



Catholics for Renewal - News Update

Royal Commission final 'wrap-up' Hearings and beyond

Special Issue No.2, 2017, Friday 24 February, Revised 25/02/2017

larger print News Update [HERE](#)

CORRECTION

This revised Newsletter corrects an incorrect LINK associated with the paper "A People not a Pyramid" in last night's version of this newsletter. To access that correct paper please use only the revised link below. Apologies for any inconvenience.

Editorial

After what will be nearly 5 years of thorough investigation and research by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Australian Catholic Church has now publicly and gratefully acknowledged this as having been essential and invaluable. Recommendations from the Commission are due to be presented to the Government

in December. What can be already said in relation to its study is that this Commission has been the most comprehensive, intensive and thorough public review of the Australian Catholic Church in its history, with direct impact on the universal Catholic Church. Any failure of the Church now to adequately address Child Sexual Abuse would be an even greater moral as well as criminal failing and would seriously further erode the Church.



However as outlined by five Australian Archbishops during their final two days of wrap-up Hearings a number of significant administrative changes have already been introduced within the Church towards a response as a result of the Royal Commission, while others that were described are being planned or considered. With profoundly expressed sorrow, humility, remorse and further apology to victims and families, the Archbishops and other Church witnesses have finally now fully acknowledged the scale and horror of Child sexual abuse and Church complicity in cover-up. Witnesses including those at today's final 'wrap-up' Hearings have expressed eagerness to be further guided by forthcoming Royal Commission Recommendations.

Why was a Royal Commission necessary in the first place and why has church acknowledgement of such extensive and horrific abuse for so long only now started? Church Archbishops have offered answers themselves - Lack of awareness, understanding and sensitivity, lack of listening, lack of gender balance in decision making, lack of openness, lack of transparency, lack of episcopal communication, lack of consultation and facility for committed engagement of all members of the church, lack of lay inclusion, lack of processes, importantly poor priestly formation and, most of all a clericalist Church culture in need of dramatic overall (as was originally intended by Vatican II). The 2020 Plenary with involvement of all in the Church was exemplified as an important part of the way forward.

We are publishing this special newsletter with two very relevant articles, one by David Timbs on the Church as A People not a Pyramid. Christianity. Leadership in a Society of Equals, and another by Fr Peter Day of the Canberra Goulburn archdiocese about the now apparent impact of the toxic culture of clericalism in the clerical child sexual abuse scandal.

As the Royal Commission now prepares to write its report for submission to governments at the end of the year, Catholics for Renewal is turning its attention to how the lessons already learned from the Royal Commission's work can be applied to the radical renewal of the Church. The question that has been constantly addressed by Catholics for Renewal is: "How could the leadership of our Church effectively facilitate clerical child sexual abuse, whilst espousing Christian values that condemn such behaviour?" It is more than a matter of administrative improvements. We have argued that the Church's global governance is dysfunctional and must be reformed. Image: Gary Waters Ikon Getty Images

A People not a Pyramid

Christianity: Leadership in a Society of Equals, David Timbs, Part 1

Abstract

One of the greatest achievements of the Second Vatican Council was to recover and reappropriate the original grace and inspiration of the Church's beginnings. This provided the insight and empowerment for Vatican II to embrace with courage a revolutionary programme of fundamental rejuvenation and reform of Church life. Among the most profoundly liberating re-discoveries of the Council was the reaffirmation of the Church's identity as the People of God. The reclamation of this profoundly biblical description of the Church is reflected in the Council's teaching on the baptismal equality of all its members. Pope Paul VI sought to enrich this even further by commissioning a Fundamental Law of the Church. By this, he intended to consolidate the central notion of the People of God by spelling out the rights and obligations of all Catholics. Pope Paul envisaged that the Fundamental Law would provide a moral standard by which the Code of Canon Law would be interpreted.

Pope Paul's initiative was shelved following his death and only a few elements of his Fundamental Law survived in the revised Code of Canon Law published by John Paul II in 1983. In recent times, however, Catholics around the world have sought to revive Paul VI's *Lex Ecclesiae Fundamentalis*. This essay attempts to explain some of the major reasons why this is both opportune and even vital for the rationale and viability of the ongoing systemic reform and renewal of life, leadership and culture of the Catholic Church. Special attention is given to the foundational theological concept of the Church as a community of baptised, free individuals who choose to become members of a society of equals rooted in the new humanity realised in Jesus. This notion of Church citizenship has profound implications for all aspects of Ecclesiology and especially in relation to the current debates about the Church's doctrine, structure, its leadership and the role of the laity.

Read Paper [HERE](#)



The smell of the sheep

Extract from paper by Peter Day, linked to source with permission of author, 17 February 2017

The catastrophe that is sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and the cultural factors that have contributed to it are seriously complex, and unravelling the mess will take a generation... or two, or three! One readily identifiable and accepted contributor to this disaster is clericalism. In essence, the abusive wielding of power by clergy - lording it over others, rather than serving them. As Lord Acton said insightfully over a century ago, "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." And while many of our bishops seem genuinely keen to eradicate this dysfunctional power imbalance; is it not the case that the very culture in which they find themselves is at the heart of the problem? For instance, the process of selecting bishops is, itself, clericalism writ large: a series of generally secret actions bereft of transparency and overseen by a select few ordained males. It is emblematic of the Catholic hierarchical project; one that, for the most part, totally ignores and sidelines the people of God, thus, trashing the Vatican II notion of "the priesthood of the baptised"....[\(Source\)](#)

Fr Peter Day is a Catholic Priest in the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese.

News and Opinion Pieces

Collectively telling their own story these recent Catholics For Renewal website News & Opinion items provide a snapshot of some significant Church issues and may be accessed [HERE](#)

- Royal Commission: Response to allegations of Child Sexual abuse was criminally negligent
- UK Cardinal says on 'Amoris' we follow the Pope's lead
- Bishop Long recalls abuse
- Royal Commission learns about Catholic Professional Standards
- The need for new Church Leadership
- Royal Commission final week of 'wrap-up' Hearings.
- RC's release of full data report on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church
- What sort of bishops do Catholics want?
- Church has paid out \$276 million in abuse claims
- The smell of the sheep
- A conversation about Amoris Laetitia
- Facing blowback, Pope talks brotherhood, shadow side of criticism
- Report harrowing and humiliating: Fisher
- Cultural change the key to protecting children: Archbishop Coleridge Extract
- Time to repeal 'ugly' Mass translation
- Hearing update on Day 3 of the Royal Commission
- German bishops' interpretation of 'Amoris Laetitia' is broadest to date
- Six archbishops to be examined by Australian judge
- Commission reports 4444 alleged incidents
- Seven per cent of priests in Australia involved in abuse of children, RC announces

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