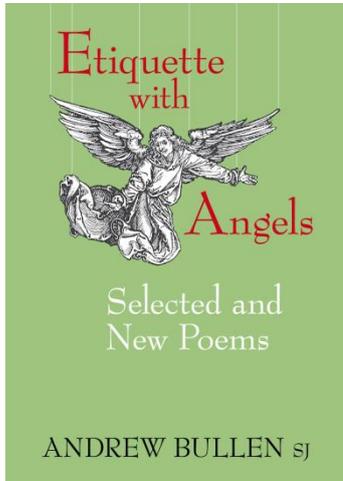




Not from the Pulpit: Fr Andrew Bullen SJ



You might have heard a rumour that I am publishing a book of poems. It's true, and if you would like to see how a book is launched you are very welcome to join us, as the advertisement below indicates. For me, this has taken a long time coming, and it is something of a private miracle to actually know it is happening – I feel a mixture of exhilaration and vulnerability. The first poem is called "Spiritual", a kind of invocation, written after/while watching a Harlem dance troupe on TV, ages ago:

Give me the reticent bravura of dance
 when the music is slow,
 the gestures supple, quick;
 let it be sassy, Lord, and statuesque,
 sweaty-tranquil,
 and inside itself, like water;
 intent like the body,
 mobile and inventive, and
 spiritual.

And the last poem, much more recent, refers to my regular walking circuit in Royal Park, Melbourne, skirting a vast inaccessible grassland about two kilometers by crow flight from the GPO: "So why Melbourne, Andy?":

Close to the city centre
 in the confines of the park,
 the wild grasses are wild.
 Their names are science of common,
 the first recondite, and the common
 vaguely known, but they grow
 hip-high, profuse over the hillrise and beyond,
 sweet smelling in gusts, in waves of blanched colours,
 impenetrable even to dogs, here and there a stalk stands out.
 Praise also the autonomy of nameless birds.

Parish Notices

Book Launch Invitation - Etiquette with Angels

Thurs 24 May @ 6.30pm for 7.00pm, Ron Dyer Centre

RSVP by Fri 18th May to judyt@northsydney Catholics.com or 8918 4147

You are invited to attend Loreto Federation 2018



18 – 20 May @ Loreto Normanhurst

Guest Speakers: Senator The Hon Kristina Keneally, Jenny Brockie, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, Frank Brennan SJ AO and Annie Crawford AM.– please visit the Loreto Federation website for the full program, speaker profiles and registration information. Join us for the full weekend, one day or just the Gala Dinner. Loreto Federation Committee 2018 Email: federation@loreto.nsw.edu.au

Readings

First Reading

[Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48](#)

The Holy Spirit descends on Jews and Gentiles alike.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 97:1-4. R. see v.2](#)

The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

[or](#)

Alleluia.

Second Reading

[1 Jn 4:7-10](#)

One without love does not know God.

[1 Jn 4:11-16](#)

Gospel Acclamation

[Jn 14:23](#)

[cf. Jn 14:18](#)

Gospel

[Jn 15:9-17](#)

In Our Prayers

Baptisms

Grace Robertson, Gabriela Menendez, Victoria Menendez, Theo Green, Patrick McGready, Hilary McNeill

Weddings

Jason Hitch & Carmen Jing

Sick

Ron Whitmore, Sr Natalina Todeschini, Brian McClosky, Rosa Maria Santos, Bruce Horsfield, John Fitzgerald, Sandra Tsui, Mary O'Connor, Joyce Paton, Josephine Rowe, Lew Smith

Recently Deceased

Patricia Joan Collins, Denis Percy, David Burke, Ted Meagher, Maureen Grant, Ethna Gallagher, Sir Eric Paul McClintock, Brother Thomas More Davison, Helen McCauley, David Dalton, Fr Peter McGrath cp, R. Ignatius Soehardjo Wiryohartono, Craig Chase, Charlie O'Connor, Reece Rong (5yrs), Paul Bellanto (SAC 1976)

Fr Jose-Maria Eneadaguila SJ, Mary Patricia Smith, Gavin O'Connor, Viviane Hartigan, Michelle Ann Fishburn

Anniversaries

Emily Olivia Guzman, Leslie Betts

Conversations

Subverting idolatry in churches and banks – Andrew Hamilton SJ

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Even after three weeks, the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry has come to resemble the earlier Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

We have seen the same initial resistance to a public enquiry, the same insistence that revelations of sexual or financial abuse reflected a few bad apples and not a bad culture, the same endorsement when the royal commission was called, and the same shaming as the public questioning of hapless senior officials followed damning evidence of abuse and of the failure to address it.

We have also seen evidence of the same incompetent management, whose very incompetence perpetuated abuse, diffused responsibility for it, and deepened the harm done by it. There was the same failure to maintain adequate systems of reporting; the same quiet moving on or transferring officers guilty of financial or sexual abuse; the same unwillingness to find out about the extent of abuse and the same slowness to offer redress.

We have seen evidence, too, of the same reluctance of senior management to know about the abuse; the same priority given to preserving the reputation of financial or church institutions; the same muted complaints of unfairness and of ignoring the contribution to society of the respective institutions; the same assistance in cover-up by regulating officers, whether in government departments, police or ASIC, effectively leaving the institutions a free hand to ignore the abuse.

We have seen the same reluctance to admit to a culture in which abuse, sexual or financial, flourishes; the same public scepticism whether the institutions will ever reform themselves; and perhaps the same lull in conversation and the same inquisitorial gaze when one admits to being either a Catholic priest or a senior bank executive.

No doubt these claimed similarities could be expanded on or questioned in detail. But to observers who share a personal and public-spirited interest in the decent functioning and trustworthiness both of financial institutions and of churches, they surely raise larger questions beyond structures of governance, remuneration, legal penalties and compensation. They invite reflection on why two apparently different forms of institution should behave in such similar ways.

An unsophisticated observer might respond that churches, banks, financial institutions and big corporations — which so far have avoided Royal Commissions — are all in fact religious organisations. Behind the metrics, the microeconomic analyses and the organisational complexity of financial institutions, as well as of churches, lies the worship of a divinity which shapes their ends.

"When the church is made into an idol, the values of its founder are inevitably compromised. This leads to the corruption and consequent loss of a good name."

In the case of financial institutions it is wealth — national, institutional and individual. Adherents of the cult see their ultimate end as the profitability of their institution, which — because wealth is one and undivided — is *ipso facto* the salvation also of the nation. The sign of individual election is to share in that wealth by promotion, by the high salaries, bonuses and status that go with them.

In Christian preaching, the cult of wealth is called idolatry, defined as the worship of images instead of the living God of Jesus Christ. Idolatry can inspire great dedication and self-sacrifice in its adherents. Its weakness is that the claim of its deity to be the highest value for society, institution and individual must inevitably override such other values as honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness and accountability. The corruption that inevitably ensues reveals the idols to be false gods, not worthy of human worship.

The same unsophisticated observer might also remark the same recurrent idolatry in the Catholic Church. The church of God comes to be worshipped instead of the God of the church. The living God of Jesus Christ is identified with the interests of the church, and self-sacrificing service of the church is identified with protecting the reputation of the church and its ministers. The signs of God's favour are then to be found in the approval of one's superiors and by promotion based on loyalty.

When the church is made into an idol, the values of its founder — transparency to the truth, unconditional love of others and especially the most disregarded, and attentiveness to the voice of God in the messy daily reality of human society and the world — are inevitably compromised. This leads to the corruption and consequent loss of a good name.

The wise and prudent of this world will no doubt accuse the unsophisticated observer of naivety in claiming that Catholics should be more concerned about idolatry than about unbelief, and that financial institutions should be more concerned about greed than about diminished profitability. But the unsophisticated observer may observe that the track record of the wise and prudent of this world is not great in recognising and calling out idols.