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NEWSLETTER

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Sydney Meetings: Program for August to December

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
August 20	<i>Where is their sanctuary?</i>	Mgr John Usher. Former Director of <i>Centacare</i> and Archdiocesan Chancellor
September 17	<i>The story of the Church in a vanishing land.</i>	Sr Helen Simpson OLSH. ACHS Chaplain
October 15	<i>Gods of the State: Religion, politics and dissent.</i>	Dr Peter Slezak. School of Humanities & Languages, University of NSW
November 19	<i>"The Show": Another Side of Santamaria's Movement</i>	Mr Mark Aarons. Author, former ABC investigative Reporter and NSW ministerial advisor <i>with</i> Mr John Grenville Former Federal Secretary of the Federated Clerks' Union
December 2	Annual Mass and Christmas Lunch at Mary MacKillop Centre Mount Street North Sydney. Mass: 12:00pm. Lunch: 12:30pm	Cost, booking details and Speaker 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>].

Melbourne meetings: June, September, and November 2017.

June 5, 2:00pm. Speaker: Dr Val Noone. **Topic:** *The influence of Dorothy Day (the founder of The Catholic Worker Movement in the United States) on Australian Catholicism, especially the impact of her three-week visit to Australia in August 1970.*

September 4, 2:00pm. Speaker: Paul Rule. **Topic:** *The Chinese Rites Controversy.*

November 13, 2:00pm. Speaker: Donna Denning will be the presenter. Topic to be finalised.

Location: Seminar Room at Dorish Maru College, Yarra Theological Union, 100 Albion Road, Box Hill.

Contact for Melbourne meetings: Dr Larry Nemer. nemerlarry@gmail.com

Annual General Meeting: Sunday 21 May 2017. Election of Office Bearers

President, John Carmody

Vice Presidents Geoff Hogan James Franklin

Secretary Helen Scanlon

Treasurer Lesley Hughes.

Councillors Janice Garaty, Howard Murray, Anne Thoeming.

There remain vacancies on Council. Sr Helen Simpson is ex officio on Council.

ACHS Constitution amendments

The amended ACHS Constitution which incorporated some minor changes necessary due to recent changes in NSW Dept of Fair Trading's regulations for incorporated associations was passed at the AGM.

ACHS Sydney meeting: Sunday 21 May 2017. Presenter: Ms Geraldine Doogue.
Topic: *Questions of identity in 21st century Australia: growing up tribal, moving beyond and then re-considering.*

Ms Doogue chose a very personal approach to this broad topic. Her roots were Irish but when she was younger her experience of visiting poor rural Co Clare relatives in the 1960s caused her to reject any desire to identify as Irish. Yet she recognises that she was secure within her “tribe” in WA; she knew the ways to behave and what to avoid. Her grandparents had come from Ireland pre-World War I, her mother was middle class Irish but her father’s roots were in poverty. Both parents had different views about Ireland, one overly sentimental, the other quite hostile. Ireland affairs were not discussed in the home.

Ms Doogue lived in England in the 1970s but avoided crossing to Ireland. She returned there on a Churchill fellowship in 2000 and was surprised at the changes that had taken place. It was however when she was covering the 100 year commemorations of the 1916 Rising in Dublin last year that she reconnected with her Irish family connections. The events as they were remembered demonstrated a maturity in the Irish ability to explore all diverse issues of what happened in 1916:

the details and ambiguities of the events. The Irish wanted to complicate history yet without stirring up the “troubles” as had happened at the 50th anniversary.

Ms Doogue compared tiny Ireland with sprawling Australia and reflected on the scale of complexity that was our story, confronting multiculturalism and indigenous peoples and our place in the world. She suspects we have yet to reach the level of maturity that would enable our history to be so examined. Colm Toibin told Ms Doogue that the rationalism and pragmatism found in Canada and Australia is lacking in Ireland, perhaps because we learnt to compromise from the beginning of European settlement. Some histories are dangerous to re-examine and we need to live with different verdicts of the same events. We must ensure we are not trapped by history.

Following the presentation there were many interesting comments and questions from an enthusiastic audience. *(Helen Scanlon, Secretary)*

Melbourne Meeting, Monday 5 June 2017. Presenter: Val Noone
Topic: *Dorothy Day in Australia, August 1970*

This paper which investigated the impact on Australian Catholicism of Dorothy Day began with three stories: first, about the success of Dorothy and others in selling the first issue of their paper, the *Catholic Worker*, in Union Square, New York, on May Day 1933; secondly, about Roger Pryke, John Heffey and Guilford Young visiting Dorothy and the Catholic Worker house of hospitality in New York in 1940; and thirdly, about Pryke and Heffey bringing Dorothy, then 73, on a three-week visit to Australia in August 1970. Dorothy was accompanied by Eileen Egan, secretary of the US Pax organisation.

For their first and third weeks Dorothy and Eileen stayed with Roger Pryke at the Harbord presbytery. Dorothy addressed a public meeting at Sydney Town Hall on peace in Vietnam; gave some eight seminars, mainly to groups of young people and visited the Matthew Talbot hostel. During her second week in Australia Dorothy came to Victoria. She stayed four days at St Benedict’s community of farm work and liturgical prayer at Gladysdale, and three days with the Ormonde family at Brighton. In the city, she gave lectures on the Catholic Worker movement at the Public Lecture Theatre, University of Melbourne, and at Corpus Christi seminary, Glen Waverley; she gave press, radio and television interviews. Dorothy also had

a meal at the open house in Fitzroy run by Mary Doyle, Brian Noone, Chris Tucker and others.

The goals of Dorothy Day’s movement were described as aiming for a return to the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount - feed the hungry, comfort the sick, visit the prisoner, return good for evil, voluntary poverty and so on, in a style that she described as anarchist-pacifist. Dorothy was a beacon and an encourager to those Australian Catholics who stood for a positive commitment to gospel values and the church’s social teachings, a constructive alternative to the indiscriminating anti-communism of the Santamaria Movement.

Copies of the posters used during her visit and two photographs, one from the Melbourne *Sun* of Dorothy on arrival at Spencer Street station, the other of her visiting the house of the Little Sisters of Jesus, Forbes Street, Newtown, in Sydney were displayed.

The following discussion was spirited. Some in the group had actually met Dorothy Day at the time of her visit. Others were interested in discussing the issues to which Dorothy was committed, e.g. houses of hospitality, farm communities, peace, etc. It is nice to know that the study of Dorothy Day is still a “work in progress” and there is much more to come of value.

Sydney Meeting: Sunday 18 June 2017. Presenter: Dr Damian Grace
Topic: *The meaning of 'reform': the contest of Erasmus and Luther on free will*

Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus had distinctly different understandings and representations of free will, which came to be voiced unexpectedly. For Erasmus – humanist scholar, Catholic priest, social and clerical critic, teacher and theologian, Luther's initial ideas about the need for Church reform in the lead-up to the Reformation were understandable and he felt the same. However, over time Erasmus became critical of Luther's strident criticisms fearing they would be divisive and he preferred to voice his concerns for reform in a private scholarly way.

Pressure from the Church to speak out against Luther forced Erasmus' hand and he mistakenly thought he was on safe ground engaging with Luther on free will, a topic on which Erasmus placed no doctrinal importance. Erasmus argued that the Church's intellectual traditions and theological philosophies provided a solid foundation for the understanding of free will, and the freedom to choose God's grace. Luther's notion of predestination, the denial of free will, his rejection of the idea that God could look favourably on an exemplary life, as well as his belief that we are completely dependent on God's mercy put him in direct conflict with the theology of the Church.

For Luther, the freedom of a Christian was precisely to be free of the need to earn God's love, but in this thinking Luther seemed to be exerting sole authority over scriptural interpretation rather than relying on the Church's intellectual and theological tradition.

When Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of All Saints, the castle church of Wittenberg, he was advertising a seminar which would discuss the sale of indulgences as a remission for time in purgatory. Luther did not want to start a new Church or break away from Rome, he wanted a reformed Church – one free from ecclesiological and doctrinal suppression. Erasmus worked to temper Luther's doctrinal stubbornness and rising passion, but in this process, the position of both men in relation on the matter of free will firmed, although in diametrically opposed ways. Temperamentally the men were vastly different – Erasmus was orthodox, moderate and sensible compared to Luther's more strident dispositions.

In this Reformation commemoration year, there is much to reflect on about Luther's role and that of Erasmus as well. *(Anne Thoeming, Councillor).*

Sydney Meeting: Sunday 16 July 2017. Presenter: Dr Bernadette Tobin
Topic: *The field of bioethics: one insider's take!*

In her talk entitled 'The field of bioethics: one insider's take', Bernadette Tobin began by outlining three features of the reasoning which informs her work at the Plunkett Centre for Ethics at St Vincent's Hospital. She pointed out that the field of bioethics is currently distorted by the influence of two 'theories', one which says 'only outcomes matter' and the other which says 'only motive matters'. However, in her work, she attempts to be attentive to all the resources of 'common-sense ethics'. Common-sense ethics is sensitive to every morally-relevant feature of ethical reflection about human action including context, intention, history, the act itself as well as motive and likely consequences. She distinguished between two kinds of religious claim, one which depends on revelation and one which does not. And she acknowledged that there is some overlap between the behavioural injunctions of Christianity and some behavioural injunctions of other non-Christian traditions of thought.

In the second part of her talk, Bernadette discussed the current case of Charlie Gard, the baby with a severe mitochondrial disease whose doctors and parents have disagreed about how best to care for him. She argued that you need to appreciate both the proper role of medical treatment in the circumstances of overwhelming disease and the best way of resolving differences of opinion between doctors and parents if you are to think well about this case. She then went on to discuss why it is that Pope Francis argues that we must not abandon people who experience gender dysphoria but who is equally firm in his opposition to teaching children that they should think of their gender as their choice! Time then prevented her from raising some of the forthcoming challenges (for both individuals and institutions) which will be occasioned by initiatives to legalize giving assistance in suicide.

ACHS James MacGinley Award

Entries for the ACHS James MacGinley Award are invited from students and recent graduates of Australian universities and theological colleges that offer accredited degree programs, and other persons who are in the early stage of a career as a scholar of Australian Catholic history. A prize of \$500 may be awarded to the winning entry. Entries close on 30 October 2016. Details: <http://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/awards/index.html>
Enquiries: email secretaryachs@gmail.com.

Special General Meeting

A Special General Meeting will be held at the beginning of the normal 17 September meeting to confer a life membership. This is the formal notice required by the constitution.

From the President

Very recently I was advised by the editorial office of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* that my most recent article had been posted on-line. It was about the German musician, Werner Baer, who arrived in 1940 (on the *Queen Mary*) as a Jewish refugee from the Nazi *Reich*.

This made me think about two things which remain relevant to our society – both ACHS and Australia more widely.

Like many before him who had fled oppression (and countless Irish, free men and women as well as convicts, came here unwillingly or under duress), Baer made a significant contribution to our society and culture. He was important in the musical work of the ABC – in both its broadcasting and concerts – as well as more widely (being at various times, for example, the director of music at the Great Synagogue and Temple Emmanuel in Sydney). As an accompanist, he collaborated with such renowned Australian singers as Ronald Dowd, Peter Dawson and Joan Sutherland.

Baer's life emphasises the fact that Australia's story is of an immigrant nation, with diverse refugees a significant element of that mix. Our fellow-citizens, many of whom currently seem so hostile to refugees or afraid of what they might do to our society, should reflect on that.

The other reminder was of that great, collaborative national reference work, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. I have a long association with it: the earliest of my 23 articles was published in 1983, but the first volume had appeared well before that, in 1966, after years of planning. The 20th volume will be published soon. The competition for inclusion is fierce and the debates at the Commonwealth and states' working-parties which make those choices are sometimes heated. You might think that's understandable when politicians are being considered, but it can apply with writers and painters as well.

For some years, the entire *Dictionary* has been available on-line at no cost, and the number of times it has been consulted, which is recorded, is simply astonishing. I would recommend a "visit" to its site to everyone. Because we try to give a picture of the entirety of Australian society in our choices, the range of personalities is rich and fascinating. There are murderers as well as statesmen; soldiers, explorers, scientists, bushrangers, editors, sports people – including a significant number of women. There are some intriguing categories: temperance advocates, for instance, circus proprietors, stock breeders (of course), suffragists, and an abundance of religious people. There are sixteen categories of clergy, with 61 Catholic priests in the first 12 volumes alone. Some entries give clues to Australian place names (such as Drs Balmain and Redfern or Bruny D'Entrecasteaux) and household names (like Metters or Henry Buck) but one of my favourites is "Lemonade" Ley, "politician and murderer" – there's nothing like that in the *British Dictionary of National Biography*.

John Carmody

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