spirit is very much alive!

Fr David Pascoe



Sr Beryl Amedee, Sr Patricia Blundell, Mons. John Radano and Bishop Joseph Oudeman at the talks

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QUEENSLAND CHURCHES TOGETHER

GENERAL COUNCIL MEETING, 5 MARCH 2005

Worship in the chapel was led jointly by the Religious Society of Friends and the Queensland Congregational Fellowship. Seating was arranged to simulate as closely as possible the Meeting of Worship of the Religious Society of Friends and the service included a twenty-minute segment of silent prayer.

President, Bishop Richard Appleby, invited Mrs Joan Hendriks to open the meeting with an acknowledgement of the original owners of the land. After welcoming the delegates he then asked the General Secretary, Ms Glenine Hamlyn, to introduce the Guest Speaker, Dr Pradip Thomas, Associate Professor at the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland.

The title of Professor Thomas' address was "Ecumenism, Fundamentalism and the Media". His main points were:

- Any kind of fundamentalism – religious, political, military, etc. – is something to be wary of. It is vital to deal with the intolerance it breeds.
- Christian fundamentalism is opposed to secularism and liberalism; it advocates the inerrancy of scripture, pre-milleniumism, and "the rapture"; it uses scripture selectively, especially the Matthew verses about the end times. It is self-referential.
- Christian fundamentalists advocate triumphalism and also try to infiltrate and influence politics.
- These groups, e.g. televangelists in the U.S., use the media very effectively to sell a way of life – the marketing of Paradise. Salvation to all believers; damnation to all others.

Why are Christians worldwide turning from the mainstream churches?

- These haven't challenged the fundamentalists but have copied their methods, offering more of the same but without having the financial backing, the political will or the technical resources. Televangelism gives legitimacy to fundamentalism.
- There is a lack of self-criticism and an accommodation of ultraconservatives within their congregations. (The NCC in India has not been critical of Christian fundamentalists. This has led to exclusiveness in ecumenical and interfaith relations.)
- Hierarchical centralisation has resulted in a separation between mainstream religions and the people; it takes time for teaching to filter down to grass roots.

In conclusion Professor Thomas questioned the wisdom of granting religious community radio licences. Religious broadcasting is good, but licences? There is a connection between religious broadcasting and politics.

Rev. John Woodley gave a response to the address from an Australian perspective.

- A common theme in religious, political, military fundamentalism is the worldview that is threatening – the Them/Us view – which sees the only solution as being within our own group. Exclusive instead of inclusive.
- The ecumenical worldview sees the world as God's gift – how can we include?

- In Australia there are no large, well-resourced right wing groups but small, loose groups do exist e.g. League of Rights, and there is a link between them and politics.

To critique fundamentalism:

- there is a need to create awareness; e.g. study groups, Sunday School, retreats, seminars, workshops, dissemination of theological leaflets, literature (WCC 2004 Resource Guide, "Transformative Justice", Marion Maddox's "God Under Howard");
- a need for clergy to be courageous;
- media literacy necessary to change attitudes.

The speakers were well received and a lively question time followed.

Constitution

Policy issues and plans for incorporation were deferred to later in the meeting and it was hoped that suggestions would be forthcoming that could be taken to the AGM.

Churches Together Indigenous People's Partnership (CTIPP)

Joan Hendriks spoke to her written report with particular mention of the immersion short course in Indigenous Life and Traditions at Uniting Church's Trinity Theological College, which has attracted an increase in numbers of participants. The focus of CTIPP's work will continue to be Reconciliation.

There is a Memorandum of Understanding between NATCIEC and NCCA for the planning of a pilgrimage next year to celebrate the anniversary of the Pope's visit to Alice Springs.

Peter Arndt of the Justice and Peace Commission, in support of Joan's work, spoke of a mentoring programme, which they hope will be in place in May. Funding is an on-going problem. The Queensland Government has promised \$10,000 this year to the Reconciliation initiative – which is welcome but still not enough.

Christian World Service (CWS)

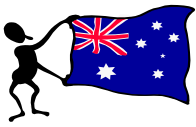
Michele Knight gave her usual professional PowerPoint presentation of her written report. She made special mention of the decision to close Force 10. This has been an amicable decision because of the competition for the donor dollar between the many voluntary agencies worldwide. Donors to Force 10 have been offered the option of contributing to Caritas or CWS (or both). These agencies will continue to carry on the tradition of Force 10.

Emmaus Network

Sean Cleary, Project Officer with the QCT initiative, Emmaus Refugee Network, presented his report, which showed that three of the proposed five refugee support groups are operating in varying degrees of development. An additional group has grown out of Michele Knight's work with the Refugees and Displaced People programme.

Funding for the project has been confirmed for three years – 2004 to 2006 inclusive. It has been decided that Sean will proceed with the work one day per week.

Veronica Ross



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA

MATTERS OF INTEREST FROM THE NCCA EXECUTIVE MEETING MARCH 2005

The first NCCA executive meeting for 2005 was held at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in Canberra where Rev. James Haire, the NCCA president, is director. The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture is located on a 6 hectares site with a panoramic view of Lake Burley Griffin.

SOME KEY ISSUES FROM THE MEETING

Role of the NCCA: The relationship between the role of the NCCA and that of State and local ecumenical bodies continues to be an issue, especially when the NCCA is working within tight financial constraints. Obviously functions such as responding to Federal Government policy are best carried out at national level, but what about other areas, such as Social Justice? Many Churches have denominational bodies working at the local level in this field. Is this doubling-up a waste of resources? Would the work be best done ecumenically and nationally?

Incorporation of Christian World Service: As the result of new advice from Government agencies, the separate incorporation of CWS, which was agreed to in principal at the Forum last July, is being reconsidered. Many member Churches were uncomfortable about the move, but agreed to it when informed that it was required by the Government for funding and accreditation.

Welcome to Country: NATSIEC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission) has requested that a Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country be included at the beginning of all Church events.

A 'Welcome to Country' or 'Traditional Welcome' is where the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custodians of the region (usually the Elders) welcome people to their land.

If it is not possible to arrange a Traditional Welcome, a simple acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians by other speakers is appropriate as a sign of respect and gesture of reconciliation. NATSIEC offers two examples of wording to be used: "I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place", and "I acknowledge that we are standing on the land of the [Gadigal] people of the [Eora] nation who have been custodians of this area for thousands of years." To find out the name of the traditional custodians of your area, contact your local Aboriginal Land Council.

Dialogue on Interfaith Cooperation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 6-7 December 2004: The General Secretary, Rev. John Henderson, reported on this dialogue, which brought together 140 participants from 14 Asian, Micronesian, and South Pacific nations.

"As Australians we were seated, in alphabetical order, next to Brunei. Malaysia was the only country notably

absent. The dialogue proved to be a rich tapestry of experiences, conversations, and interactions. Considering the first time nature of the meeting and the restrictions some delegations were under, the meeting went very well and there were some excellent exchanges. The official government line for the dialogue was 'empowering the moderates', but it was evident that the meeting was not entirely going to be told who it was or what it was to say. There are hints from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and others that this was not a 'one-off' and the government will be planning further events. Those of us involved adopted the view we should support and help the government in its effort, and make sure the Christian community, and its churches, remain involved."

forceten: *forceten* has been a joint giving programme shared between CWS and the Catholic agency *Caritas*. The programme predates the existence of the NCCA and was a sign of ecumenical co-operation. Now it has been decided to wind-up *forceten* and this will happen at the end of 2005. CWS is preparing to launch its own monthly giving programme, which will be offered to existing donors to *forceten*. *Caritas* has done the same.

And leaving the best news until last: The meeting was informed of a resolution that had been passed at the Anglican General Synod in October 2004. The Synod welcomed the Second Report of the Anglican-Lutheran Dialogue and adopted the text of a covenant between the two Churches which includes this statement: *We believe that the agreement in faith and order we have reached is sufficient basis for regional agreements for Eucharistic hospitality and recognition of ministry. Under this covenant each church may invite and welcome the members of the other church in a particular locality to share in Holy Communion and to receive pastoral care according to need.*

This agreement represents a wonderful step forward in ecumenical understanding in Australia.

Elizabeth Harrington
Elected Member, NCCA Executive

STOP PRESS:

Columban Father Patrick McInerney will speak on "Christians and Muslims Living Together" on Friday, 1 July 2005 at 7:00pm at the Aspinall Centre, Upper Mount Gravatt. See our website for details.



WORLD NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

Ecumenical News International, is an independent news agency covering religious, ecumenical and humanitarian affairs. ENI is an Association under Swiss law whose members include the World Council of Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Conference of European Churches. It produces a daily e-mail bulletin containing summaries of its articles. Below are some interesting stories reported in the past few months

24 FEB 2005: Russian church mulls setting up Orthodox TV channel

Moscow (ENI): In an undertaking that could never have been talked about during Soviet Communist Party rule, the Russian Orthodox Church is considering setting up a general television channel in Russia, a senior church official has said. "Already the volume of Orthodox programming is enough to fill the airtime of a major cable or satellite channel," the Rev. Vsevolod Chaplin, deputy chairman of the external relations department of the church's Moscow Patriarchate this month told the Russian daily newspaper Kommersant. He said having a broadcasting medium espousing the values of Orthodoxy was on the horizon. [435 words, ENI-05-0117]

6 APRIL 2005: Christian unity should serve peace, justice; not institutions says Kobia

Hong Kong (ENI): Churches need to find new ways of demonstrating unity in a world of change where the focus of Christianity is shifting to the Southern Hemisphere, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Samuel Kobia, has said in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The purpose of promoting closer Christian unity in the world "is not to serve its own interests and those of institutional structures of the churches, but to serve the causes of justice and peace in the world", Kobia said. [470 words, ENI-05-0240]

7 APRIL 2005: Orthodox Church leaders look to improved relations with Vatican

Warsaw (ENI): The head of the Russian Orthodox Church has said after the death of Pope John Paul II that he hopes for improved relations with the Roman Catholic Church. "A new period is now opening in the Catholic church's life, in which there is a possibility of mutually respectful relations and brotherly Christian love between our churches," Patriarch Alexei II said in a letter sent to Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, who under John Paul II was dean of the College of Cardinals. [641 words, ENI-05-0245]

21 APRIL 2005: World Council of Churches' Kobia queries Annan's security plan

Geneva (ENI): The leader of the world's largest grouping of churches, the Rev. Samuel Kobia, has told UN Secretary General Kofi Annan that he disagrees with some of his security proposals to reform the United Nations. Kobia said the World Council of Churches of which he is general secretary was concerned about suggestions that the UN charter allowed countries to take pre-emptive military action without reference to the UN Security Council. [461 words, ENI-05-0293]

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YOUNG CATHOLIC WOMEN'S INTERFAITH FELLOWSHIP

On the occasion of the World Day of Prayer, Friday, 4 March 2005, the Commission for Australian Catholic Women announced the establishment of Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship, which will identify and train key individuals to take a leadership role in promoting interfaith relations.

The Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship programme means that ten young Catholic women will be given academic and skills training in Interfaith Relations in 2006 to equip them for leadership in Interfaith Relations. The value of each Fellowship is \$12,000.

Mrs Geraldine Hawkes, Chair of the Commission for Australian Catholic Women says *"The gifts of young Catholic women are necessary for the Church in Australia to come to a more profound understanding of itself and its role in contemporary Australia. The CACW Women's Interfaith Fellowship, through a process of education and formation, will enable young Catholic women to become skilled in leadership, theology and the principles of interfaith relations. Women are especially gifted in forming and nurturing relationships with people from a variety of*

life experiences. CACW wishes to ensure that these gifts are encouraged and nourished and that young women be supported in leading the work of building religious understanding and peaceful coexistence in our church and in our world."

The Fellowship is comprised of: an academic course of study resulting in a Graduate Certificate in Interfaith Relations delivered through Australian Catholic University, Canberra campus; skills development in interfaith dialogue as well as media relations; ongoing engagement in Interfaith Relations; personal and group reflection and processing of course content, skilling and engagement.

For more information contact the Secretariat for the Commission for Australian Catholic Women by e-mail at admin@cacw.catholic.org.au or phone 02 6201 9864.

(Reprinted from *Catholic Women's Weekly*, the e-mail bulletin of the Commission for Australian Catholic Women. To subscribe, contact the above address.)

THE ANGLICAN BUSH CHURCH AID SOCIETY

I work part time for the Bush Church Aid Society, which is an Anglican Church mission organisation, which works solely within Australia seeking to serve people who live in remote and isolated places. It began in 1919, (the same year as Qantas). The work of the society has changed according to the needs of people over the years. It was involved with a considerable amount of medical work in the early days (until the Government nationalised all medical work), especially along the trans continental railway route – Tarcoola, Cook, Ceduna, Wudinna, Coober Pedy etc. The first flying parson based at Wilcannia and the Flying Doctor based at Ceduna were part of BCA's ministry.

My job involves lots of travel, and earlier this year I was invited to speak about the work of BCA at the Uniting Church in Jandowae. Those who were part of the meetings were from the Anglican, Uniting, Catholic and Assembly of God churches – real ecumenical gatherings. This would be true in many areas where BCA works; for example, in Lightning Ridge the BCA supported Anglican minister is the only resident Christian minister in the town so the church is the focal point for all those interested in Christianity. The church is called Lightning Ridge

Community church. Visiting ministers from other denominations do visit and conduct services at other times. In Leigh Creek, South Australia, the Anglican and Uniting Church ministers work together in planning visits to properties seeking to ensure each is visited without duplication. Roxby Downs also has a Community church, made up of many different denominations. An article by the clergy for the local paper is contributed alternately by the Anglican and Catholic ministers. In the West Darling (Broken Hill area) the Uniting church has a plane and they take the BCA pastor with them when they go visiting properties, working co-operatively. On Flinders Island once a month the Anglican and Catholic communities meet after their services and share morning tea together. In Winton the Uniting Church provide the vehicle and some infrastructure and the Anglican Church provide the Minister.

These are just a few examples of ecumenism in action in our sparsely populated country areas, making better use of personnel and resources. May it long continue!

Mrs Ruth Blackburn.
St John's Anglican Church Wishart

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