



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC
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NEWSLETTER

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Christmas Greeting

The Councilors of the ACHS thank members and those who have contributed to the Society in 2017 for their support and involvement. We look forward to your continued membership and support of the Society and wish you, your families and colleagues a happy and holy Christmas and that God will bless you in 2018.

The Council also encourages members to promote the Society and invite friends, colleagues and others to attend our functions and to join the Society.

ACHS November 2017 Meeting Sydney.

Date and time: Sunday 19 November 2017. 2:00pm

Location: Crypt Hall of St Patrick's at Church Hill [Grosvenor Street], The Rocks.

Speaker: Mr Mark Aarons. Author, former ABC investigative Reporter and NSW ministerial advisor *with* Mr John Grenville Former Federal Secretary of the Federated Clerks' Union

Topic: *"The Show": Another Side of Santamaria's Movement*

Enquiries: Dr John Carmody, President ACHS: john.carmody@sydney.edu.au

ACHS 2017 Annual Christmas Mass and Lunch.

Date and time: Saturday 2 December 2017. Mass 12:00pm. Lunch 12:30 pm

Location: Mary MacKillop Centre Mount Street North Sydney.

Speaker: Mr Nathan Pitt. Inaugural Conaci Scholar ACU, introduced by Professor Anne Cummins, Deputy Vice-Chancellor ACU

Cost \$55. A booking form will be enclosed with this newsletter.

RSVP: 20 November 2017. **Further information:** Email secretaryachs@gmail.com

Sydney Meetings February to April 2018

This information is correct as at 24 October 2017, but changes can occur.

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
18 February	<i>A maker of the Australian Catholic Story: John McEncroe</i>	Emeritus Professor Fr Edmund Campion: author, historian formerly Professor of History, Catholic Institute of Sydney.
18 March	<i>The bureaucratisation of Catholic schooling and the emergence of the Catholic Education Office</i>	Br Dr Kelvin Canavan fms. Executive Director Emeritus Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Sydney and Visiting Professor: University of Notre Dame and ACU
15 April	1:30pm. Annual General Meeting and Election of Councillors. 2:00pm April Meeting and Presentation.	Speaker and topic for April meeting to be advised.

Location, time and contact: Sunday afternoons at 2.00pm (unless otherwise stated) in the Crypt of St Patrick's at Church Hill [Grosvenor Street], The Rocks. Admission is free and does not require membership of ACHS, but a donation is welcome. **Enquiries to:** **Dr John Carmody**, President ACHS john.carmody@sydney.edu.au

Further information see: ACHS website: <http://www.australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au>.

ACHS Melbourne Chapter November 2017 Meeting

Date and time: Monday, 13 November 2017. 2:00.

Location: Seminar Room. Dorish Maru College Box Hill.

Speaker and topic: To be advised. The speaker listed in previous notices is unable to attend.

Contact Fr Larry Nemer email: nemerlarry@gmail.com

Melbourne Meetings 2018

Proposed dates and times: 2:00 to 3:30pm Monday, March 5th; Monday 4th June; Monday, 3rd September; and Monday, 12th November.

The speakers and topics are to be advised.

Location: Seminar Room of Dorish Maru College, Box Hill.

Contact Fr Larry Nemer email: nemerlarry@gmail.com

ACHS 2018 Membership subscriptions

These are due on 1 January 2018. If they are not paid by 1 May Membership ceases and you would need to reapply for membership. A membership renewal forms is included in the envelope with this Newsletter.

ACHS Sydney meeting: Sunday 20 August 2017 Presenter: Monsignor John Usher.

Topic: *Where is their sanctuary?*

Monsignor Usher's presentation was a reminder of the pace of change in the Church as a whole, and within our own Australian Catholic Church in particular. His extensive experience in working with the needy, culminating in his former appointment as the Director of Centacare, has given Msgr Usher unique insights not only into the social welfare responsibilities of the Church, but also into the needs and challenges of everyday life for those on the margins of society and seeking help.

Msgr Usher was ordained in 1972 and later completed undergraduate and master degrees in social work at the University of Sydney. He worked with Centacare and Catholic Community Services and was its Director for 21 years until 2004. Following on from these responsibilities, the Msgr was appointed Chancellor and Vicar-General of the Sydney Archdiocese remaining in this role until 2015.

Notions of sanctuary and solidarity framed this presentation, and the audience was invited to contemplate their currency within the Church. Msgr Usher referred to research he had undertaken into poverty in Australia. His analysis of 30 large families (5+ children each) showed half of these families could be described as 'non-coping'. They needed the support and assistance of external services offered by agencies such as St Vincent de Paul, the Smith Family, the Salvation Army, etc. The common characteristics that seemed to link with these families was a lack of knowledge about how support systems worked, and a sense of isolation from each other as well as the community in general. The other group, the so-called 'coping' families, were characterised by a strong sense of solidarity and belonging, and a sense of 'being in a

safe place'. Using this family metaphor to query the place of the Catholic Church, Msgr Usher pondered the question as to whether Catholics today would consider the Church to be a sanctuary and safe place for our faith and faith-linked actions.

In earlier post-colonial times, the formation of an Australian Catholic Church created an energised community, and coupled with the *Rerum Novarum* focus on the common good and role of the state, it created a sense of safety and sanctuary within the Church, especially in troubled sectarian times. Notions of rights, justice, solidarity and common identity strengthened the feeling of belonging. Incremental changes after World War 2 likely contributed to a dismantling of these ideals, especially as social welfare services became more corporatized and commercialised, and increasingly distanced from notions of human dignity. The sense of solidarity and belonging to and within the Church may have changed as a consequence of this shift, and Msgr Usher challenged the audience to think more deeply about this possibility.

Msgr Usher's presentation was extremely well received with many questions and comments following. Of particular note were the questions and comments about current Catholic social welfare, and Msgr Ursher noted that around 700 people are employed in Catholic Care alone. One audience member currently working in the public hospital system noted the very high quality of the services offered by Catholic agencies, particularly when compared to other providers.

(Anne Thoeming. Councillor)

ACHS Melbourne Chapter meeting: Monday 4 September 2017. Presenter: Paul Rule
Topic: *The Chinese Rites Controversy: the most important event in modern Church History?*

Paul described in detail the historical development of the Rites controversy. He pointed out that it centred on whether Christians could perform ancestor rituals and rituals in honour of Confucius in its narrow sense. The question of what should be the appropriate Chinese name for God also entered into the controversy but was not a burning issue as were the ritual practices. The controversy went on from the 1630s until 1742 when the Pope put a definitive end to a discussion of the controversy.

The major figures involved in the controversy were introduced. What was clear was that the entire controversy was more complex than sometimes appears in the literature. There were the struggles between the newly established *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* and the well-established Jesuit structures and program active in China. And while the arrival of Franciscan and Dominican missionaries from the Philippines stimulated the start of the controversy, it would be

simplistic to say they were opponents of the Jesuit practices. As time went on for the most part they accepted the practices themselves. However, the delegates who came from Rome (de Tournon and Mezzabarba), who were meant to “solve” the issue actually brought more complexity to it.

Paul’s paper made it clear that much of the controversy was a European one, rather than a Chinese one, and has to be understood against the background of the many controversies and tensions that were going on in Europe and the Vatican at that time. The fact that Rome changed its policy in 1939 for “political reasons” makes clear that the controversy has relevance for today’s church. Karl Rahner once declared that the key issues in the contemporary Church are a kind of reprise of the Chinese Rites: Is Christianity – or rather should it be – European in language and expression?

(Fr Larry Nemer Coordinator Melbourne Chapter)

ACHS Sydney meeting: Sunday 17 September 2017. Presenter: Sr Helen Simpson OLSH.
Topic: *The Coming of the Faith to Kiribati and some memories of a missionary*

Kiribati, since 1979, has been an independent republic within the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is located due North of Fiji and straddles the equator. It is comprised of 32 coral atolls and the highest altitude is three metres.

The Gilbert Islands are part of the nation called Kiribati and that is where most of the people live. This group of islands was discovered and named by Captain Gilbert who accompanied Captain Arthur Phillip to Australia in 1788. Europeans began to settle here from 1837 onwards and by 1860 a coconut oil trade had been established. At this time, too, the “black birders” were raiding the islands of the Pacific and taking men to work on plantations and in mines of richer countries. The Gilbertese reacted violently to this and after the establishment of the British High Commission for the Western Pacific in 1877 the Gilbertese were able to go to work in these same places but as paid labourers and to be returned to their own country after a few years.

A small group of Gilbertese who were working in Tahiti met up there with Bishop Stephen Janssen. He

appreciated the worth of these men and he appointed a priest to learn their language and to instruct them in the Catholic faith. Two men who had received instructions in the faith and who had been baptised then received further teaching from the bishop who declared them as catechists. With a small catechism and part of the New Testament translated into the Gilbertese Language Betero and Tiroi returned to their island, Nonouti to instruct their fellow islanders in the faith. By 1888, when the first priests came there, Betero and Tiroi had built eight Churches on Nonouti, baptised 560 people and were instructing another 600. The First nine OLSH Sisters arrived there in 1895 and their role was to work with the women and set up schools for girls.

There are many stories of the difficulties faced by the first sisters who ministered there including that of Sr Baptiste Kellhetter who eventually died of leprosy. There are also many stories of teaching. One was about teaching Science in a senior secondary school, Immaculate Heart College, in North Tarawa, the rural part of Tarawa which is accessible only by boat.

(Sr Helen Simpson Councillor).

ACHS Sydney meeting: Sunday 15 October 2017. Presenter: Dr Peter Slezak.
Topic: *Gods of the State: Religion, politics and dissent.*

Although Dr Peter Slezak’s presentation did not specifically address issues of direct impact on Australian Catholic history, the President noted the Church’s wider global engagement in religious and political matters and the continuing cultural and

intellectual links and interests that Australian Catholics have with people of all races and beliefs.

Peter commenced his talk by noting the distinction between religious belief as a personal faith as well as spiritual response to God and belief as a political

sentiment. He noted that history has shown how for some, faith can become grounded in the State rather than in God, for example, the interwar emergence of what have been described as civil, political and secular religions, as per Mussolini Hitler and Stalin. Referring to contemporary atheism as popularised by public intellectuals such as Dawkins, Hitchens, etc, Peter commented on the contradictory stance exemplified in the actions of atheists whose belief is invested in the faith of a state worship and where they become 'conspicuous apologists for state power'. History points to many instances where historical truth and intellectual decency have been sacrificed for political gain and Peter highlighted the need for these new atheists to acknowledge their tendency for a belief that is ill-informed and unfounded in evidentiary terms.

But in politics this approach is not new. Eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers were inspired by the Italian polymath Galileo Galilei and the Scientific Revolution rejecting dogma and belief, instead embracing notions of fact and proof. Further back in the time to Socrates, his refusal to recognise the Gods of the State which figuratively included 'official dogmas of the prevailing authority' coupled with accusations of 'impiety', led to his death. Fast forwarding on to the twentieth century, the American intellectual Noam Chomsky acknowledged the tendency for those who should know better – scholarly academics – to be less than independent in their criticisms of government policy particularly (with reference to American's official and unofficial war

engagement), preferring instead to become agents of those holding the reins of power. In 1996, Chomsky noted that when it comes to moral truth, the tendency is to honour the commissars and berate the dissidents.

The tendency for today's atheists to attack religious belief exemplifies, according to Slezak, 'a slavish commitment to crude ethnic stereotypes, combined with an almost delusional misrepresentation of the facts of recent history'. He believes this can be seen in their belief of a link between Islam and Muslim terrorism, and associated tendency to confuse politics and theology. Their own dogma is selective and delusory as per the example of the 1968 My Lai massacre in Vietnam where despite copious evidence of other cases of violence, it was claimed that such indiscriminate violence appalled the perpetrators. Many other examples were given in the talk of such misrepresentations and inconsistencies. Blaming religion rather than politics for aggression and terrorism has been a part of our world history.

Two quotes centuries apart yet twinned in meaning closed the presentation and exemplified the dominance of politics in life. Pericles said around 430 B.C. 'For we alone regard someone who takes no part in politics not as one who sticks to his own business but as a man for is good for nothing'. The black activist Eldridge Cleaver said in more simply the 1960s 'You're either part of the solution or part of the problem'.

(Anne Thoeming Councillor)

Some events from the past.

200 years ago in 1818 Fr. O'Flynn is deported from NSW.

150 years ago in 1868

- Christian Brothers arrive in Melbourne
- Archbishop Polding lays the foundation stone for the new St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

100 years ago in 1918:

- World War I ends
- Newman College, Melbourne University opens
- The first Bishop of Wagga, Joseph Wilfrid Dwyer, is installed

Catholic Schools founded in 1918

- St Anthony's School, Clovelly, NSW
- St Patrick's School, Macksville, NSW
- St Patrick's School, Port Kembla, NSW
- St Kevin's College, Toorak,

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