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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 2022. We look forward to your continued membership and support and wish you, your families and colleagues a happy and holy Christmas and that God will bless you in 2023 The Council also encourages members to promote the Society and invite friends, colleagues and others to attend our functions and to join the Society.

November 2022 ACHS Meeting

20 November	<i>The story of St Mary's Spires – the completion of Polding's program</i>	Mgr Tony Doherty Former Parish Priest of Rose Bay and former Dean of St Mary's Cathedral (Sydney) Co-author of <i>The Attachment</i>
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February 2023 ACHS Meeting

19 February	<i>Catholic Action, Sydney style: Catholic lay organisations from friendly societies to the Vice Squad</i>	Professor James Franklin ACHS Vice-President and Editor, "ACHS Journal" Honorary Professor of Mathematics (University of NSW)
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2022 Christmas Lunch

The Australian Catholic Historical Society will hold its annual Christmas Mass and Lunch on Saturday 10 December 2022 at the MacKillop Centre 7-11 Mount Street North Sydney. Mass: 11:45pm, Lunch 12:30pm. Cost: \$65.00 per person. A booking form is included in the envelope with this Newsletter. It contains payment details, etc.

ACHS Membership 2023

ACHS membership year is from 1 April to 31 March in the following year. If a member's fee is not received by 1 July membership will cease. Membership forms will be included in the envelope with the February 2023 ACHS newsletter. A membership form can also be downloaded from the ACHS website.

Report of Sydney Meeting, Sunday August 2022

Presenter: Dr Helen Belcher.

Topic: Plenary Council.

Dr Helen Belcher, a member of the Fifth Plenary Council, presented a thorough reflection on the Council, addressing the history, the process, the highs and the lows as well as her personal thoughts.

She explained the nature of Plenary Councils (legislative) and how they differed from Synods (consultative), the nature of Synodality and its basis in listening to every view, and the process of "spiritual conversations". Helen took us back to 2012 when the road to the Council began, the long gestation period, its launching at Pentecost 2020, its official convocation at Pentecost 2021 and the havoc caused by Covid.

The initial "Listening and Dialogue" phase asked specific questions about the hopes and experiences of Catholics and resulted in over 220,000 responses and over 17,000 submissions. These were distilled into a report of over 300 pages, then into six national themes and further refined by and next extensive "Listening and Discernment" Phase.

The results of this consultation were taken to the First Assembly, in 2021, of 280 lay, religious, clerical and episcopal delegates which was conducted via Zoom with

all its inherent problems, most importantly without the opportunity of informal discussion over a cup of tea. Helen thought the Assembly helped identify flaws in the process, especially the balance between the small group and individual interventions, but was overwhelmingly demanding. She likened the post Assembly feeling to that of jet lag.

Following this assembly further material was supplied to the members and responses sought. This led to various iterations of Motions and Amendments for the second Assembly which was preceded by a number of on-line conversations to iron out any problems. The Second General Assembly was held, in person, between July 5th and 9th in Sydney. The weather was appalling and Covid hit some of the participants, so it was not plain sailing. Eleven parts consisting of several motions were considered and most were accepted overwhelmingly.

The incident that hit the headlines was the "protest" over the votes on the role of women in the Church. This was a spontaneous display of the hurt felt by many at the failure of the motions regarding women and was not led by a feminist cabal (the protest included clergy and bishops).

The outcome of the vote actually shocked everyone and plans to redraft and re-debate amended motions were quickly implemented. It also led to a profound change in the atmosphere at the Assembly and to a better process. It was a Spirit filled turning point in the Assembly.

The results will be sent to Rome for final approval but in the meantime many of the recommendations can be implemented at a local level. Interim reports on the implementation will be made in 2023, 2025 and finally in 2027. Dr Belcher thought the assembly would be an historic turning point for the Church in Australia, was

enthusiastic about the experience and thankful that she had been able to participate.

Question time raised the issue of cynicism towards the whole process, further explanation of the notion of “spiritual conversation” and whether there would be immediate on-going action as a result of the recommendations.

The full talk is available on the Society's website and Dr Belcher also recommended reference to the Plenary Council's own website where all the documents, proceedings, votes and reports are available.

Report on ACHS Sydney Meeting, September 2022

Speaker: Br John Luttrell

Topic: *Champagnat Marists in Australia 1872-2022*

John was previously President of ACHS and also was for many years the Journal Editor. He was Conference organiser for two Conferences held at the Catholic Institute and a long time member of ACHS. John is one of the authors of the recent publication *Sub Tuum Praesidium* (Sydney Marist Brothers Australia 2022.) The other three are Julian Casey, Peter Rodney and Neville Solomon.

Br John introduced his talk by commenting on the bronze bust of the French Marist brother Ludovic Laboureyras which is placed on the outer wall of the crypt. Ludovic was the leader of the first four Marists, two Irish and one Scottish. They had come at the request of Archdeacon John McEncroe to start a school in Sydney. They joined the Marist Fathers at St Patrick's in the Rocks area in 1872 and set up a school for more than 200 boys. More Marists arrived in 1875 and two more schools opened, one at St Benedict's, Broadway and one at Parramatta.

In 1876 a Cork born Marist John Dullea was appointed as “Provincial of Oceania” covering New Zealand, Samoa and Fiji as well as Australia. More brothers arrived from France and Ireland and the local young men in Australia were also joining the brothers' community and Hunters Hill novitiate was established. By 1900 there were 163 professed brothers and in 1916 there were 210 brothers in 38 communities. Oceania was split and the Province of Australia was just for the geographic area of Australia.

Teacher training was theoretically one year but the teacher shortage meant this period was often curtailed. Most of the brothers had a very restricted life experience: a Marist Juniorate, the Novitiate and then teaching in a Marist school. Their lives were basic, often materially inadequate.

Change happened in the 1960s. Vatican II and also government funding to private schools leading to the employment of lay men and also women. It was

recognised that these lay people too had a mission as Christian educators. Many brothers questioned their own unique role in the church and many left. The numbers dropped from 600 plus in 1970 to 250 in 2011.

Added to these challenges were the revelations of sexual abuse revealed in the Royal Commission. Many brothers were found guilty. The consequences for all were anxiety, fear of working with children and possible false accusations, sense of betrayal and shame, being collectively branded, and caught between compassion for victims and then need to relate to offenders. Like other sections of the Catholic Church, responses included: apologies to victims, compensation, development of protocols and holding workshops on child safety.

The Marist brothers have now mostly left schools to the lay teachers but schools still maintain the Marist ethos. **Marist Schools Australia** (MSA Ltd) has 56 affiliated schools, 12 owned by the congregation and the rest diocesan. MSA provides services, staff formation, administrative and legal help and Marist teaching resources. Other initiatives are responding to contemporary needs: **Marist Youth Ministry**, **Marist 180** (for young people in trouble), **regional outreach** to mainly SE Asian countries,

Currently the Australian Marists are in one province based in Sydney. In December a new Province (Star of the Sea) will be established. It will include New Zealand and the Pacific. Mary, Star of the Sea was an early title for Mary, Mother of Jesus. Under this title Mary was invoked to be protector and guide of seafarers, and John Luttrell said this was an apt title for the community of Marists spread across the Pacific Ocean.

Interesting discussion following the talk. (*Helen Scanlon*)

Report on ACHS Sydney Meeting, Sunday 16 October 2022

Speaker: Professor John Potts, Department of Media and Communications, Macquarie University

Topic: Heavens Below: Religion on ABC Radio from 1940s to the Present

This talk, presented is part of an ongoing project on the history of ABC Radio. It focused on the ecumenical nature of religious broadcasting in Australia in the 1940s

and 1950s. The ABC made every effort to over-ride the sectarianism dividing the Christian community. Squarely behind this was the Rev. Kenneth Henderson, who ran the

programming from 1943-1956. The mission of cultural radio was to foster an inclusive public good. Broadcasts of religious services were provided according to a numerical basis of the statistical affiliations shown in the census. Sectarianism was the strongest of all divisions in the community. It was evident in the 1901 Federation celebrations, and in the conscription debates of 1916-17. Sectarianism in twentieth-century Australia was bound up with issues of national identity, revealing 'a complex interaction of religious identity and rivalry, class, socio-cultural and ethno-political relationships' (Benjamin Edwards, 2008). David Malouf (1988) noted that Catholics and Protestants attended different schools and learned different versions of history.

Henderson's vision of Christianity was ecumenical and resolutely non-sectarian. He felt that more could be achieved by broadcasts targeting a broad audience; and in 1947 a program called 'Plain Christianity: A Word to the Wayfarer' commenced. This programme was devised by Henderson and Boyer. Henderson persuaded the rival church leaders to accept it as a replacement for actual broadcasts of worship on Sunday evenings. He saw these 'wayfarers' as best be served 'by a message of companionship'. The Christian churches involved in ABC Radio broadcasting in the 1940s and 1950s continued the form of a direct broadcast of denominational church services. Each denomination was able to control the form and content of broadcasts such as the Sunday 11 a.m. church service transmission. This conservative deployment of the radio medium, however, was anathema to Henderson, who bemoaned the 'lack-lustre' results when a microphone simply transmitted the contents of a denominational church service. Henderson wanted

Christian leaders to embrace the medium of radio. His mission in radio was to experiment with the forms of the medium, to develop expressions of religion in studio sessions. 'It is by intimacy', Henderson wrote, 'that you must do your evangelising'.

Outside of the ABC, Religious organizations were involved in the foundation of some of the earliest Australian radio stations: the Theosophical Society and 2GB in 1926; the Catholic Church and 2SM in 1931. At the ABC, Henderson pursued inclusiveness. He organized meetings with Anglican, Catholic and non-Episcopal clergy to urge their collaboration in broadcasting. By 1953 Henderson was able to form the Federal Religious Advisory Committee (FRAC), a cross-denominational group on religious broadcasting that lasted until 1976.

Questions that followed this address included:

1. Why was the term 'Roman Catholic' used as a policy at the ABC? To signify difference from other religions which used Catholic in their name.
2. When did 'secular' take on meanings to include atheism and agnosticism? In the 1960 when interest in different religions and 'no religion' grew.
3. Were there any statistics to show how effective radio was? Do we know whether it worked? No statistics available but there is an opportunity for further research.
4. Are there instances of sectarianism within a religion? In 1920s Anglicanism suffered when the reform of the Book of Common Prayer occurred. (*Anne Power*)

ACHS Melbourne Meeting, Sunday September 2022

Speaker: Professor Constant Mews.

Topic: *From Church History to Religious History*

The Victorian Chapter held a second of its investigation into writing Church History in contemporary Australia. After Professor Graeme Davison at our prior meeting, this meeting was address by Professor Constant Mews. He has recently retired as Director of Monash University's Centre for Studies in Religion and Theology.

He spoke on 'From Church History to Religious History', taking a lead from Charles Taylor seeing an enduring significance for Religious History in Australia. This would not be in the manner of the past with its confessional focus but rather as an engagement with what Charles Taylor has called the 'social imaginary' in Australia. This is the deep context of culture in which a community engages with religion, as it is the presumed understanding of symbol, story, institutions and experiences by which we conceive of our social order. Regardless of the levels of stress or obesity in Australia, we understand ourselves as a laid-back people obsessed with sport.

In like fashion, religion and its questions still lie within the social imaginary in a distinctly Australian way. Mews identified one such strength as a sensitivity to sources

beyond the traditional Christian historiographical narrative: Relationship to the land, issues of isolation, the struggles with foreigners and with Indigenous Australians all are fruitful places to explore questions of religious story.

The presentation drew from many sources displaying Mews' life of scholarship. Megasippus, Hildegard of Bingen, Bruce Mansfield and Carolyn Walker-Bynam and many more besides made an appearance as Mews joined Charles Taylor in wrestling the phenomenon of contemporary secularism and the place religious history plays with in it. For Mews, there will always be a role for the core task of religious history; to tell again the stories of a people's engagement with the fundamental religious questions and how it finds expression among the group.

A vigorous conversation followed thereafter of both questions and responses to the stimulating paper. Even following that, more sharing of history happened over a sharing of a meal for members.

The Melbourne Chapter convenes again on the evening of 7 November. (*Fr Matthew Beckmann OFM*)

Marists leave Church Hill

By Michael Kenny: Sydney Archdiocesan Communications Manager. 25 August 2022 (Courtesy *The Catholic Weekly*) Archbishop Anthony Fisher has publicly thanked the Marist Fathers for more than 150 years of service at the oldest continuous Church still in use in NSW.

Marist Fathers were entrusted with St Patrick's Church Hill in 1868. From 2025, the Fathers will vacate the parish and continue their ministry in new and expanding areas of Sydney.

For more than 150 years, St Patrick's Church Hill has served the local Catholic community of The Rocks and Millers Point. With many of those residents, such as those in the Sirius Building now relocated to other parts of Sydney, St Patrick's has evolved to a parish where 80 per cent of the congregation now use it as a secondary parish to visit while in the CBD. The Church has also become popular amongst those on holiday, staying at nearby hotels.

Part of its popularity is attributable to the generosity of the Marist Fathers in offering the Sacraments at various times throughout the day. The Parish is one of the busiest in the nation, with four Masses celebrated each week day, eleven Masses on weekends, hours of Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament each day and close to 30 hours of the Sacrament of Reconciliation offered each week. The Marist Fathers have been called to western Sydney where they will continue their ministry of mercy.

The new custodians of St Patrick's Church Hill, who will be invited to continue the generous sacramental ministry by Archbishop Fisher will proudly continue the mission in one of the nation's most revered places of worship.

Australian Catholic Church History Symposium

Summary by Odhran O'Brien, Honorary Archivist

The Australian Catholic Church History Symposium was established during 2020 to promote contemporary public discourse on the rich tradition of the local Catholic community and its place in modern Australian life. The symposium is hosted each year at the University of Notre Dame Australia's Fremantle Campus in Western Australia.

The presenters for 2022 included Dr Geraldine Doogue AO, ABC Television and Radio Host, Sr Lucy Van Kessel, Presentation Sister, and Mr James McMahon AM, Chief Operating, Officer, Australian Capital Equity. During the evening's event there were three, twenty-minute presentations on the theme of 'Professional Histories and Faith'.

In the introduction to the event, Dr Angela McCarthy, a member of the organising committee, summarised the purposed of the event as follows:

'We look forward to being able to explore the rich tradition of our Catholic tradition through the narratives of the members of our Catholic community. ...As we all know our contemporary lives are entwined in an increasingly secular social milieu and being open and deliberate about one's faith can be a serious challenge. Each of the presenters are engaged in our world where they have made personal faith contributions within their professional fields. Our recent Plenary Council...is an action of our church to reset and enliven the focus of our faith in action in our contemporary world. We have to be more relevant. We pray that we will become a synodal church that is Christ-centred and missionary, and to do that we can be encouraged by the lives and their stories of those who are with us in our presenters.'

The symposium can be viewed at the following link: www.youtube.com/perthcatholic

'Cathedral Folly' Lecture

The outcome of the March lecture called 'Cathedral Folly' delivered by Dr John Challis is the publication of an article in *New Norcia Studies No 28 launch* which was published on 5 October 2022. Copies are available for purchased at: <https://shop.newnorcia.com.au/>

Bicentenary of St Mary's Cathedral

The Catholic Weekly of 23 Oct 2022 was a large commemorative issue on the bicentenary of St Mary's Cathedral, <http://weeklycatholicnews.com.au/2022/10/23/>

The James MacGinley Award

The James MacGinley Award for Australian Catholic History, now worth \$1000, is open for submissions of original research from students and graduates of accredited tertiary institutions, as well as others who have a scholarly interest in Australian religious history. The closing date is 28 February 2023. Further details are found on the ACHS website. Enquiries to achsawards@gmail.com

Postal address The Secretary ACHS PO Box A621 Sydney South, NSW, 1235	Enquiries may also be directed to: secretaryachs@gmail.com Website: http://australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au/
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