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UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY

NEWSLETTER

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Australian Catholic Historical Society Inc. Sydney meetings and program for 2024-5

This information is correct as of 25th October 2024, but changes can occur.

DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
17 November	The Guild of St Pius X – its people and achievements in the liturgical life of Australia from the 40s to the 70s	Patrick Kirkwood , formerly: Head of ABC Religious Programs (Radio and TV and Director, Catholic Audio-Visual Centre, (Homebush, NSW))
7 December	11:45am Annual Mass and Christmas buffet lunch at MacKillop Place and Chapel"	Fr John Boyle, Speaking about Domus Australia in Rome
16 Feb	Jeff Kildea	Tragedy and Farce: The Sister Liguori story
16 Mar	Bishop Vincent Long	The 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war - his personal reflection
27 April	<u>To be advised</u>	<u>To be advised</u>
18 May	Phil Billington	Promoter of Kevin Lawler biography of Archbishop Francis Carroll

Location, time and contact: Sunday afternoons at 2.00pm (unless otherwise stated) in the Crypt Hall of St Patrick's, Church Hill [corner of Harrington and Grosvenor Streets. Admission is free and does not require membership of ACHS. Members are encouraged to bring a guest. **Visit the ACHS website** <http://www.australiancatholichistoricalsociety.com.au> for diverse information and features

Report of Sydney Meeting on 18th August 2024

Topic: The decline of Australian Catholic intellectual life

Speaker: Gerard Windsor

By 'Catholic intellectual life' Gerard Windsor was referring to writing about (Catholic) religious and theological issues. While intending his title more as a teaser than as a proclamation, he argued for a clear contrast between a silver age running from the mid-fifties to the early seventies, and the subsequent period up to the present. It began with what he called the Vincent Buckley circle, centred on Melbourne and conspicuously led by the laity (mostly male), with joint activity by priests, but independent of institutional structures including the seminaries, and striking for the equitable collaboration of the laity and clergy.

Buckley, known as a poet and critic, was also an imaginative and original theologian. The

University Catholic Federation of Australia conference of 1955, significantly taking the theme 'The incarnation in the university', can be seen as inaugurating this fertile era. Sydney's Catholic intellectual life had focussed on historiography, but it produced two significant periodicals: the annual *Manna* (1957–1968) and the independent newsletter *Report* (1968–1971).

Subsequently, evidence of Catholic intellectual life has been clearest in publishing. Under Brian Johns as General Manager, Penguin Australia published, for example, Edmund Campion's *Rockchoppers* (1983) and in 1986 *Sweet Mothers, Sweet Maids* (ed. Kate Nelson and Dominica Nelson). The activities of Dove Communications and David

Lovell Publishing could also be cited. Publications such as *Australian Catholics* and *Eureka Street* and writers such as John Warhurst and Michael McGirr have produced much that is stimulating – Australian Catholicism has been blessed by the writings of former priests – but these writings are by and large not focussed on Catholic belief, they are not theological. The current situation suggests that Australia will have a Vatican I church rather than a Vatican II church. The lack of intellectual life in, for example, Opus Dei is noteworthy.

In discussion, it was observed that two Catholic universities have been established in Australia since 1990, and both teach theology seriously. Moreover, the participation of lay Catholic women has surely developed, and there has been a broadening of the role of Australian Catholics in areas of public life such as politics and journalism. Conversely, the contraction is hardly confined to the Church; the decline in book reviewing and in intellectual life at the universities has been conspicuous.

John Scahill, August 2024

Report of Sydney Meeting on 15th September 2024

Topic: Catholic mindedness in the Catholic doctor: the Sydney Catholic Medical Guild of St Luke: 1933-1935

Speaker: Dr Anne Thoeming

The speaker traced the origins of the development of Catholic medical guilds from the period prior to the Christian era, right through to the current day. Early medical training in the Christian era was like an apprenticeship system. Monks learned how to be doctors and performed medical procedures in the European monasteries and convents which were the primary medical treatment centres until about 1300. The crusades influenced the expansion of professional medical guilds and enabled the transfer of knowledge from the middle eastern medicine tradition to the west as Islamic doctors were said to be the most advanced in the world at that time. Quasi-guilds gradually turned into what we know today as specialist associations such as colleges of surgeons, physicians, etc.

Australia's medical guilds in the colonial period were state-based associations before the British Medical Association formed in Australia in 1880. Medical journals were the key source of educating doctors about new techniques, medical methods, and notions of professional ethics. While the journals provided guidance to doctors on matters that resonated with the moral values of the time, there was little to guide Catholic doctors in their work especially as new ideas about eugenics and sterilisation developed around the world.

The release in 1930 of the encyclical *Casti Connubii*, was an important step in the Church's efforts to condemn the use of eugenic means to rid the world of physical and mental disabilities and strengthen race. It was the first explicit statement opposing eugenics negative elements and affirmed the sanctity of Christian marriage, and the welcoming of all children from the marriage union

regardless of physical, family or personal circumstances. The encyclical privileged natural law over biological law and became the cornerstone of Catholic social ethics.

In December 1933, the increasingly fraught moral environment prompted the Jesuit Fr Richard Murphy, and a group of Sydney Catholic doctors to come together and form the Australian Medical Guild of St Luke. Its first official meeting was held on 22 April 1934 at St John's College in Sydney and was attended by about seventy doctors and medical students, and nine priests. Thereafter, the Guild met regularly to hear member and guest papers about medical and associated religious matters. Ideas were exchanged, the latest medical advances discussed, and priests reflected on the religious conundrums that new medical advances raised. The Guild was an educational and supportive association at a time where Catholic intellectual activities were limited in Sydney.

Catholic Mindedness was, according to Murphy, to be seen in the everyday life of a doctor, and should be reflected in their convictions, interests, tone, and outlook, as well as public and private dealings. He urged members to look at and examine everything they did in their life in a Catholic way. Guild members embraced that sense of their *Catholic Mindedness* at a time when Catholics felt besieged by the world and its "godlessness".

The Guild's meetings and discussions understandably concentrated on issues of the mid-1930s. Eugenics and birth control dominated the early 1934/5 discussions and by 1936 they extended to include areas such as communism and the decadence of modern art and pornography. The

speaker discussed two papers of the period, one on contraception and the other on forced sterilisation, both of which were reported in the Guild's *Transactions* journal. Today, the Guild continues

under a different name, the *Australian Catholic Medical Association*.

Helen Scanlon, September 2024

Report of Sydney Meeting on 20th October 2024

Topic: The St John's College Act of 1857 -the legal antecedents and historical context

Speaker: Kyle Oliver

Sydney University was established in 1850, and residential colleges were planned by using traditional English universities as a model. The Chief Justice Sir Alfred Stephen simultaneously drafted two pieces of legislation, the Affiliated Colleges Act and St Paul's College Incorporation Act. The first stipulated that if a Christian denomination raised funds of £10 000 to build a college the government would match this. The structure of St Paul's Council was modelled on both Trinity College Cambridge and St Augustine's College Canterbury. This latter was established for the education of Anglican missionaries and based in turn based on a mediaeval monastic model.

Thus Saint Paul's College Council and the original Bill prepared for St John's College had at its core a mediaeval structure. But it also was modern in that the College could make statutes and revoke or amend these. And thirdly it was colonial in that the council had both clerical and lay fellows and Christian faith was promoted and maintained even though the college was part of the secular university.

The Bill for St John's specified a head of college, the Rector, and 18 Fellows, voted from the subscribers 'of whom 6 shall always be Priests duly approved, and whilst they continue to **be approved, by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney** ...and 12 shall be laymen.' These "18 shall elect 6 from their own body to be called Senior Fellows who shall appoint the Rector who shall not be one of themselves one of themselves." These 6 fellows, 3 priests and 3 Laymen, plus the Rector shall be "the Council of St John's College". The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Sydney shall be the Visitor with all the legal powers of office of Visitor.

Kyle Oliver gave us a history going back to the 13th century of the role of the Visitor, initially the person who donated the lands to provide income for the mediaeval colleges. Legal determinations over the centuries modified the powers that a Visitor had. These were in common law, not ecclesiastic law.

However, when the Act of Incorporation was passed 15 December 1857, there were a few significant changes to the Bill. St Paul's Constitution was being altered by a further Act to enlarge the Council and

allow the Council to appoint the Vice Warden. And these changes were also made to the St John's Incorporation Act plus another significant change.

"The said body politic or corporate shall consist of a Rector and 18 fellows, of whom 6 shall always be **duly approved priests** and 12 shall be laymen which said eighteen fellows 18 shall appoint the Rector who shall not be one of themselves and the Rector and fellows shall form a council to be called the Council of Saint John's College" (St John's Incorporation Act 1857)

"The Roman Catholic Archbishop shall be Visitor of the College with all the legal powers of office of Visitor."

The change to have **all** Fellows deemed to be on the Council changed the balance of power. Previously when there was planned to have the Senior Fellows the Council had 4 priests and 3 laymen. The Council in the Act had 7 priests and 12 laymen, a very different situation. It was suggested that Archbishop Polding was not pleased. Archbishop Polding also in this Act no longer had the personal power to veto those priests elected the Council as Fellows.

Polding as Visitor had the responsibility of calling the first meeting of the subscribers to the building fund to elect from their members the initial Council. There seems to have been some distrust because the Act stated that the notice of this meeting would be in one or more newspapers and notified a fortnight before the appointed day.

Polding was probably not consulted about the changes to the original Bill. His power to approve the priest members was removed and his power as Visitor in controlling the first election was diminished The Council when elected was truly independent and the laymen now had the majority of position on Council so could not be ignored.

The 1857 Act lasted until 1994 when there was an amendment. However, in 2018 the 1857 Act was repealed entirely, and the college was reconstituted in the Act of 2018.

Fr Brian Lucas thanked Kyle for his presentation, and he asked the first question: why not establish the colleges as Charitable Trusts? Oliver replied that

doing this would involve Royal Courts and chancery and he would not advise this. Oliver was asked if he thought that the amendments made to limit the Archbishop's power over the Council was due to animosity with Polding. Oliver thought not, although

it had been his idea that he has veto powers over the clergy but all the priests who served on the first council were Polding supporters.

Helen Scanlon, October, 2024

Report of the Melbourne Meeting on 2nd September 2024

On 2 September 2024, the Melbourne Chapter of the ACHS gathered to hear a stimulating presentation by Deakin University doctoral candidate Scott McCarthy: *'I fear we Irish people are too much given to scratching one another': Catholic Socio-Economic Mobility and 'The Irish-Australian shoneen' in Victoria and New South Wales, 1883-1917*. For context, shoneen is 'a would-be gentleman who puts on pretentious airs' and is a pejorative term used in Ireland from at least the eighteenth century to describe Irish people who cultivated English manners and customs. While much has been written on sectarianism in Australian history, McCarthy's interest lies in the tensions (and suspicions) of upward socio-economic mobility of middle-class ambition among Irish Catholics in Australia. While the popular narrative of the poor Irish working class is true, a good many Irish Catholics became wealthy and began to enter the upper echelons of business and political life. In some ways, this was a natural evolution of Catholic emancipation and the emergence of the middle class in Ireland that naturally found its way to Australian shores. McCarthy quoted various sources and periodicals to show evidence of Irish Catholic working-class disdain for the 'elites' and for Jesuit schools such as Xavier College in Melbourne and Riverview in Sydney. In his presentation, McCarthy showed the cover of an anonymously authored pamphlet

published in 1911 by E J Dwyer outlining the sins of 'Bad Catholics', that is, those who had traduced their working-class origins. (Ironically, such sentiments would be repeated five decades later following the divisive Labor Split).

Daniel Mannix of course became the great working-class hero and would cross swords with some Catholic professionals who disagreed with him over conscription such as journalist Benjamin Hoare, Mr. Justice Heydon and Thomas Hughes. They feared that Mannix's interventions unnecessarily stoked the flames of sectarianism in Australia. As McCarthy pointed out, such sentiments were similar to senior Catholic laymen who in 1897 were critical of Cardinal Moran's ill-fated attempt to nominate himself to the Federal Convention to discuss Federation. As McCarthy discussed the fluidity of class, status, and identity of Irish Catholics, it was noted that the whole fight for justice for Catholic education was precisely that Catholics would enter the universities and the many professions that had been denied them for so long and so achieve upward social mobility. The fluidity of class and social status can be seen in Mannix supporter and entrepreneur John Wren who lived in a mansion in leafy middle-class Kew and yet could still identify with working-class Catholics through horseracing, boxing, pubs, and wrestling!

Rev Dr Max Vodola, Convenor

Christmas Luncheon 7th December

For our Christmas lunch please fill out the form and sent it by Monday 25th November and add any dietary requirements. The booking form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Important Notice:

If you are not receiving the monthly enews and wish to receive it, please send an email to maggyfranklin@yahoo.com.au with your preferred email address.

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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