

BITS & PIECES 185

APRIL 25TH 2024

FROM MICHAEL GILL

I'M HAVING A HOLIDAY IN JAPAN. THE NEXT EDITION WILL BE ON MAY 23RD.

**CONTRIBUTIONS MOST WELCOME.
READ AS LITTLE OR AS MUCH AS YOU WISH.**

Highlighting is mine

If any link does not open, cut and paste into your browser

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BATOR IN AUSTRALIA



Catalyst for Renewal, in cooperation with North Sydney Catholic parish,
is pleased to welcome you to a public forum

Becoming synodal people: forming clergy and laity

AGBONKHIANMEGHE E. OROBATOR SJ
with **MC GERALDINE DOOGUE AO**
and panellists **SANDIE CORNISH** and **PAUL MONKERUD**



SUNDAY 26TH MAY 2024

7.15pm – 8.45pm

RON DYER CENTRE, 42 RIDGE ST, NORTH SYDNEY

and via livestream: <https://vimeo.com/event/4232342/085d036ff2>

Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orabator SJ is dean of Santa Clara University's Jesuit School of Theology, a delegate to the Synod on Synodality and a leading theological voice in ecclesiology, ethics, human rights, human dignity, and the participation of women in the life of the church.

Sandie Cornish is senior lecturer in theology at Australian Catholic University, theological advisor for the Australian Catholic Church Fifth Plenary Council and expert and facilitator at the Synod on Synodality.

Paul Monkerud is Liverpool parish priest, apostolic vicar of Western Region of the Archdiocese of Sydney and former chair of the Ongoing Formation of Clergy Committee.

Geraldine Doogue AO is renowned Australian journalist, broadcaster, and host of Plenary Matters podcast.

All Welcome – No Booking required – Entry by Donation

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W: www.catalystforrenewal.org.au

You can also find us on Instagram at [#catalystforrenewalaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/catalystforrenewalaustralia)

THURSDAY MAY 23RD 5PM - 6.30 PM

AT NEWMAN COLLEGE AND RECORDED

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

A PUBLIC FORUM FROM SENSE OF THE FAITHFUL AND NEWMAN COLLEGE

Lecture, discussion and Q&A

23 May 5 pm-6.30 pm at Newman College, University of Melbourne

Register Now to ensure you have a seat.

<https://www.trybooking.com/CQLKM>

Recording: <https://www.senseofthefaithful.org.au/>

FRIDAY MAY 24TH ST IGNATIUS CHURCH TOOWONG

7.30pm to 9.00pm and Webcast

SYNODALITY AND THE LIFE OF THE PARISH

A PANEL AND DISCUSSION FROM TOOWONG PARISH

A Panel with **Orm Rush** (priest of Townville Diocese and Associate Professor of Religion and Theology at the ACU) and **Maeve Heaney VDMF** (consecrated member of the Verbum Dei Community and Director of the Xavier Centre for Theological Formation at the ACU)

SUNDAY MAY 26TH 7.15PM RON DYER CENTRE NORTH

SYDNEY PARISH and LIVE Webcast

**BECOMING SYNODAL PEOPLE; FORMING CLERGY
AND LAITY.**

**A DISCUSSION AND LIVE WEBCAST FROM NORTH
SYDNEY PARISH AND CATALYST FOR RENEWAL**

SEE REGISTRATION FLYER ABOVE

**MONDAY MAY 27TH 7.15PM ONLINE FROM ACCCR 3.30PM
TO 5PM**

**“TOWARDS PROMOTING THEOLOGY” WHAT DOES
IT MEAN FOR US?**

A WEBCAST FROM ACCCR AND GARRETT PUBLISHING

Pearls and Irritations
John Menadue's Public Policy Journal

POPE FIRES WARNING SHOT TO CHURCH LEADERS WHO WOULD DEFY VATICAN II

By [David Timbs](#)
Apr 21, 2024



The neo-traditionalists have been sent a clear message by Pope Francis that their dismissal of synodality, and their disruptive behaviour do violence to the very nature of the Church itself and thereby damage the Reign of God.

For Pope Francis, synodality is ‘one of the most precious legacies of the Second Vatican Council’ and the most authentic way for the People of God to receive and implement what Vatican II envisioned.

In October 2015, when Francis told the synodal assembly that ‘synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers the most appropriate interpretive framework for the self-understanding of the Church itself, he called on all Catholics to embrace a synodal way of thinking and acting as the path ‘which God expects of the Church of the third millennium’.

Since then, Francis has expanded the composition of the Synod of Bishops to include 70 ‘non-ordained’ members with full voting rights to ensure that the true nature of the Universal Church is properly represented: ‘not some of the bishops some of the time but all of the Church all of the time’.

READ ON:

<https://johnmenadue.com/pope-fires-warning-shot-to-church-leaders-who-would-defy-vatican-ii/>

FROM BOB HINKLEY

Here's a link to my recent radio appearance on community radio in Geelong.

I discuss (beginning at 11:37 and ending at 25:11) the recent decision of the European Court of Human Rights Court (ECHR) in Strasbourg where Switzerland was:

1. held responsible for not doing enough to meet its international commitments to stopping global warming and climate change, and
2. ordered to rectify the situation, which the court characterized as a violation of human rights.

The ECHR is a body of the 46 member states European Council (comprised of the 27 member states of the European Union and 19 other countries). The decision was 16 to one and should have far ranging impact not just in Europe, but elsewhere.

Importantly, the Court did not consider the effects of its decision on the economy thus giving human rights precedence to economic considerations. In effect, it said that Switzerland (and all of the Council's member states) must meet their climate and human rights obligations regardless of the effect on the economy.

This may seem odd after four decades or more of the world protecting the economy above all else but, when you think about it, it makes sense. The environment and human rights are just two things which should be protected from severe harm regardless of the effects on the economy. Another is the public health and safety.

My Code for Corporate Citizenship follows this principle. We expect companies to make money, but they should never do so at the expense of severe damage to the environment or human rights.

Here's the link: <https://climatesafety.info/thesustainablehour499/>.

Bob

FROM RICHARD JOHN BAILEY: MARIST BROTHERS PARRAMATTA CLASS OF '47

Earth's Population Statistics in Perspective

The population of Earth is around 7.8 Billion. For most people, it is a significant figure. However, if you condensed 7.8 billion into 100 persons, and then into various percentage statistics, the resulting analysis is relatively much easier to comprehend.

Out of 100:

11 are in Europe

5 are in North America

9 are in South America

15 are in Africa

60 are in Asia

49 live in the countryside

51 live in a city,

75 have mobile phones

25 do not.

30 have internet access

70 do not have the availability to go online

83 can read
17 are illiterate.

33 are Christians
22 are Muslims
14 are Hindus
7 are Buddhists
12 are other religions
12 have no religious beliefs.

26 live less than 14 years
66 die between 15 - 64 years of age
8 are over 65 years old.

If you have your own home, Eat full meals & drink clean water,
Have a mobile phone, Can surf the internet, and have gone to
college, You are in the minuscule privileged lot.
(in the less than 7% category)

Amongst 100 persons in the world, only eight live or exceed the
age of 65!

If you are over 65 years old, be content & grateful Cherish life.
Grasp the moment.
If you did not leave this world before the age of 64, like the 92
persons who have gone before you,
you are already the blessed amongst humankind.
Take good care of your health. Cherish every remaining
moment.

If you think you are suffering memory loss, read on.

Anosognosia, very interesting:

In the following analysis, the French Professor Bruno Dubois,
Director of the Institute of Memory and Alzheimer's Disease

(IMMA) at La Pitié-Salpêtrière - Paris Hospital addresses the subject in a rather reassuring way:

"If anyone is aware of their memory problems, they do not have Alzheimer's."

1. forget the names of families.
2. do not remember where I put some things .

It often happens in people 60 years and older that they complain that they lack memory.

"The information is always in the brain, it is the "processor" that is lacking."

This is "Anosognosia" or temporary forgetfulness.

Half of people 60 and older have some symptoms that are due to age rather than disease. The most common cases are:

- forgetting the name of a person,
- going to a room in the house and not remembering why we were going there,
- a blank memory for a movie title or actor, an actress,
- a waste of time searching where we left our glasses or keys.

After 60 years most people have such a difficulty, which indicates that it is not a disease but rather a characteristic due to the passage of years .

Many people are concerned about these oversights hence the importance of the following statements:

1. "Those who are conscious of being forgetful have no serious problem of memory."

2. "Those who suffer from a memory illness or Alzheimer's are not aware of what is happening."

- your brain is in perfect shape!
- you are far from having any relationship with Alzheimer's.

We are truly blessed, So, share this with your over-55 friends, it can reassure them.

In any case, if you are over 65 and complaining about a few aches and pains, think again

..... 92% of people didn't even get that opportunity!!

NORTH SYDNEY PARISH



Many parishioners joined Fr Quyen Vu SJ as he joined with our Jesuit Community, presiding at the 6pm Mass at St Mary's on Sunday 21st April. An amazing homily as he shared his path to Australia and the Jesuits.

And great music from the youth group



Please join us!
Thurs 2 May @7:30 -10:00am,
Promenade Bondi Beach

This special event will help to raise money and awareness of the [HOPE Program](#) — a therapeutic support program that helps to protect babies and young children from early trauma by helping young families to address the stress and trauma in their lives. There will be an auction and a raffle with some incredibly generous prizes including accommodation packages,

A Reserve tickets to the Australian Ballet; One year's worth of Harris Farm Markets' fruit and vegetables; Pamper package for two, and much more!

Your ticket also includes a contemporary Australian breakfast along with refreshments.

Raffle and auction prizes will be live shortly. Tickets are \$150 per person plus booking fee.

events.humanitix.com/hope-mothersday24



Spirituality on the Sofa

**Wednesday 1st May 2024 7.30 – 9pm (AEST) Via
Zoom**

[Click here to join via Zoom](#)

Topic : *"Let's talk about the Power of Poetry"*

Speakers: *Susan Eichorn and Judge the Poet*

Come and meet via Zoom, two powerful and imaginative leaders who will invite us – from opposite sides of the world and from their different roles in life - to reflect with them on the spiritual dimension of Poetry...

Judge the Poet is our first international speaker who will Zoom in from the UK and,

Susan Eichorn - whom many of you will happily recognise as our trusty, regular Moderator - will share with us some of their experiences in the world of poetry.

And perhaps some of us - as well as participating by “deep listening” – might feel like sharing some of **our** thoughts - perhaps even by offering some lines of poetry from one of our favourite poets? We can use the “Chat” function or by

raising our hand to be invited by our Moderator, to contribute orally.

Judge the Poet: *After completing a university degree in English Literature, Judge set out to be an 'Ambassador for Poetry'. Now, much in demand for corporate events and cabaret entertainment, he has created magical memories for audiences all around the world. He has performed in venues throughout Great Britain and across Europe, America, Australasia, Asia and the Middle East. His unique talents have been sought and enjoyed by Nelson Mandela, Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Charles, Bjorn Borg and many others.*

Susan Eichorn: *Susan is a high school English teacher, mother of 'many men', ocean swimmer and nature lover. Her happy place over the last 25 years has been in the classroom, encouraging teenagers to love and create poetry. Susan enjoys everything about poems: reading them, listening to them, analysing them, and occasionally even writing them. Susan finds it easy to crack out the odd rhyming couplet, loves a bit of 'double, double, toil and trouble' and finds creative poetic inspiration from the domestic to the spiritual.*

We look forward to “seeing” as many of you who can make it on 1st May, and please feel free to pass on this invitation to any of your family or friends whom you think might be interested.

If you can assist us with a **donation** to help us that would be wonderful. Here are the details:

Commonwealth Bank

Account name: Catalyst for Renewal Inc. **BSB:**062
182 Acc No:1002 4424

Links for participating via Zoom/S.O.S

If you have a smart-phone, computer or tablet you will be able to participate on 6 March – either in Australia or overseas:

[Click here to join the Zoom meeting](#)

This should take you straight to the meeting, you may need to say 'yes' in a dialogue box to open Zoom meetings.

Or you can cut and paste the following into your browser:
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75310963248?pwd=dnPUW1aVLeO6nnHZcdr2XD3GBSb3zj.1>

Or start Zoom and enter the following:
Meeting ID: **753 1096 3248** Passcode: **408783**

You will also be able to access the *Spirituality on the Sofa* gathering through the following website: catalystforrenewal.org.au

The gathering will not be recorded.

St Mary's North Sydney
Wed 15 May 7-9pm

27th Women's Night of Spirituality

2024 guest speakers

MC EMMA ROSSI

NEAVE MACKEY

MARY CROCK

HELEN FORDE



Journalist and women's rights campaigner.



RedKite Ambassador, an Australian charity providing critical support to children with cancer.



Professor of public law with expertise in immigration, refugee, and human rights.



CEO Jesuit Mission

Women of Faith

Musical items by the
Parish Community Choir conducted by
Danielle Whitmore, Musical Director

Cash donations received on the evening will be distributed among the charities nominated by the speakers.

FROM GUY de VILLIERS

MOTHERS DAY GIFTS FROM CANA

Dear friends,

Hoping that everyone is staying warm and dry this wet weekend. With Mother's Day coming up, may I please encourage you to consider a gift from CANA. More about CANA below:

Cana Communities is a not-for-profit charity working with men and women who are experiencing homelessness, addiction, imprisonment, mental health issues and other barriers that have prevented them from creating a positive life for themselves.

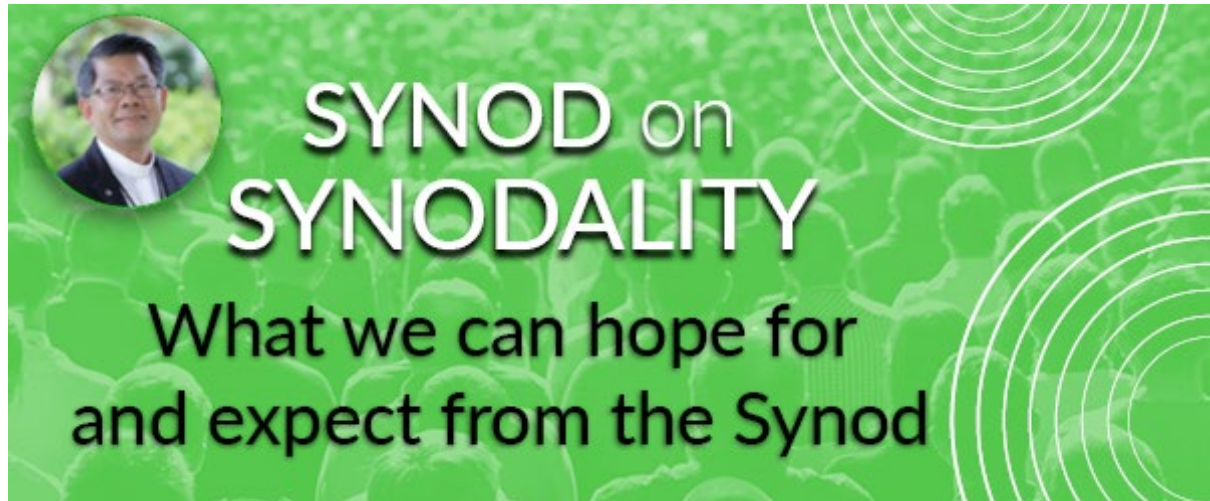
CANA offers hospitality and care in places where people can come together - to be safe, to be welcomed, to be accepted, and to belong - providing the opportunity for lives to be rebuilt.

Please use this links below for CANA's offerings:

https://www.canafarm.com.au/our-shop/mothers-day?mc_cid=5f4786287b&mc_eid=d892d361ae

PLENARY; SYNOD AND THE LIKE

FROM TRISH GEMMELL



A few notes I made:

Bishop Vincent on the Parramatta Synod: before the Synod he was anxious, fearful, opening a Pandora's box? Experience: messy, uncertain, painful, honest, real, raw, holding of tension, hearts were transformed, God was with us in our midst.

Sandie: we are learning as we go; toleration of open-mindedness. Difficulties of inclusiveness in a world church; strengths and weaknesses of local churches; she hopes we can expect progress.

There was a question on Dignitas Infinita: Sandie said, "maybe the door is opening. There is a grappling with understanding." Vincent said that the last word hasn't been pronounced on this. (Like you said!)

Formation of seminarians was considered very important for overcoming clericalism.

Re Conversation in the Spirit, Vincent said the end result proved the process worked. Sandie said we need to engage with it as a spiritual practice, not just a technology. The task of the facilitator is therefore

very important. She also said that encounter and dialogue is post-Cardijn - a deeper invitation.

There was a question about a post-Francis world: Vincent said that God desires a synodal church in the third millennium - this is a significant shift in the reception of the tradition. The whole church is responding to the call. Sandie said, and you will love this, it's not all up to Francis!

The video of the event is now available to view at the following link:

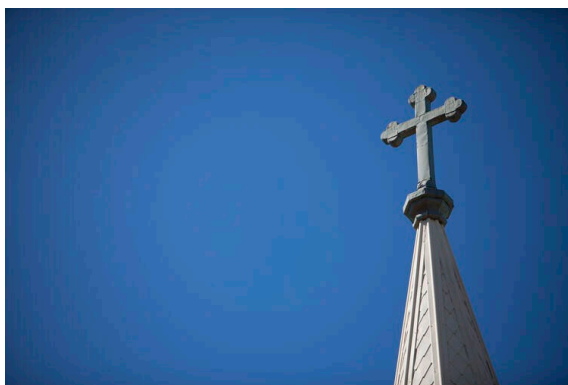
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/p26YzmVD-D4>

FROM ANDY NGUYEN SJ

“a long but good read”

America
THE JESUIT REVIEW

What happens when a diocese takes a synodal approach to parish restructuring?



<https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.americamagazine.org%2Ffaith%2F2024%2F04%2F18%2Fcatholic-diocese-parish-closings-mergers-247747&data=05%7C02%7C%7C26673899753044ce6a2208dc63f4c33a%7C8>

[4df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C638495150127585270%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KTNUMhZ%2F8wqnXghLXiVzj1wCTlaGjiFy79SI7XLyACg%3D&reserved=0](https://www.ktnu.edu.au/unknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KTNUMhZ%2F8wqnXghLXiVzj1wCTlaGjiFy79SI7XLyACg%3D&reserved=0)



BISHOPS FORUM

ARCHBISHOP MARK COLERIDGE

"MY JOURNEY IN THE SYNODAL CHURCH"

SUNDAY 5TH MAY 2024

1.30pm – 3.00pm

THE CRYPT ST PATRICK'S CHURCH

GROSVENOR STREET, THE ROCKS

Archbishop Mark Coleridge majored in English and French in his degree at Melbourne University before discerning a call to the priesthood. He was ordained in Melbourne in 1974 and worked as an assistant priest in various Melbourne parishes before studying Sacred Scripture in Rome and Jerusalem for four years. He returned to Melbourne and taught Scripture, then back to Rome for doctoral studies. After this he came home to teach at the Catholic Theological College. From 1997 to 2001 he worked in the Vatican Secretariat of State. In 2002 he was

episcopally ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, in 2006 Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn and in 2012 Metropolitan Archbishop of Brisbane. After his experience at the Synod on the Family he was a natural choice to head the commission that organised our Plenary Council. In reflecting upon his four decades as a priest and a Bishop, Archbishop Mark has noted that almost nothing had turned out as he expected but invariably events had turned out better than they would have had he planned them himself. As he has been moved to reflect “Jesus often surprises, but he never disappoints”.

All Welcome – No Booking required – Entry by Donation

Telephone 02 4971 4090

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W: www.catalystforrenewal.org.au

You can also find us on Instagram at
[#catalystforrenewalaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/catalystforrenewalaustralia)

FROM JOHN BUGGY AND



Michael Morwood – Theologian and Author

New Windows for Religious Belief and Practice

COMING EVENT

The human species is in its infancy, not in maturity, as it deals with scientific understanding of its place in the universe and how it should (and must) develop. The windows used for centuries to understand our place in the universe and to shape religious faith have been upended and can no longer be relied upon to help the human species develop. We do not have a "full story" yet, but we do have some new windows to ponder, and hopefully help us on our way.

To participate via Zoom at 4.00 pm (AEST) on Thursday the 16th of May, please click on the button below.

Register Now

<https://australianreformingcatholics.au/event-register/>

Dr. Peter Vardy. Exploring Faith and Reason

Dr. Peter Vardy outlined the development of Christian doctrine in the early centuries and the later centrality of St. Thomas Aquinas in establishing the link between Philosophy and Theology.

This led on to the tension between science and faith in the modern world, including Darwin's theory of natural selection, and alternative approaches culminating in the contrasting Franciscan tradition reflected by Pope Francis.

This stimulating presentation, accompanied with Powerpoint notes and followed by participant discussion can be viewed by clicking on the button below.

Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMxZcH_BwQ4

ARC Member Bishop Tim Norton meets with Members

RECENT EVENT

For those of you who were unable to participate in this stimulating and informative Zoom meeting with Bishop Tim and his thoughts on Church reform, we have a recording of the questions and discussion held on Thursday the 24th of August 2023. Click on the button below to be taken to the video of the meeting.

Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rumTNIWHLrg>

FROM PETER JOHNSTONE AND CCRI

Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) has scheduled an **open webinar at 10pm AEST, THURSDAY 2 May 2024** to discern international approval of a consolidated report proposing essential reform topics to be discussed at the 2nd Assembly in Rome, October 2024. This report has been created over several months by multiple synodal gatherings coming together through CCRI.

All are welcome. Rene Reid, CCRI director, has asked that this invitation be shared widely.

The latest version of the final draft report/submission for the 2nd Assembly of the Synod on Synodality is set out below

Further details of the webinar are at:

https://web-extract.constantcontact.com/v1/social_annotation_v2?permalink_url=https%3A%2F%2Fconta.cc%2F4aEfylf&image_url=https%3A%2F%2Fmlsvc01-prod.s3.amazonaws.com%2F3c963256301%2F51685329-fcac-4cdc-a10c-3653e48bef15.jpg

This is a CCRI online global multigenerational synodal gathering. The hope is twofold: (1) to have participants of all age groups from younger adults to more senior Catholics; and (2) to propose essential reforms in our Church generally agreed upon across cultural lines globally.

To join at 10pm AEST, Thursday 2 May 2024, click on <https://zoom.us/j/2429500175>: Password is: spirit.

Regards

- PJ

Submission from Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI) Agenda Issues for 2nd Assembly of the Synod on Synodality

The following submission responds to the directions approved by the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat of the Synod in *Towards October 2024: “HOW can we be a synodal Church on mission?”*

CCRI requests that these matters be included in the agenda for the 2nd Assembly.

Key Terms

The terms **Synodality**, **Clericalism**, **Subsidiarity**, **Governance**, and **Sense of Faith of the Faithful** (*Sensus Fidei Fidelium*) are key to issues addressed by the Synod; meanings are appended*.

Principles, Issues and Actions

The Synthesis Report of the 1st Assembly includes a very wide range of substantial proposals but lacks priorities for the central issues, reflecting the ‘sense of faith of the faithful’* and teachings of Vatican II.

We suggest that principles and priorities are needed in order to address adequately the extensive issues raised by the Synthesis Report; the following 5 agenda principles/items are accordingly proposed as priorities:

1. The Reign of God to be fully embodied in mission and practice

ISSUES:

- i. “*A missionary Church capable of transforming everything*” (*Evangelii Gaudium*)
- ii. The Church’s loss of trust, credibility and relevance in the Church amongst the faithful and the wider world
- iii. Massive departure of Catholics from the Church in many countries
- iv. Clerical sexual abuse of children and adults and particularly its cover-up shows dysfunctional governance*
- v. Considerable financial malpractice and numerous bankruptcies in the Church
- vi. The Church’s mission must be pursued synodally by both teaching and modelling Christianity.
- vii. Bishops in many countries need to regain their moral authority and pastoral legitimacy.
- viii. Failure by priests and bishops to seek and accept the ‘*sensus fidei fidelium*’*.

ACTIONS: That the 2nd Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. Synodality* to be a core element of all Church structures, practices and culture.
- ii. Strong accountability, transparency and inclusion while recognizing subsidiarity*
- iii. Continue to address sexual abuse issues even in the midst of financial bankruptcy.
- iv. Involve the faithful in the selection of bishops and parish priests/pastors
- v. Involve the faithful in the evaluation of bishops every 3 years
- vi. Involve the faithful in the evaluation of parish clergy every 2 years.
- vii. Governance* education for all in Church leadership roles
- viii. National Convocations to address the massive loss of Catholics from the Church

2. Equality of all, ensuring gender diversity in governance and ministry - rejecting male clerical autocracy as the Church's model of governance

ISSUES:

- i. Male clerical autocracy is the traditional model of governance of the Church, with inadequate accountability, transparency or synodal inclusion; neither theologically based on clear teachings of Jesus, nor synodal, it reflects past cultural practices now exposed as inadequate and discriminatory.
- ii. Male autocracy is damaging to institutional decision making and efficacy.
- iii. Consideration of women deacons is welcome but in itself inadequate, a subordinate ministry.
- iv. The exclusion of women from Church ministry (c. 1024) and Church governance (cc.129 and 274§1), and from preaching the homily (c.767§1), is discriminatory, contrary to Jesus' inclusion of all, and deprives the Church of the benefits of gender diversity and balance in leadership.
- v. Church teaching about LGBTIQ+ sexuality is scientifically wrong and discriminatory
- vi. Women, men, and young people continue to be alienated.
- vii. Ecumenical dialogue is prejudiced by Catholic sense of superiority.
- viii. Clericalism and the shortage of priests are aggravated by mandatory celibacy.

ACTIONS: That the 2nd Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. Replace male autocracy with co-responsible models of ministry
- ii. All synodal structures and practices must be truly inclusive of all races and genders
- iii. Repeal canons 129 and 274§1, which exclude women from governance
- iv. Ensure the inclusion of all qualified laity in all new synodal structures and practices
- v. Repeal canon 1024 which excludes women from sacred ordination
- vi. Amend cc.767 §1 to permit non-ordained to preach the homily.
- vii. Amend cc 194 and 1394 to remove the ban on marriage of priests.

viii. Welcome divorced /remarried, LGBTIQ+ Catholics, and the marginalised.

3. Synodal structures and practices at every level of the Church

ISSUES

- i. A synodal culture requires co-responsible synodal structures and practices
- ii. Church governance lacks a synodal approach in its decision making and structures, devalues the sense of faith of the faithful, and prejudices the Church's efficacy
- iii. Many dioceses lack diocesan pastoral councils despite the terms of canon 511
- iv. The current male governance and leadership model adopted by bishops is largely autocratic
- v. Shortage of priests under the current institutional restrictions results in Eucharistic famine.
- vi. Parish pastoral councils are not required by canon law
- vii. Finance Committees serve the pastoral mission, but not the Pastoral Council.
- viii. Lack of awareness and inability to participate in the synodal process

ACTIONS: That the 2nd Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. Synodal structures and practices be canonically mandated, guided by pastoral care rather than doctrinal control.
- ii. Bishops to be accountable for adoption of synodal structures, practices and culture in their dioceses.
- iii. Structures and practices to reflect the principles of both synodality and subsidiarity, respecting the *sensus fidei fidelium* and ensuring Christian discernment through Conversations in the Spirit
- iv. Priesthood incorporates optional celibacy as is done in the Oriental Rites
- v. Diocesan and parish pastoral councils to be mandated with responsibilities for local decision-making ensuring accountability and transparency with regular synodal reporting to the faithful
- vi. Finance Committees should serve the mission of pastoral councils
- vii. Mandate diocesan synods to be convened every 3 years
- viii. Educate all Catholics in scripture, theology, synodality, and subsidiarity informed by scientific principles.
- ix. Homilies to periodically promote after-Mass dialogue and discernment.
- x. Liturgies to be more diverse and participatory, accessible and responsive to local needs and cultures.
- xi. Endorsement of Small Christian Communities as part of a synodal Church structure.

4. Clericalism to be eradicated

ISSUES

- i. Clericalism is a toxic culture, the antithesis of Christianity and synodality

- ii. Clericalism, excluding women from ministry and governance, is fundamentally immoral and misogynistic.
- iii. Clericalist attitudes are reinforced by complicity of laity.
- iv. Clericalism leads to a massive loss of talent that could build up the Body of Christ
- v. Clericalism is the logical outcome of the Church's current teaching regarding Holy Orders and Eucharist

ACTIONS: That the 2nd Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. Create specific structures that require inculturation of synodality and acceptance of women's equality in governance and ministry
- ii. All levels of the community to be involved in the selection of their bishop
- iii. Education of laity in scripture, theology, and ministry in order to promote empowerment and co-responsibility.

5. Enculturate 1-4 throughout the Church and reinforce the *sensus fidei fidelium* through appropriate synodal programs for the entire Church from parish communities, ecclesial organizations, to the Vatican

ISSUES:

- i. Effective Church reform requires a common culture of synodality, rejecting male autocracy
- ii. The actions in 1-4 above will require both decrees and synodal programs of learning throughout the Church at every level from parishes to the Vatican in accord with Pope Francis's example

ACTIONS: That the 2nd Assembly propose to Pope Francis:

- i. A program of synodal learning for bishops, priests, and laity, including all church organizations
- ii. Ongoing servant leadership formation at every level
- iii. Review of all catechetics and Church activities including liturgy to achieve understanding and commitment to the actions in 1-4 above to achieve:

“a synodal Church in mission”

(see Appendix below re Synodality, Clericalism, Subsidiarity, Governance, and the Sense of Faith of the Faithful)

APPENDIX

Key Terms

Synodality (cf. International Theological Commission and the Catechism) pertains to the essence of the Church, and every aspect of the Church's life and mission, and means "walking together". It is a constitutive dimension of the church. The concept of synodality was implicit in Vatican II's teaching, meaning much the same as communion, or union with God the Trinity and union with others in the Church. Consulting and listening to the faithful, who make up a great majority of the church, before the hierarchy makes decisions at all levels of the Church, is an essential aspect of the synodal process. The whole body of the faithful cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the *sensus fidei* of the whole people of God.

Clericalism is the antithesis of synodality. Clericalism involves an expectation that ordained ministers are better than and should rule over everyone else among the People of God. Pope Francis has stated: "*It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a church that does not include the active participation of all the members of God's people. ... Such is the case with clericalism, an approach that not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the heart of our people.*" (Letter to the People of God, August 20, 2018). Sexism and misogyny are corollaries of clericalism among some clerics.

Subsidiarity is a social principle that ensures individuals, groups and associations have maximum freedom to exercise personal responsibility as they pursue their goals, consistent with the requirements of the common good. The principle was expressed by Pope Pius XI 1931 in a papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*:

Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do. (n.79).

Governance is a concept encompassing all the means by which an organisation is directed and controlled to achieve its mission and strategic objectives. Good governance has regard to leadership, authority, processes, systems, structures, relationships, standards, delegations, and organizational culture; these are the tools of good governance. Organisational leaders are responsible for all aspects of the organization's performance and ethical standards. Good governance requires high standards of accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness, with full regard to gender balance and diversity, and guided by the principles of synodality and subsidiarity.

Sense of Faith of the Faithful – ‘*sensus fidei fidelium*’ (cf. International Theological Commission) The Church teaches that the congregation of the faithful cannot err in matters of faith. While the faith of the universal Church is authoritatively expressed by her prelates, each believer has a personal instinct of faith. The International Theological Commission stated that the sense of faith of the faithful “is a sort of spiritual instinct that enables the believer to judge spontaneously whether a particular teaching or practice is or is not in conformity with the Gospel and with apostolic faith. While the validity and importance of different church teachings cannot be the subject of a popular vote, the degree to which they are or are not accepted by most Catholics is important.”

The Second Vatican Council's teaching regarding the laity, the document on Revelation says:

"All of the baptized participate in the prophetic office of Jesus Christ ... The Holy Spirit anoints them and equips them ... conferring on them a very personal and intimate knowledge of the faith of the Church. ... As a result, the faithful have an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, which enables them to recognize and endorse Christian doctrine and practice, and to reject what is false."

For information or clarification: Rene Reid, Catholic Church Reform Int'l director

This report is the result of several synodal gatherings held monthly consisting of about 150 of our members.

Circulated by ACCCR

(Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform)

Text provided by the author with acknowledgement of feedback by Peter Sheehan and Rowan Ireland

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SENSE OF THE FAITHFUL: WHAT IT MEANS IN PRACTICE

Richard Curtain

The Church clearly recognises the importance of the *sensus fidei*, but the key issue is how do we interpret the content of the sense of the faithful for a given religious community at a given time. This is particularly important when times are changing rapidly, and reform is underway. I outline below two recent attempts to discern this content.

Response to the call to take part in the Plenary Council consultations

The opportunity to identify the type and extent of the changes the Australian Catholic laity want for their Church came when the whole community was invited to take part in consultations at the parish level in the lead up to the 2020-22 Plenary Council. It was the first time the Catholic Church Australia-wide had initiated such a broad based and intensive consultation process.

This first-in-our-lifetime opportunity encouraged a small group of us from five parishes in Melbourne to form the Sense of the Faithful group to set up a [website](#), with two broad objectives. We wanted to facilitate discussions between parishes in Australia on the key issues facing the Church. We were also seeking to articulate and

promote via a consultative process a shared view across parishes, to the extent to which such a shared view exists.

Identifying the key issues based on prayerful discernment

The 2014 International Theological Commission report on the *Sensus Fidei* spells out six criteria for discerning what is an authentic *sensus fidei* manifestation as distinct from simply expressions of popular opinion, particular interests, or merely the spirit of the age (Para 87). The six defining criteria are as follows (see paras 89 to 105, and McPartlan 2014):

- (1) Active participation in the life of the Church, namely, in her liturgy, mission and service.
- (2) Attentive listening to the word of God, in a spirit of thankfulness and praise.
- (3) Openness to reason as a vital partner to faith.
- (4) Willing attentiveness to the teaching of the magisterium of the Church.
- (5) The document highlights holiness, and has hallmarks of humility, freedom, joy, and peace, and identifies the saints, and Mary outstandingly, as ‘light-bearers of the *sensus fidei*’.
- (6) The edification of the Church, building others up and avoiding what divides.

We saw the results of the consultations for the Plenary Council (PC) as providing the basis for identifying the key concerns of practising Catholics, based on their prayerful discernment. The results are the product of a process that complies with the six criteria for identifying

an authentic expression of the sense of the faithful of the laity. However, the way the results were presented by those organising the consultations for the Plenary Council was disjointed, which made them difficult to interpret as a whole.

For example, this was the case with the deliberations of six publicly identified writing groups focused on six broad themes, distilled from the early PC related consultations. The six thematic reports listed 159 recommendations made by the writing groups after a protracted discernment process. However, the recommendations in each report often overlapped and were presented in a way that made them hard to aggregate to provide an overall picture of the most important recommendations. The second example below shows how we addressed this problem. But first, let me outline our efforts to identify the key issues arising from the initial consultations.

Early efforts at distilling the key issues for the PC: Joint parish statement 2019

Our initial response was to organise an archdiocese-wide meeting. We brought together interested parish representatives to prepare a joint statement of key issues for the Plenary Council to consider. The meeting was held at the Melbourne Theological College on 13 April 2019 and was attended by 62 representatives of 32 parishes. The attendees were asked to rank the top priorities for the Plenary Council based on a list of issues identified from the parish group submissions. The meeting established a drafting group to prepare a joint

statement, based on those identified priorities. This statement was vetted by representatives of the 32 parishes and 24 parishes endorsed the [Joint Statement](#).

The Plenary Council 2020: Joint Parish Statement identified nine key issues. These were: address the sexual abuse crisis; change the nature of the plenary council; encourage an open and inclusive church; promote servant leadership for a humble church; change the composition of the priesthood, including a greater role for women; implement new governance changes; make the liturgy more relevant; renew our focus on the poor and marginalised; and protect and restore the earth.

Analysis of the recommendations of six thematic writing group reports

A second example of our efforts to identify the laity's key priorities was to work out the relative importance of the issues identified in the 159 recommendations of the thematic reports, available [here](#). Two issues stood out with the most mentions in the recommendations of all six thematic reports. These were: the need to implement new governance changes and the need for humble leadership and changes to the priesthood. Next in importance were the issues related to the need to promote mission and evangelisation and to encourage an open and inclusive Church, with mentions in five and four thematic reports respectively.

These examples show how the sense of the faithful can be identified from consultations with the laity, if properly conducted. They highlight the crucial role that further analysis of the results of the consultations can

Richard Curtain is chair of the [Sense of the Faithful](#) editorial group. He completed a four-year term as a Research Fellow in the Development Policy Centre, Crawford School of Public Policy, The Australian National University in June 2022. He continues as a Research Associate of the Centre, specialising in contemporary Pacific migration to Australia. He is working with others to publish a book comparing seasonal worker programmes in four countries: Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada.



[LEADERSHIP IN A
SYNODAL CHURCH](#)

[ANNE BENJAMIN & CHARLES BURFORD](#)

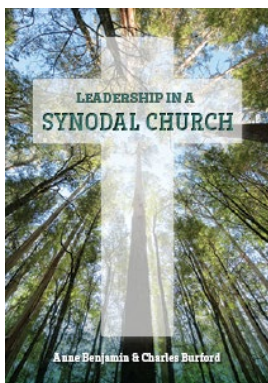
How can you, your Church, and its leaders become more synodal?

Leadership in a Synodal Church explores leadership and culture through the lens of mission, synodality, governance, people, and moral discernment. Enhanced by practical examples and exercises for reflection, it draws on a wide range of scholarship in theology, leadership, governance, and organisational theory to offer a positive resource for a Church community journeying towards greater synodality.

Above all, *Leadership in a Synodal Church* is written with an insider's perspective with a great sense of faith, love for the Church, and hope for the future.

Leadership in a Synodal Church is an essential resource for those wanting practical proposals for furthering the development of its leaders so they can promote a culture in harmony with a synodal Church – and ensure their community understands Pope Francis' call for a synodal Church.

[To view a sample chapter, click here.](#)



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Synodal Church and Matthean Ecclesiology



Mathew Bomki, SJ

The synod on synodality, a three-year process of praying, listening and engaging in dialogue, inaugurated by Pope Francis in October 2021 to chart a path for our post-modern era, registered a significant milestone with the 26th Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome (October 4-29, 2023). For Pope Francis, “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third

millennium.”

This synodal journey follows in the spirit of the Church “renewal” (*aggiornamento*) initiated by the Second Vatican Council (*Ecclesia semper reformanda*) where there is a re-emphasis on the renewal of the Church as the People of God, a people journeying in communion with a sense of co-responsibility and a renewed participation in the mission. Such an enterprise calls for an evaluation of the meaning of belonging in this community called Church in the 21st century. Is there a room for all in the Church? Is the Church that “mother hen” which gathers her “brood” under her wings despite individual differences (Cf. Matt 23:37)?

In the last two years, the preparation for the synod on synodality has drawn global attention, within and outside the Catholic Church. Despite the mixed feelings and lack of fervor in some circles, the shared experiences of most of those who took part in the October 2023 synod seem marked by consolation, a proof that the prime agent of the synod is the Holy Spirit as Pope Francis has always insisted.

READ ON:

https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/synodal-church-and-matthean-ecclesiology/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LCC+Eng+DailyNewsletter+19Apr2024+Paid_02&cmid=de7574dd-ec7b-47ed-9e25-e05b5d601622



Cardinal Cupich: 3 ways the synod's 'conversations in the Spirit' can revolutionize the church

The reflections of Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., at our pre-synod retreat in October 2023 convinced me that Pope Francis' reframing of the scope and meaning of synods will also have staying power, because this reframing opens up a new model for the church.

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2024/04/24/cupich-synod-conversations-spirit-radcliffe-247793?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=qKBtUj8bN68Ay.bRtzmmCILWthGtVZV2J.kmOw4sgJmUzSVJhqRFvDqoK1PHJMMFH5WJT5q

SYNOD OFFICE HOLDS INTERNATIONAL MEETING AT THE VATICAN FOR PARISH PRIESTS

Interview with one of the 300 men who has been invited to attend a gathering aimed at getting parish priests more actively involved in implementing synodality at all levels of the Church.

[By Arnaud Spilioti](#)

April 18, 2024



Pope Francis with some parish priests at St. Henry Parish in Casal Monastero, Rome, April 5, 2024. (Photo by IPA Agency/Maxppp)

[Share](#)

The General Secretariat of the Synod in Rome hopes that an upcoming international meeting of parish priests will help get the men who are on the front lines of the Church's pastoral mission more engaged with the Synod on synodality.

"I hope this time will facilitate clarification, so that we can leave with some good practices to live out the spirit of the Synod in our parishes," says Julien Dupont, a priest from the Archdiocese of Poitiers in France.

Further reading: [Synod office urges local dioceses to hold further consultations](#)

He's one of 300 priests from around the world have been invited to come to the Vatican for the April 29-May 2 gathering, which is aimed at better including these clerics in the ongoing synod process.

Dupont spoke about his expectations for the international meeting in this interview with *La Croix*'s Arnaud Spilioti.

La Croix: You are one of the four French parish priests chosen to participate in this international meeting. What are you expecting?

Julien Dupont: First and foremost, I expect to meet confreres from around the world. There are a little over 407,000 priests worldwide. For this meeting in Rome, there will be 300 of us – it will be a good sample of the universal Church. I hope to experience the Church in its universality during these days. It will be an opportunity for us to listen to the Holy Spirit, to hear what He has to say to us today.

Further reading: [The pope's problem with today's seminarians and young priests](#)

This is primarily a working meeting. The objective is to pool our experiences to better understand the expectations of our different

colleagues and their parishioners. I hope this time will facilitate clarification, so that we can leave with some good practices to live out the spirit of the Synod in our parishes.

During this meeting, what do you wish to express?

I fundamentally believe in differentiated co-responsibility within the Church. This expression, which may seem a bit obscure, could be translated by emphasizing the fact that we are all disciples and missionaries at the same time. I believe that all the baptized should take their place in the Church and assume their responsibilities as Christians. We need to find good practices, so let's exchange ideas – with the goal of improving our discernment.

How were you selected?

The archbishop proposed my name to the French Bishops' Conference (CEF), which selected four French priests with the aim for a form of diversity. What probably motivated the decision is that I participated in the General Secretariat of the Synod within the Archdiocese of Poitiers between 2017 and 2018. We submitted the synodal acts to Rome in 2019. I am very attentive to the synodal spirit, and more generally, to living together.

"The primary place of Christian life still plays out in the parishes worldwide."

During the first phase of the Synod on Synodality, priests were not the most involved, a perception confirmed by the Vatican. What is your view on this?

I am rather pleased that the Synod is giving us a voice. Indeed, like many of my colleagues, I think that we have not been sufficiently involved. However, the primary place of Christian life still plays out in the parishes worldwide. It is positive to be involved in this upcoming meeting, even if it remains somewhat symbolic to gather 300 parish priests from around the world.

I'm not overly enthusiastic, but I'm waiting to see in which direction we're headed. It will be necessary to ground our work in concrete attitudes, and not just stick to grand general debates. I have confidence in the success of this assembly.

How have you experienced the Synod in your parish and diocese so far?

It has not been easy to relaunch a process of listening and dialogue between our people, especially as we were just coming out of a diocesan synod. The beginnings were quite complicated, and I noted that many parishes in my archdiocese struggled to propose meetings around the Synod. For now, I feel that some people project all their desires into this synodal process, while others seek to express their anger at the dysfunctions of the Church. It seems to me that, for the moment, these reactions are not productive and quite far from the spirit of the Synod.



Traditions of value

Dear Friends,

Recently, I came across the phrase “traditions of value” and I thought immediately of this newsletter, which gives an account of some of the activities of a tradition that values the formation of people for the lay apostolate.

From Pope Francis to students and young workers, we are treated to reflections that highlight the power of Cardijn’s method of See, Judge, Act to transform peoples’ lives.

Cardinal Christophe Pierre speaks of his own formation through the use of See, Judge, Act. Pope Francis’ reflection on the virtue of prudence shows the influence of the method on his way of teaching.

Faithful to the Cardijn tradition, Stefan Gigacz raises the question of the method employed for discernment during the present Synod on Synodality. Indeed, the entire newsletter may be considered an argument for adopting See, Judge, Act as the method for the second session of the Synod.

We explore the mission and vocation of the lay person, not only through webinars advertised in the newsletter, but also through video and thought-provoking articles by Richard Pütz and Brian Lawrence.

Finally, you will find in our newsletter the call for the inclusion of specialised Catholic action movements and other lay movements in the second session of the Synod.

Pat Branson
Chair

Cardinal Christophe Pierre: Pope Francis and the See Judge Act



Delivering the 2024 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Lecture sponsored by the Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage at Loyola University, Chicago, on 11 April 2024, Apostolic Nuncio to the USA, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, spoke of the importance of the see-judge-method as a tool of ecclesial discernment.

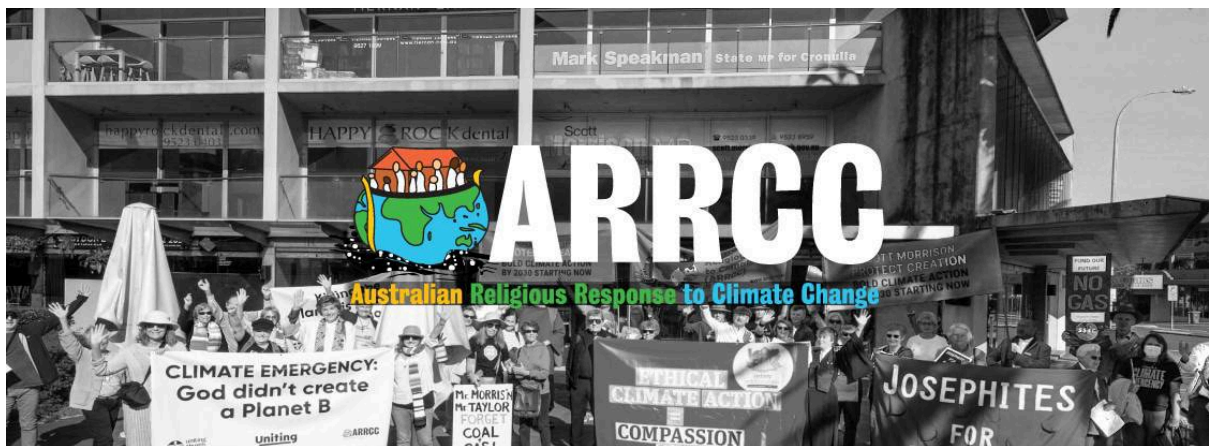
Cardinal Pierre himself has close family links with the Specialised Catholic Action movements in France through his mother, who was a founder the Action Catholique Indépendante (ACI), a movement for business people and professionals.

READ MORE AND WATCH THE VIDEO

[See judge act as a tool of discernment](#)

https://australiancardijninstitute.org/see-judge-act-as-a-tool-of-discernment/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_source_platform=mailpoet&utm_campaign=april-2024

GOD'S CREATION AND PEOPLE, AND THEIR RIGHTS



Hello Michael --

We in ARRCC are very conscious of Australia's outsized role as a driver of climate change - with just .33% of the world's population, our domestic and exported emissions account for 3.6% of the world's total. Hence our wanting to get on with the work we had been planning this year.

One of the plans has been to get one of our personalised letter-writing efforts going, this time to both PM Albanese and the Leader of the Opposition. In this newsletter, there's also information about events coming up tomorrow and next week. Please try to make it along to at least one event if you can.

Writing to the Prime Minister and Mr Dutton

We're asking people of faith everywhere to [write to the Leaders of both major parties](#). If you can, please start by finding even a few others in your faith community to spend an hour over a cup of tea each writing your own individually worded letter.

It's safe to start by assuming that the Prime Minister is genuinely concerned about the climate crisis. The reason that he tends to hold back from taking sufficiently bold action isn't a lack of caring, but a political assessment that it would be too risky to go further than he already is. Our job is to show him that there is more political room to move than he might think.

It is particularly important to encourage the Prime Minister to co-host the COP31 climate summit at the end of 2026.

It is by no means a done deal that he will put himself behind Australia's bid to do this. We need him to regard it as an opportunity for Australia to shine rather than a risk to be avoided. Now is the time for this message to get through.

Why write to Peter Dutton?

We know a lot of people think there's no point, that the Coalition is set in its ways. Yet the ongoing aim of the climate movement is strong bipartisan support for serious action. This is for two reasons:

- Labor tends to be cautious about being too far ahead of the Coalition, so intransigence on the Coalition side of politics still drags back Labor's level of ambition.
- Even if this doesn't happen at the next election, at some point the Coalition may win back the government and we don't want them to undo any good work that has been undertaken.

It's therefore vitally important for the Coalition to move ground.

That said, they have shown no interest in doing so. There have been calls to scrap even their 2050 target. They have pursued an agenda of promoting nuclear energy, in what appears to be an attempt to distract people away from technologies that are available now and are much cheaper (renewables). They have attacked large-scale solar and wind and have attacked fuel efficiency standards for vehicles.

So, what to do?

There is very little that can be done if the Coalition wins the next election on this platform. However, if they lose, we need them to understand the extent to which their climate policies were a factor in that. They will need to learn the lesson. That didn't happen at the last election, despite it being described widely as the Climate Election. However, the conservative side of politics has tended to put that loss down to factors *other than* their failures around climate action.

By pointing out now the extent to which the mainstream has moved on this issue and is prepared to vote on it, the seeds will be planted for conversations after Election Day for this lesson to be learned and to achieve true bipartisan support for climate action.

What to write?

You can find our [complete guide here](#).

Let us know when you're done

When you have sent your letter(s), please could you let us know by filling out the [form at the bottom of this web page?](#) That way we know how many letters people are sending, and where you are in the country. Thank you!

Faith-led Day of Action - CitiGroup

24th April is a global day of action being organised by the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace in the USA (Investor Advocates for Social Justice). They are shining a light on CitiGroup's lending to companies that are expanding fossil fuels, in breach of Indigenous human rights and contributing to climate change.

Banks like CitiGroup are providing finance for Santos, a company with gas expansion plans that would irresponsibly drive up the world's emissions with disastrous consequences for life as we know it. Their plans would also disrespect the spiritual and human rights of the Tiwi Island and Larrakia Traditional Owners. For short-term profits. The Sisters have lodged a shareholder resolution in relation to CitiGroup's investment in Santos.

ARRCC aims to have a presence at both events planned. Partner organisation to ARRCC, Market Forces are the local organisers in Australia, and some local women Religious are attending.

When: 24 April, 12.30 - 1.30 pm

Sydney: 2 Park Street Sydney

Melbourne: 120 Collins St, Melbourne

Please bring placards with faith-inspired messaging. If there are others you can bring along, please ask them.

Rise Up week of action

As we've been saying lately, here is one thing we can get on with right now. The Rise Up week of action (April 29 to May 10) is nearly upon us. Climate organisations across the country are working together to put pressure on the Government to lift its game. That pressure is very much needed because right now,

the Federal Government continues to approve new coal and gas projects. Please join an action near you.

As ever, we're asking people to be visible as people of faith. There are a couple of ways you might want to do this. **You may wish to bring your banner** if you've ordered one and if it says 'No new coal and gas'. This would require at least two people, one at each end. It would be very effective though.

Or you could bring one of our great new placards. These are A2 in size and have messages on them that would be perfect for this kind of action, and could be carried by just one person. Have a [look at them here](#).

The actions that we are most keen for ARRCC supporters to attend are below. Please try to make it to **one of them**:

Newcastle

[Office of the Minister for the Pacific](#)

Pat Conroy MP

Friday 3 May 11am to 12pm

Hosted by the *Knitting Nannas*

1a 571 Pacific Hwy

Belmont, NSW 2280

Sydney

[Rise Up Sydney](#)

Wednesday 8 May at 10am

Outside Kirribilli House, 109 Kirribilli Avenue, Kirribilli, Sydney.

Hosted by *Move Beyond Coal*, 350.org and *Australian Youth Climate Coalition*.

Canberra

[Office of Senator Katy Gallagher](#)

Friday May 10 from 10 to 10.30am

Unit 3 40 Corinna Street

Phillip, ACT 2606

Hosted by the Pacific Climate Warriors & Move Beyond Coal

Nowra

Office Fiona Phillips MP

Friday May 3 at 10am

3/59 Junction St, Nowra NSW 2541

Melbourne

Electorate of Wills

Friday 10 May at 11am

Office of Peter Khalil MP

466-468 Sydney Rd

Coburg, VIC 3058

Hosted by Climate Action Merribek

Electorate of Higgins

Thursday 2 May at 11am

Office of Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP

Corner of Wattleree and Tooronga Roads

Malvern, VIC 3144

Hosted by Higgins CAN

Rise Up Melbourne - flagship event

Thursday 9 May at 12pm

Melbourne Commonwealth Parliament Offices

4 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, 4002

Hosted by 350.org

Geelong

Office of Richard Marles MP

Friday May 10 from 9 to 10.30am

92 / 100 Brougham St - Westfield Building

Harassment of Tanzanian Earth protectors

The ten GreenFaith International volunteers in Tanzania who were recently detained by police and continue to be harassed for speaking out against the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline have been harassed further. We are asking as many of you as possible to [sign and share the open letter](#) calling for a stop to this injustice. **There are options to sign either as an organisation or as an individual.** Or write your own personalised letter, if you can.

If you're on Facebook, please share this [Facebook post](#).

This is part of an international effort to tell the Tanzanian government, the Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), and TotalEnergies (the corporations behind the pipeline project) that communities of faith around the world are watching and will have the back of the activists involved.

Ki'nh chào, Namaste, Shalom, Salaam, Om Shanti, Peace,
سَلَامٌ, 和平, Paz, शांति, صلح, สันติภาพ

Thea

ARRCC

<https://www.arrcc.org.au/>

ASIA HIT HARDEST BY CLIMATE CATASTROPHES IN 2023

UN identifies Asia as the world's most climate-affected region, warming faster than the global average, with temperatures nearly two degrees Celsius above the 1961-1990 average.

By La Croix (with AFP)

April 23, 2024



Asia was "the region of the world most affected by weather-related disasters" in 2023, with floods and storms causing the most casualties and economic losses, according to the latest report from the United Nations' weather and climate agency.

"Climate change exacerbated the frequency and severity of such events, profoundly impacting societies, economies, and, most importantly, human lives and the environment that we live in," said Celeste Saulo, Director of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), in a statement.

Further reading: [Pope Francis and the Christian vocation to care for "our common home"](#)

The year 2023 was the hottest ever recorded globally. The WMO emphasized that the impact of heatwaves in Asia is becoming increasingly severe, adding that the melting of glaciers, especially in the Himalayan range, threatens the water security of the region. Moreover, Asia warmed more rapidly than the global average last year, with temperatures nearly two degrees Celsius above the 1961-1990 average.

Serious implications ahead

"Many countries in the region experienced their hottest year on record in 2023, along with a barrage of extreme conditions, from droughts and heatwaves to floods and storms," the report highlights. The State of the Climate in Asia 2023 report underscores the acceleration of major climate change indicators such as surface temperature, glacier retreat, and sea level rise, stating that they will have severe repercussions on societies, economies, and ecosystems in the region.

Further reading: [World experiences its warmest winter on record, reports Copernicus](#)

The average annual near-surface temperature in Asia in 2023 was the second highest ever recorded, at 0.91 degrees Celsius above the 1991-2020 average and 1.87 °C above the 1961-1990 average. Particularly high average temperatures were recorded from Western Siberia to Central Asia, and from Eastern China to Japan, with Japan experiencing its hottest summer on record.

Accelerated glacier retreat

Regarding precipitation, it was below normal in the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush mountain range in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, southwestern China suffered from a drought, with precipitation levels below normal almost every month of the year.

The Asian high-mountain region, centered on the Tibetan Plateau, contains the largest volume of ice outside the polar regions. Over the past few decades, most of these glaciers have retreated, and at an accelerated rate, the WMO reported. Twenty of the 22 monitored glaciers in the region showed a continuous loss of mass last year.

Further reading: [2024 begins with the hottest January on record](#)

The report also noted that sea surface temperatures in the northwest Pacific Ocean in 2023 were the highest ever recorded.

Floods and storms

Last year, 79 disasters associated with hydrometeorological hazards were reported in Asia. Of these, more than 80% were floods and storms, which resulted in over 2,000 deaths. Nine million people were directly affected.

"Floods were the leading cause of death in reported events in 2023 by a substantial margin," the WMO highlighted, noting the still high level of vulnerability of Asia to natural hazard-related events. Following a typhoon, Hong Kong recorded 158.1 millimeters of rainfall in one hour on September 7, 2023, a record since measurements began in 1884.

Further reading: [Global temperatures hit record high in March](#)

The WMO stressed the urgency for national meteorological services in the region to produce data to better alert about risks. "It is imperative that our actions and strategies mirror the

urgency of these times," said Saulo. "Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the evolving climate is not merely an option, but a fundamental necessity."

AMERICATODAY

Today's top stories from the church and the world

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Earth Day 2024: It's time for the Catholic Church to give up fossil fuels for good

Pope Francis says that responses to climate change "have not been adequate." This Earth Day, both clergy and laypeople must repent of our sins of omission and work toward decarbonization.

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https://www.americamagazine.org/politics-society/2024/04/19/earthday-2024-diocese-decarbonization-laudato-si-247709?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2928&pnespid=urJqCSBNZKwLxaHc.jHqCZKI5Qn.XoR6cvjn2Po5sQFm57.5_DLmnnYRtN_LjWrY7Q7VB.c9



INTO THE THIRD YEAR OF WAR IN UKRAINE



Giovanni Sale, SJ

More than two years have passed since Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, in what he called a “special operation.” The Kremlin, misinformed by its generals and spies, thought that taking Kyiv and establishing a friendly government there would be easy to achieve; in reality, it was not. The long trail of military vehicles headed for the capital, attacked and largely

dispersed en route, became a symbol of the Red Army's unpreparedness and inefficiency. The resistance put up by the Ukrainian army, already partly armed by Western allies, was truly heroic and patriotic. Putin had to scale back his war aims, focusing, in late March, mainly on the Donbass and southern regions.

Thanks to military and financial aid from Western countries, mainly the U.S. – despite the latter's initial reluctance to give powerful, long-range weapons so as not to strike Russian territory – the Ukrainians were able to block Moscow's *blitzkrieg* on Kyiv and gradually liberate part of the territory occupied by the aggressor.

The Ukrainian army launched two major counteroffensives in the fall of that year: the first in the Kherson region, the second south of Kharkiv, both from September to November 2022. Both were successful. The victories in the Kherson area to the south, which forced the Russian army to retreat, led to the belief that the Ukrainian advance was almost irresistible and that the liberation of Russian-occupied territories was possible. It was thought that this was a goal that could be achieved quickly, in part thanks to the arrival of new and more powerful weapons provided by the West. "Strikes behind enemy lines using medium-range missiles such as HIMARS, operations by special forces, and raids in the skies over Moscow," boosted the confidence of Ukrainians who were fighting to liberate their country, as well as that of Western supporters, but at the same time they underestimated the strength and determination of their opponents.

[Read More](#)

https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/into-the-third-year-of-war-in-ukraine/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LC+Eng+DailyNewsletter+22Apr2024+Paid_02

POPE FRANCIS

MORE ON DIGNITAS INFINITA

The logo for Eureka Street, featuring the words "EUREKA STREET" in a white, sans-serif font inside a dark red arrow-shaped banner pointing to the right.

Vatican invites global discussion on human dignity

David Kirchhoffer

Though there are few surprises in Vatican document *Dignitas infinita*, this summary of Pope Francis's moral theology on dignity invites a reevaluation of our shared humanity in the face of an increasingly complex ethical landscape.

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THE TABLET

the manner and moment of their death. That looks rational enough at first glance. But here is where

duty of care between the sick and society – that is the bedrock of a society that respects their dignity and their rights.

HUMAN DIGNITY

A WARNING FROM HISTORY

Because “gender transition” has become a hot political potato, a lengthy Vatican document that mentions it only briefly nevertheless made the headlines. *Dignitas Infinita* explores the concept of human dignity from many angles, and comes firmly to the conclusion that it is neither a legal fiction nor a human invention but an intrinsic property of all human life from conception to death. The defence and promotion of human dignity is at the heart of the Church’s mission and purpose.

The strength of *Dignitas Infinita* is that it weaves the defence of the dignity of those who are threatened by poverty, war, discrimination, violence and abuse together with the unborn and those at the end of their lives – the more familiar objects of Catholic concern – into a seamless garment. It is at its weakest, however, when it applies its general doctrine to some particularly complex modern challenges, including “gender theory”. It does not accept the separation of sex and gender, as the theory requires, and it condemns any attempt to alter a person’s sexual identity by medical intervention such as drugs or surgery as a violation of personal dignity.

It has no sympathy, therefore, with the theory’s insistence that gender is non-binary or that an individual may have a gender identity different from the one, as the saying goes, “assigned at birth”. This is where the authors of the document should have been more cautious. Two examples serve as a warning. The first is Galileo, who was accused of heresy for

denying that the sun rotated round the earth. The second is homosexuality, which the Church for a long time saw either as a delusion, a moral failing – that is to say, a sinful choice – or a mental illness. We have learnt that the earth goes round the sun and we have learnt that being gay is a regularly occurring nonpathological minority variant in the human condition. There is a danger that in approaching a transgendered person, the Church will see not the person in front of them but an individual either sinful, mentally ill or deluded.

Brain science has made a lot of progress in recent years, and has discovered significant differences between the brains of people with XX and XY chromosomes. *New Scientist* reported recently there is in neuroscience “a nuanced debate that encompasses gender as well as sex, and is in no way settled”. Given this uncertainty, it is not impossible that a person with male chromosomes could have a brain with female properties. The Vatican has no competence to decide one way or the other, and perhaps should have had the humility to say so.

And *Dignitas Infinita* may have missed the bigger picture. A significant element in the debate around transgender theory is a debate within feminism about women. Women’s very existence as a reality and therefore the right of women to have their dignity protected, including in sporting events, is both asserted and denied. Without resorting to stereotypes, there was room for the Vatican to say something significant about female dignity in this debate, and the opportunity was lost.

THE TABLET

THE INTERNATIONAL
CATHOLIC WEEKLY
FOUNDED IN 1840

ASSISTED DYING

WHY LEGALISATION IS WRONG

There is a trend across western societies in favour of euthanasia, to which Britain is no exception. The prospect of a change of government later this year makes it likely that Britain may soon take the first steps towards legalising it, under the heading of “assisted suicide”. Meanwhile, the Vatican has waded into the general debate this week, declaring laws that permit euthanasia or assisted suicide are an affront to human dignity.

There is merit in that argument. Human dignity is closely connected to human rights. In the British case, the problem is that the Suicide Act of 1961 removed the risk of prosecution from those who had attempted suicide, but not from those who had tried to assist them. This change in the law produced a unique anomaly – that it is a criminal offence to help someone do something which it is lawful for them to do.

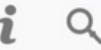
Guidance subsequently issued to police and prosecutors wisely urged them to exercise discretion where the motive was honest and compassionate. In such circumstances, the sick person was unlikely to have been able to die by suicide without help; they were unable, in short, to avail themselves of the freedom to kill themselves the 1961 act had recognised. Most of the debate on assisted dying has concentrated on the issue of personal autonomy – the argument that someone reaching the end of their life should have the right to choose the manner and moment of their death.

That looks rational enough at first glance. But here is where

Dignitas Infinita – the Vatican document on human dignity – is helpful. Dignity, which is intrinsic for human life and therefore inalienable, is not a purely individual matter. It has a social dimension. Anything which injures the dignity of one injures the dignity of all. Anything which weakens the protection of the right to life of one, weakens it for all.

Take a person in hospital who is terminally ill and, in spite of receiving good medical care, is in severe pain. Their illness may be the result of unwise lifestyle choices, but at this time of sickness they are not responsible for their plight. This is fundamental to how they are regarded by family and friends, by medical staff and by the community at large. It is the community’s duty to care for them unconditionally in their powerlessness and weakness. But if assisted dying were to be legalised, that would change. Medical staff would be obliged to offer them the option of a quick death. If they rejected the offer, they would become responsible for their situation. They would be choosing to occupy that precious hospital bed; not to release property they own for the use of the next generation.

They would be choosing to tie up scarce resources to which they do not have an inalienable right. They would be being selfish. That is how they would perceive it, and how they would be perceived. The legalisation of assisted dying would mark a fundamental collapse in the unwritten covenant – the duty of care between the sick and society – that is the bedrock of a society that respects their dignity and their rights.



Dignity unbounded

A new Vatican document defends transgender people while rejecting “gender theory”, and emphasises that those whose dignity is threatened include all those threatened by poverty, discrimination, violence and abuse as well as the unborn and the elderly / **By AUSTEN IVEREIGH**

AMONG THOSE in the Church who minister to gay and transgender people there were heightened nerves in advance of Rome’s doctrinal document on human dignity, released on Monday. It has been five years in gestation, meaning that it predates the makeover of the Vatican’s doctrine dicastery in 2021 and the appointment as its prefect last year of Francis’ confidant, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández. But mainly what had them worried was what Pope Francis in March said at a conference in Rome entitled “Man-Woman: Image of God”. He told the delegates that he had asked for some studies of gender ideology, “this ugly ideology of our time, which erases differences and makes everything the same”. So when the announcement came that the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith would tackle the issue in its new document on human dignity, a lot of people who have spent years building bridges with LGBT folk took up the brace position.

Their fear was that a major Vatican denunciation of gender ideology would be deployed by certain parties in the Church – US culture warriors, some Middle-Eastern patriarchs and bishops in Africa and Eastern Europe – against gay and trans people, legitimating hostility and prejudice against them. As I saw for myself in the synod assembly last October, many senior Church people in Africa and the Middle East claim that homosexuality does not in fact exist, and is a creation of a “gender ideology” imposed by the colonial liberal West. (Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo, president of the African episcopal body SECAM, regularly quotes Vladimir Putin to make this argument.)

This is a long way from Francis’ view, which starts from the reality of homosexuality as a chromosome variant in nature: he regularly tells people that God made them that way. He uses “gender ideology” specifically to describe the notion that the male-female dichotomy is not fixed, and that people can “choose” their gender, which may be made up of fragments of either sex; and that this is the view that is imposed on the developing world by Western agencies. The document repeats that warning, but avoids the Pope’s term “gender ideology” in favour of “gender theory”, which, as it says, is the subject of considerable debate among scientific experts, but at its core risks denying “the greatest possible difference that exists between living beings: sexual difference”.

To reassure a friend with an LGRT ministry

what Francis was seeking to do was defend the rights and dignity of gay and transgender people, while rejecting a false and dangerous ideology that purports to advance their cause. It was a bit like the popes of the early twentieth century, I said, who were passionate promoters of workers’ rights yet categoric in denouncing the doctrinal errors of communism.

Was I right to be relaxed, or were my friend’s fears realised? The first surprise is that you have to get through a lot of *Dignitas Infinita* to find out. Only in five of the 63 paragraphs are “gender theory” and “sex change” mentioned, as the eleventh and twelfth of thirteen “grave violations of human dignity” called out in the final part of the document. (The others are extreme poverty, war, the travail of migrants, human trafficking, sex abuse, violence against women, abortion, surrogacy, euthanasia and assisted suicide, marginalization of people with disabilities, and digital violence). The second surprise is that gender ideology is dealt with categorically, but hardly comprehensively – and much less thoroughly than in the 2019 document from the Congregation for Catholic Education, “Male and Female He Created Them”, which *Dignitas Infinita* barely acknowledges.

AT MONDAY’S press conference, Cardinal Fernández stressed that each of the topics merits a whole document in itself, and that *Dignitas Infinita* simply sketches different threats to human dignity in today’s world. Its main purpose is instead to offer in a single text a summary of the Church’s core teaching on human dignity, above all as it has developed in this pontificate: Pope Francis explicitly asked, notes the preface, that the document “highlight topics closely connected to the theme of dignity, such as poverty, the situation of migrants, violence against women, human trafficking, war and other themes”. *Dignitas Infinita* in this way nicely captures the ways in which this pontificate has stressed such topics as just as much core Catholic concerns as the defence of those dying or yet to be born.

Its novelty, Fernández said, was to organise that teaching around a central axis of an intrinsic (the document calls it “ontological”) dignity which is “beyond all circumstances” because bestowed by our loving Creator; and to develop the argument from there. Hence the title

people with disabilities in 1980 in Osnabrück, Germany: that God loves all men and women with an infinite love that thereby confers on them an “infinite dignity”. What the declaration seeks to show, says Fernández in the preamble, is that respect for human dignity regardless of people’s deficiencies is the “fundamental condition for our societies to be truly just, peaceful, healthy and authentically human”. It is the key to human fraternity.

The document distinguishes four ways in which human dignity can be understood: ontological, moral, social and existential. The most important is the first, which is indelible; we have it because God has willed our existence, and loves us. Moral dignity refers to how we use our freedom, consonant or not with that dignity; we can lose it by how we act. Social dignity refers to our living conditions; some people are forced to live in situations that contradict their inalienable dignity but they do not thereby lose their own dignity. Existential dignity, meanwhile, is

especially relevant nowadays to debates about laws allowing assisted suicide: people might not lack dignity in their living conditions, yet struggle with suffering or loneliness; they or those around them might say that therefore they lack “dignity of life”.

The document sketches the development of the understanding of human dignity in and from the Bible, in the actions and options of the God of Israel, and above all of Jesus. It shows how the implications of these carried on detonating through medieval metaphysics and Renaissance humanism. The modern Christian understanding that people are even more worthy of respect and love when they are weak or suffering “has changed the face of the world”, says the document, giving birth to institutions that take care of the disadvantaged.

Dignitas Infinita then moves to critique erroneous understandings of “personal” dignity: the idea that a person lacks dignity if they are unborn, disabled, or dependent, thus making dignity contingent on a flawed idea of what human beings are. Equally, *Dignitas Infinita* rejects “an arbitrary proliferation of new rights”, many of them at odds with those set out in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which had its 75th anniversary last December. Some of

I think I was right to predict that the document would offer no succour to the culture warriors





PHOTO: ALAMY/DPA, KARL-JOSEF HILDENBRAND

German priest Wolfgang Rothe, right, takes part in a parade celebrating gay and trans rights

and individualistic freedom that claims to impose particular subjective desires and propensities as ‘rights’. The error here is to uproot an understanding of dignity from the givenness of “our shared human nature”, to disrespect creation and its inherent laws, to see dignity as a kind of individualistic emancipation from community and its obligations to serve others.

Thus the document calls out the movement for assisted suicide over its use of the term “dying with dignity”: pain and suffering do not cause a person to lose their dignity; nor does helping a person to take their life help get it back. Even if the suffering person wishes it, helping them to take their own life is “an objective offence against the dignity” of that person, as well as the rest of us, for “the dignity of each person, now matter how weak or burdened by suffering, implies the dignity of us all”.

When it finally gets to gender theory the document begins by affirming the ontological dignity of every person, whatever their sexual orientation, and deplores the way gay and trans people (although it doesn’t use those terms) are discriminated against and

mistreated across the world. In the press conference, Cardinal Fernández said that the Church’s position against the criminalisation of homosexuality was clear, and how appalled he was to hear Catholics praise hardline regimes for gay-bashing laws: they had a deeply deficient grasp of the Gospel’s understanding of human dignity, he said. Asked about the description of homosexuality in the Catechism as “intrinsically disordered”, he said the term was strong, needed a lot of explanation, and that “other words” might be found to distinguish it from “the unique mystery” of a male-female union capable of creating new life.

THIS COMING-TOGETHER in sexual difference is what *Dignitas Humana* upholds and defends as divinely ordered. So while it accepts the conceptual distinction between biological sex and the cultural notion of gender, *Dignitas Infinita* firmly rejects any bid to disassociate the two. By “desiring a personal self-determination”, gender theory succumbs to the age-old “temptation to make oneself God” rather than accepting the givenness of Creation. The male-female polarity is “foundational” and “ineliminable”; it is “the most marvellous of reciprocities”, capable of

generating new life, intrinsic to the divine act of creation; only by acknowledging and accepting this “difference in reciprocity” can each person discover their dignity and identity. Hence “it follows that any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception,” the document goes on, noting that while medical procedures may be necessary to resolve “genital abnormalities” such procedures would not constitute a “sex change”.

Those paragraphs were immediately rejected by the US-based New Ways Ministry as buying into “an outdated theology of gender essentialism”. In reducing gender to just male-female, their statement said, it failed to respect the full dignity of “non-binary” people as well as their “experience”. Yet what is that experience? Gender dysphoria (a very rare and painful condition) sheds little light on the claims of gender theory which, as Maggie Ferguson’s article here last week on the Tavistock disaster showed, has often created havoc in the lives of vulnerable young people, anguished over their identity for reasons that should not lead to surgery on their organs. But all this goes beyond the scope of *Dignitas Infinita*, which does not read like the “study” Francis has called for. A much more comprehensive theological case is needed, one that takes on the best evidence of science and the claims of gender theory, while engaging the experience of Catholics who claim to be transgender.

While surprised by how little the document actually said on gender theory, I think I was right to predict that it would offer no succour to the culture warriors. But my friend is not convinced. He thinks the document “gives licence” to bishops and others who want to condemn and exclude vulnerable transgender people. If he’s right, at least they cannot now do so without being judged by a central teaching of the Christian faith, solemnly re-affirmed by Rome, that derives from God’s loving creative act.

Austen Ivereigh’s latest book is *First Belong to God: On Retreat with Pope Francis* (Messenger Publications).



Tablet Webinar

Women and the Church: Are women discerning their baptismal calling?

“To enable the flowering of the feminine is to make the Church whole.”



Join Anne-Marie O’Riordan, research associate at the Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology as she looks at why the Catholic Church should have a serious conversation with a wide range of contemporary Catholic women and ask them who they understand themselves to be and what their baptismal callings are. In the spirit of Pope Francis’ recent Apostolic Letter to theologians, *Ad theologiam promovendam*, she asks why the Church isn’t heeding the call to gather this vital information as part of the ongoing synodal process.

Wednesday 15 May 2024, 6pm – 7pm BST

For more information and to purchase tickets for this webinar, visit www.thetablet.co.uk/events

SEBASTIAN MILBANK



Dignitas Infinita has offended progressives and traditionalists

burial at St Patrick's and at most of Liverpool's other churchyards was prohibited.

The only bodies remaining at St Patrick's are in four vaults in the crypt. Three have been opened and surveyed in an operation that left the coffins undisturbed. These vaults were re-sealed in brick, but a fourth has a heavy metal door which is opened so we can peer inside. By the light of a mobile phone we can see a large coffin with a cross. It is covered in cloth that was once bright red; Gothic lettering is discernible around the border. To the right is a plainer coffin, and between them are two tiny ones, both falling apart. These bring a surge of sadness at the death of two babies 200 years ago.

The vault belonged to Peter Roberts, a sail-maker who died aged 45 on 30 March 1828, seven months after the formal opening of the church. Maria Murray, who has family links to the parish going back to the 1840s, has been investigating the early congregations. By studying inscriptions on gravestones, burial records, census records and local newspaper archives, Murray is building up a picture of a large community of professional people. A pattern is emerging of individuals buying plots not just for their immediate family, but also for godparents and neighbours. "Although you've got the individual burials and the vaults, the families are all interlinked," she explains. "They're godparents to each other's children, they're in business together, and you can just see there's an absolutely thriving community that's coming through."

THERE ARE SEVEN coffins in the Roberts vault. Maria has tentatively identified among them Peter Roberts' brother-in-law, Richard Wade, a tall chandler, and two nephews, one of whom, Aloysius Roberts, died as a baby. In the Marsh family vault, Maria learned the story of two brothers buried there. Thomas and John, aged 20 and 19, were killed when a chimney from a neighbouring house crashed into their home in Great George Square during a hurricane in 1839.

Maria's study of burial records shows that in the early years, people were interred in individual graves, but as time went on pits were increasingly used: "You've got lists of lists of people who are being buried in them." These are the poor, their lives cut short by overwork, hunger and disease. Maria only has their names to go on but she intends to find out all she can.

"I want to give them back their identity," she says.

The research continues as do the phases of an ambitious plan to restore the church. Michael O'Neill points to the plaque on the front which shows it was begun in 1821 but gives only AD as the date when it was finished. "That is because the work of the Church never ends," he says.

Elena Curti is a former deputy editor of The Tablet. Her books, *Fifty Churches to See Before You Die*, and the sequel, *Another Fifty Churches*, are published by Gracewing (£14.99 each).



The declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Infinita: On Human Dignity*, sent shock waves through the secular press. This was, in large part, thanks to its headline-grabbing denunciation of "gender theory". Perhaps this should have come as less of a surprise given Pope Francis' well-documented and forceful statements on the topic – but there is a difference between the remarks of a pope and a doctrinal declaration, especially one written in such unambiguous terms.

According to *Dignitas Infinita*: "Any sex-change intervention, as a rule, risks threatening the unique dignity the person has received from the moment of conception." It condemns the "arbitrary proliferation of new rights" and "gender theory" which, it says, "amounts to a concession to the age-old temptation to make oneself God". Alongside firm reassertions of the Church's opposition to surrogacy, abortion and euthanasia, this was a furious broadside against the secular progressive worldview.

The sharpest reactions were, predictably, in the United States, where gender ideology is firmly entrenched on the left. The LGBT-affirming Catholic group New Ways Ministry was among the chorus of woe. It lamented that the declaration had ignored the "lived experience" of trans people and accused the Vatican of "propagating ideas that lead to physical harm to transgender, non-binary, and other LGBTQ+ people".

One might have imagined that conservative Catholic critics of the Pope would have been celebrating, but not so. Neo-Thomist theologian Edward Feser objected to the idea of "infinite dignity" itself, writing: "No, as the Catholic faith has always taught, only a single human person possesses that – Christ, and only because He is God, not because He is human. God alone has infinite dignity."

It's striking how much the idea that humans, by their very nature, might have inherent, even infinite, dignity, offends both Catholic progressives and traditionalists. For the former, dignity is tied to our individual will, not our given nature – our capacity for choice and freedom. For the latter, dignity grants too much to that nature, detracting from supernatural grace.

Lurking behind both lines of attack, if you look carefully, is a concern with

power. Whether the reference point is Carl Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction or Foucault's "discourses of power", much modern political analysis seems to reduce to this logic. Whether that coercive power is vested in individuals (and the technocratic superstructures that enforce individual autonomy), or in an authoritative clerisy (as the passive, almost Calvinistic sense of dignity as something entirely marred by the fall and only given by a corrective grace militates towards), both subtly push us away from an Augustinian vision of a politics ordered by love, rather than power relations.

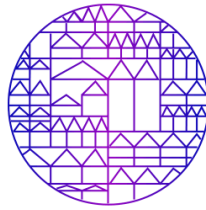
But as Aquinas writes, even in our fallen state "man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men". Moreover, our possession of the image of God can be said to give us an infinite dignity, in two senses. Firstly, "things other than God can be relatively infinite, but not absolutely infinite" – human beings by their nature possess infinite potential, but not actual infinity, or, in the language of modern philosophy, we are "transfinite", bounded infinities, but not "absolutely" infinite, as God is. Secondly we share God's infinite and eternal life analogically, as we are made in his image: "as some receive immutability from Him, they share in His eternity".

Even if not all humankind accepts God's infinite grace, they are surely fitted to receive it, and the fall, though it mars that image, can never abolish it, or change our nature: one properly named as infinite dignity. Such an idea, then, is hardly a fifteenth-century invention of the humanists, but has a genuine place and meaning in classical theology.

The concept of divine dignity is unsettling to many because it unseats both the sovereign individual and the sovereign ruler; the two bases of modern politics and public life. It directs us away from the seductive logic of competition and conflict, and forces us to confront the inherent worth of every person. It places not just rights, but duties in the hands of everyone, and calls us to take a part in the salvific work of the Church.



Sebastian Milbank is executive editor of The Critic.



Commonweal

DIGNITY AND GENDER *Evaluating 'Dignitas Infinita'*



On April 8, to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith released the Declaration *Dignitas Infinita*. Laying out a forceful vision of the indelible “dignity of the human person in Christian anthropology,” the document states, “every human person possesses an infinite dignity, inalienably grounded in his or her very being, which prevails in and beyond every circumstance, state, or situation the person may ever encounter.”

Most of the Declaration is cogent and compelling. The sections

on gender theory and sex change, however, have triggered critical reactions among many LGBT people and their allies. While the document affirms the dignity of “every person, regardless of sexual orientation” and rejects “every sign of unjust discrimination,” the Editors write **in the May editorial** that its “peremptory and somewhat confusing critique of ‘gender theory’ and ‘sex change’ is likely to reinforce the very discrimination it explicitly condemns.” Because the declaration has so little to say about the pastoral care of transgender people, the Editors continue, “the important questions it raises about identity and the limits of self-determination are unlikely to get a hearing among the very people who have the most at stake in this discussion—those who sincerely believe that their gender does not correspond to their sex.”

Read the editorial **here**.

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/dignity-and-gender?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=7d40e3c5fd-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-7d40e3c5fd-92527613

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On April 8th, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) released a new document about the infinite dignity of the human person, [Dignitas Infinita](#).

More specifically, *Dignitas Infinita* is a Declaration (the same kind of document as [Fiducia Supplicans](#)) that was approved and signed by the pope and thus part of the ordinary magisterium of the . . .

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Tracing Threads: Development of Doctrine in "Dignitas Infinita"

by [Nathan Turowsky](#)



Dignitas infinita, the new DDF declaration on human dignity and various contemporary practices that threaten it, reads mostly like a document that reaffirms traditional prohibitions—sometimes quite sternly so, such as in the section on “gender theory,” which I think is thorny in some ways but don’t really want to complain about at length.

There are, however, several points at which the document shows doctrinal development on one subject or another.

This begins with the definition of dignity itself, which proposes a fourfold distinction between . . .

[...Read post https://wherepeteris.com/tracing-threads-development-of-doctrine-in-dignitas-infinita/](https://wherepeteris.com/tracing-threads-development-of-doctrine-in-dignitas-infinita/)

AT THE VATICAN, POPE FRANCIS' OPPONENTS ARE MANEUVERING



More than 11 years into his tenure, Pope Francis is increasingly criticized by opponents who are intensifying their accusations, anticipating the nearing end of his pontificate.

Read more > https://international.la-croix.com/religion/at-the-vatican-pope-francis-opponents-are-maneuvering?at_source=piano&at_medium=email&at_campaign=11588&pnespid=Xb0sq0gE_CNLMk6FuoJRFUNJqRIIny_p4qQwSAfsNbY7KyfFsDIIdC6M.Svr2EDcCytuV7AVSmbw

JESUIT THINGS

Let Their Voices Be Heard

Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific Diakonia 2024 Quarter 1



[Download full newsletter](#)

https://mcusercontent.com/ef2e645f85e66557028d8e3de/files/94525889-0fcb-3bd0-695a-1372008a15b8/Diakonia2024Q1_LetTheirVoicesBeHeard.01.pdf

The Jesuits' musical legacy: A mission opera debuts in Bolivia



[Phillip Alcon Ganir, S.J.](#) April 19, 2024



Scott Loudon and his team

filming his documentary, 'Anonimo' (photo courtesy of Scott Loudon)

Like many other films that suffered financially during the Covid-19 pandemic, Scott Loudon's [documentary](#) on the music of the Jesuit reductions in South America stalled. But the project never died. Loudon's faith as a Protestant evangelical and a former missionary, along with his passion for these missions, helped him focus on God's providence even in light of setbacks.

READ ON:

<https://www.americamagazine.org/arts-culture/2024/04/19/bolivia-jesuit-reductions-opera-247763>

OTHER THINGS

Daniel Dominguez



Allowing the greater creative agent to proceed.

Announcing my most recent body of work which will be exhibited as a series of lectures, in the **first three Wednesdays in May, 2024**. I have been invited to present by the Catalyst for Renewal organisation as part of their 2024 Call to Be lecture series (see booking details below).

The Call to Be series is an attempt to reflect on our calling to discover our transcendent self. The inspiration behind this series, Fr Michael Whelan SM PhD writes...

“This call to be is experienced within a recognition of a greater good,

a presence beyond, a mystery. By ‘mystery’ we mean the inexhaustible intelligibility that is constantly there before us”.

Over 300 illustrated drawings being used to form the basis of these lectures.

All three lectures loosely follow my feeble attempts to answer this Call to Be, as an artist, as an educator and as a Catholic. A brief outline of my lecture topic and the different lecture themes is outlined below.



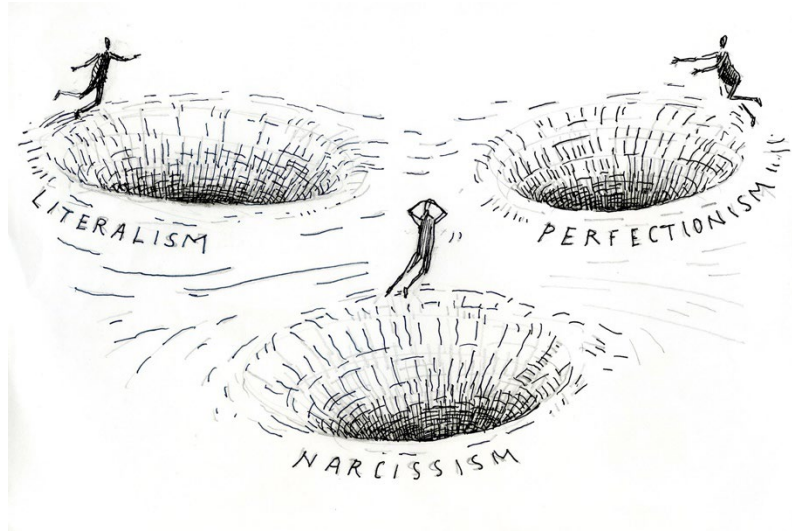
Maintaining a safe creative environment

The Call to Be Lecture Series 2024 presents

The Artist's Story:

Lecturer: Daniel Dominguez

“Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world”. Explore how the “call to be” is a call to discover our transcendent self and a creative centre that can hold. How did we move from a society of collective religious practice to one of an individual experience of creativity and spirituality? What role does education play in breaking apart and sharing our understanding of the transcendent? How does Catholicism provide a bridge to re-establish a shared foundation of faith and creativity. Journey with an artist, educator and Catholic as he considers answers to these critical questions through discussion and the contemplative form of drawing.



The three great pitfalls



The foundation of critical thinking and the pinnacle of creative thinking, and the passage in between.

Lecture 1: The story of the artist (Wed 1 May 10-12pm)

This lecture follows my path as an artist and the path of Modern creativity I belong to, as it has risen and fallen over the last 500 years. In particular, I look at the later pre-eminence of Postmodernism and the cultural legacy of following a urinal as a cultural icon.

Lecture 2: The story of the educator (Wed 8 May 10-12pm)

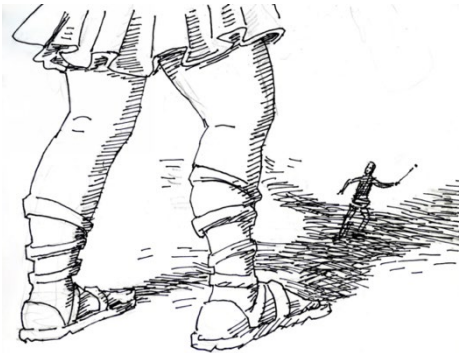
This lecture reflects on my experiences as an art educator and the critical problems of attempting to share the unsharable: the sacred process of creativity. We will examine how I have addressed this problem through the creation of a drawing curriculum and the consequences of approaching a sacred subject with a such prescriptive approach.

Lecture 3: The story of the Catholic (Wed 15 May 10-12pm)

This lecture looks at the Catholic promise, to provide a passage from the critical to the creative, delivering the broken sinner to eternal salvation. Examined here is the creative symbolic process I have followed to resolve the critical problems of my work, as an artist and educator, exploring the value of using symbols to answer the critical problems of our time.



“...the most influential artwork of the 20th century”



A critical question leading to a creative answer

All lectures held in the Crypt of St Patricks Church,

20 Grosvenor St, The Rocks

To be held on 1, 8, 15 May 10am-noon, cost \$90.

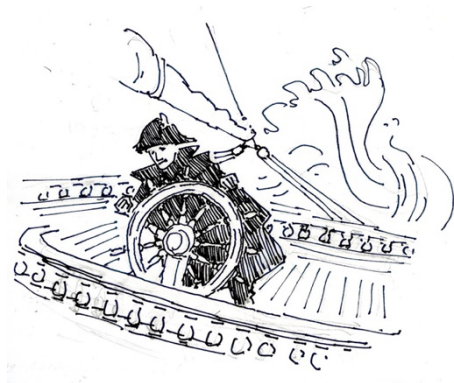
Please register and pay

at <https://www.trybooking.com/CPXSG>

For more information

see <https://catalystforrenewal.org.au/events>

or email: thecalltobe@gmail.com



Holding on to the Serenity Prayer

Daniel Dominguez

[Admired Leadership Field Notes](#)

Are You Culturally Intelligent?



Being *culturally intelligent* doesn't mean you can speak multiple languages or that you have spent a lot of time visiting other countries and cultures.

But it does mean you have an open mind and appreciate that different cultures have distinctive norms, values, and practices. The goal of a culturally intelligent leader is to navigate cross-cultural situations with sensitivity through respectful behavior.

Interacting with the people and customs from different cultures requires a deep understanding of what counts as respect and trust in that particular culture. This entails spending the time to educate yourself in the values, customs, and communication styles relevant in the common situations found in that culture.

In addition to asking colleagues who have grown up in various cultures to point out essential differences, good leaders seek out online resources, books, and workshops that can assist in this effort. Culturally intelligent leaders question their assumptions and operate from curiosity, showing a deep respect for the customs and traditions important in that culture.

Of the many behaviors that communicate respect, everyday gestures play a pivotal role. In nearly every culture, specific gestures carry a tremendous meaning to others. Gestures that involve physical touching and handshakes, eye contact, distance in personal space, and head movements matter most.

Understanding how a particular culture interprets the gestures in those four categories allows leaders to become a quick study and to navigate respectful behavior successfully on short notice. For instance, engaging in the appropriate head nodding is important in most cultures, as nodding and head shaking convey respectful agreement or disagreement depending on the culture in question.

There is an enormous amount of information to consume when studying the customs and preferred communication styles of different cultures. It can take years to fully appreciate and understand the nuances involved in shaping meaning in a given culture. Gestures give leaders a shortcut to behave respectfully on relatively short notice. Get the gestures in those four categories right, and leaders can learn to show up in a trustful way.

So, the next time you are headed to a different culture, spend the time on gestures first. Respect starts with small acts. The smallest gestures often carry the most weight and display your cultural intelligence with aplomb.



AN IMPOSSIBLE FRATERNITY?

Welcome to the April issue of La Civiltà Cattolica, English edition.

The article “*An Impossible Fraternity?*” explores the paradoxical nature of humanity, where our core need for connection can lead to both violence and compassion. It argues that critical thought and open dialogue can bridge this divide, citing the Swallow Project as an example.

Philosopher Philip Clayton argues that traditional theological language struggles in discussions with other disciplines. Leandro Sequeiros’ article “*Philip Clayton and his Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Person*” examines Clayton’s views on the concept of “person” and its implications for the idea of a personal God.

In the article “*Disability and Incarnation,*” Justin Glyn proposes that Christ’s humanity inherently included disability, not just through the crucifixion, but from the start. This challenges us to see limitations as part of being human and fosters deeper connections with God and others in our imperfect lives.

The article “*The Ignatian Art of Management*” by Daniel Izuzquiza Regalado explores a lesser-known aspect of St. Ignatius’ letters – his guidance on practical matters. By analyzing this correspondence, Regalado reveals Ignatius’ skills as an administrator and offers insights for those seeking to integrate faith with business management.

Also in this issue:

[Conscious Machines? Reflections on so-called 'Artificial Intelligence', Ferenc Patsch](#)

[Fr. Girolamo de Angelis, Missionary and Martyr in Japan in 1623, Giancarlo Pani](#)

[The Art of Maria Callas, Giovanni Arledler](#)

[Acts 27: Storm and Salvation for All, Marc Rastoin](#)

[War and Violence According to the Bible, Saverio](#)

[Corradino and Giancarlo Pani](#)

[Handala, the Palestinian Child who said Enough to the Horror of War, Giancarlo Pani](#)

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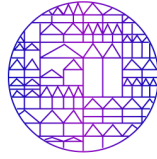
La Civiltà Cattolica provides full digital access to all the articles published in our English edition since the first issue in February, 2017.

Also, subscribers will find downloads of all digital editions based on the subscription period they have opted for in PDF or e-pub formats for free from [My Downloads](#).

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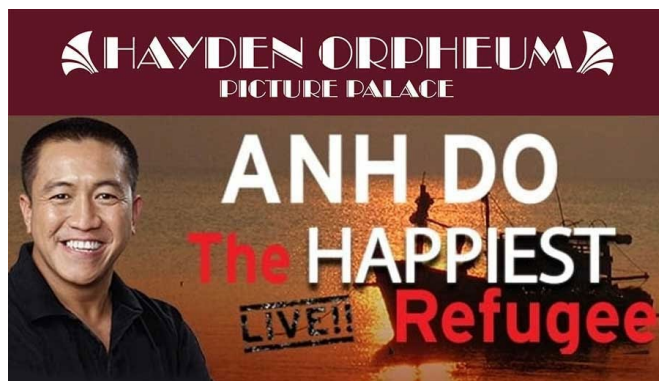
Commonweal

Will Trumpism Spare Catholicism?

Massimo Faggioli

“Just over six months out from the 2024 presidential election, it could be said that [a ‘Trump-Strickland’ axis may be coming into existence.](#)”

https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/will-trumpism-spare-catholicism?utm_source=Main+Reader+List&utm_campaign=62c1455766-92527613-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_16_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_407bf353a2-62c1455766-92527613



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“irrepressible good humour, infectious energy and bright optimism”

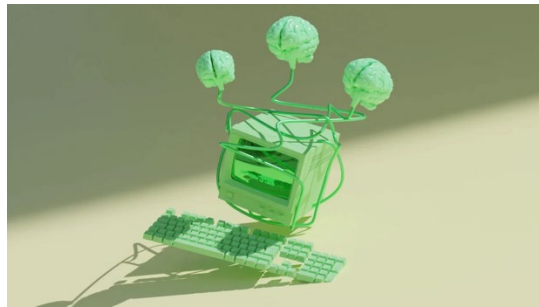
The Sydney Morning Herald

“the happiest audience experience I have ever had”

Arts Hub

“Two thumbs, five stars, show of the season”

www.themusic.com.au



When you're feeling nervous about AI — worried it will flood the world with lousy content or subjugate the human race and breed us with poodles, so we won't shed — try asking ChatGPT to generate a bunch of names. For a show, a product, a pet, whatever.

We can pretty much promise you the result will be bad. Like, hilariously bad. Past attempts at getting its help to name new Descript features have produced such delightfully terrible ideas as "Gatherent," "Draftorax," and "Speakifyx."

No technology is going to rule the world if that's the best it can do. But even if it's slightly comforting, it's also frustrating — because we keep hearing that AI will be a great brainstorming partner.

Turns out though, that AI actually *can* be good at brainstorming — if you know how to prompt it. But to learn

you have to put in tons of practice, trial and error, time and effort.

Or, you can just read [this article](#) by Descript's resident expert on AI+creativity, Briana Brownell. This time she's reporting on a study that discovered the best way to prompt AI for brainstorming.

Briana also makes another important point: humans aren't very good at brainstorming either. Have you ever spent an hour in a brainstorming session that produced absolutely nothing useful? Bet you have.

https://www.descript.com/blog/article/best-ai-brainstorming-prompt?utm_source=braze&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_week16