



# Champagnat

an International Marist Journal of Education and Charism

Volume 12 Number 1

January–March 2010



## Signs of the times

Constance Lewis   Desmond Connelly   Charles Gay  
Bill McCarthy   Alice Williams   Verity Guiton

*IN THIS ISSUE ...*  
*Join our conversation on*  
**Signs of the times**  
*Featuring*

**Constance Lewis** *on Mary MacKillop's legacy*

**Desmond Connelly** *on charism's progress*

**Charles Gay** *on the definitions of sin*

**Bill McCarthy** *on Maryanne Confoy's book*

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# Champagnat

An International Marist Journal of Education and Charism

Volume 12 Number 1

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*Champagnat: An International Marist Journal of Education and Charism* aims to present information on research, educational practice and policy-making in the field of Marist Schools Australia Melbourne and other associated areas in a format that is accessible to both researcher and practitioner, within and beyond the international Marist network. Qualitative and quantitative data, case studies, historical analyses and more theoretical, analytical and philosophical material are welcomed. The journal aims to assist in the human formation and exploration of ideas of those who feel inspired by a charism, its nature and purpose. In this context, charism is seen as a gift to an individual, in our case Marcellin Champagnat, who in turn inspires a movement of people, often internationally, across generations. Such an educational charism encourages people to gather, to share faith, to explore meaning, to display generosity of spirit and to propose a way forward for education, particularly of the less advantaged. Consequently, this Journal endeavours to discuss the relationship between charism more generally, and education.

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## Beginnings

**T**HE APOLLO IMAGE of Earth depicted on the cover of this, the first edition of our Journal for 2010, is surely stunning. It reminds Christians of the absolute beauty of God's creation and the wonderful advances in technology which enable us to be able to see this beautiful reality. Pertinent to this image also, is its focus on Africa, the birthplace of humankind, with both its richness and its poverty.

While we Christians witness the beauty of God's creation, here in Melbourne at the beginning of 2010, we are being informed of a forthcoming seminar on the topic

of 'secular Sunday', proposing a suggested rise in atheism. These conflicting paradigms highlight the importance of theme of this edition of our Journal: signs of the times. How do we read such signs and, more profoundly, what is our contemporary reality?

During the 1960s, Pope John XXIII recognised the great changes the world was undergoing at that time. He could see these transformations bringing with them great technological advantages, as well as the potential for a great loss of a sense of the spiritual. These were among the reasons that led him to convoke the Second Vatican Council<sup>1</sup>:

In the face of this twofold spectacle – a world which reveals a grave state of spiritual need and the Church of Christ, still so vibrant with vitality – we, from the time we ascended to the supreme pontificate ... felt at once the urgent duty to call our sons [and daughters] together in order to enable the Church to contribute more effectively to the solution of the problems of the modern age.

In his opening address to the Council, in October 1962, he went further:

It is one thing to have the substance of the ancient doctrine of the *depositum fidei* but quite another

to formulate and reclothe it – and it is this that must – if need be with patience – be held of great importance, measuring everything according to the forms and proportions of a teaching of pre-eminently pastoral character<sup>2</sup>.

This call to ‘reclothe’ required an accurate reading of the signs of the times. We are told this, in turn, led to the phrase ‘Signs of the times’ becoming a mantra at Vatican II<sup>3</sup>.

The Pope’s challenge is still before us today with all its pastoral responsibilities. How do we read the signs of the times in 2010? Irish theologian David Power contends this involves a twofold task:<sup>4</sup>

First is to read the world in such a way as to know its ambitions, its desires, its capacities for good, as well as its flaws and indeed deeply ingrained sin.

Second is to be observant of the signs of the times in the sense that Jesus gave this expression, that is, to see in the world the signs of God’s gracious presence, of God’s advent, of God’s benevolent love, in the midst of human distress.

***... the secular society  
in which we live has a  
great deal to tell us if we  
can hear.***

Dr Constance Lewis appears once more, this time with her study of Mary MacKillop and the foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. In a year which may well see the canonisation of their founder, the Josephites have retained a strong and vibrant sense of their original charism. The story of the founding of the Josephite congregation is one with which many of our readers may well be familiar.

The extract that we present here was originally published in 1989. In it we find several contemporary references to the research being undertaken at that time by Fr Paul Gardiner SJ. His book *Mary MacKillop* was published five years later in 1994: it is the definitive biography that became a bestseller read by many of us.

Reading Dr Lewis’ article we are again impressed with the rigour and originality of her research and the meticulous attention she pays to the working of the Josephite charism in 1989.

It is a long article, well worth savouring at leisure. The chronicle of her difficulties with hostile bishops at times reads as vividly as a thriller.

In 15,000 words Constance Lewis has managed to give life, scholarly research and socio-his-

torical context to Mary MacKillop and her congregation.

How a charism can hold its essential character while still being flexible enough to adapt to the signs that the times give us is Desmond Connelly's concern in 'Song without words: reflections on charism'. We lead with this article because it crystallises our theme: Desmond's cogent and profound observations can be applied to every other article in this issue of the Journal. His treatment of the concept of charism is deeply interesting as it examines the effect of secular as well as religious heroes: Gandhi, John F. Kennedy and Aung San Suu Kyi come under his scrutiny and the comparisons are enlightening.

Bearing all this in mind, Charles Gay's article 'What is sin?' confronts us with the need for discernment and informed conscience. He presents a definition of sin that is wider than the merely personal; his identification of systemic sin amounts to a discussion of signs of the times that we should be vigilant to recognise.

I am pleased to publish a letter from Ambrose Kelly that responds to Jeff Crowe's article in the last issue giving expression to Jeff's call to assist those at the margins.

Br Bill McCarthy is our book

## *How do we read the signs of the times in 2010?*

reviewer for this issue, presenting a profound and perceptive analysis of Maryanne Confoy's splendid book *Religious Life and Priesthood*. Part of the Paulist Press' *Rediscovering Vatican II* series, her book revisits key document and is a reminder of the optimism and openness of those times. One of his most telling comments comes at the end of his review as he notes that not everyone will be pleased by Maryanne's approach, noting that she 'is critical of fearful Catholics who have a vigilante mentality'.

In this issue our media reviews are of a particular relevance to urgent contemporary issues, reminding us that the secular society in which we live has a great deal to tell us if we can hear. Accordingly our film reviewers look at *Avatar* and *Precious*, based on the novel *Push by Sapphire*. These are two highly regarded films with completely different approaches, yet both with a potent call to our senses of justice and compassion.

We welcome back Alice Williams to these pages, who brings her uniquely sharp observation and elegant writing style to her review of *Precious*.

We also welcome a new young

reviewer, Verity Guiton, who is more qualified than most film reviewers to consider the merits of *Avatar*, since she is completing an environmental science degree this year. She subjects the film's strong political message to a keen and well-informed analysis, while conveying an infectious sense of enjoyment at the technological wizardry of the movie's 3D effects.

Our Assistant Editor and TV Columnist Juliette Hughes considers some programs that examine the darker side of human nature in her review of a series of three programs (*True Horror*) that screened on SBS during February. She concludes that the human imagination produces 'inhuman' monsters whose true origin is in all-too-human evil.

In the face of such horrors the signs become clear. Our task, as Marists and those committed to integrating faith with life, is to go into dark, ignorant and hateful places and bring light, learning and love.

Our media provide good analysis of much of the 'ambitions' and 'flaws' within our global community. This is highly important. Less is said, however, of 'God's gracious presence' amongst us.

American theologian John Mogabgab observes that this void

is not new<sup>5</sup>. Moses approached God on Mount Sinai in 'thick darkness' (Ex 20:21); the Book of Ecclesiasticus suggests most of God's works go 'undetected' (16–21); at Nazareth Jesus slips through the crowd unnoticed (Lk 4: 28–30); the disciples see a 'ghost' walking across the waters to their storm tossed boat (Mark 6:49–50); Mary Magdalene believes Jesus to be the gardener at his graveside (Jn 20:15) and the disciples on the way to Emmaus conclude Jesus is simply another traveller on the journey from Jerusalem.

The call of the 1960s to read the Signs of the Times applied to all groups in the Church. In its document *Perfectae Caritas*, Vatican II urged Religious Orders and Congregations to return to their founding charisms and enter a process of renewal in response to the signs of the times.

They took this seriously. Many reorganised their ministries according to a renewed commitment to social justice and their desire to 'recapture their primary commitment to the poor'.

Much of this is now being described and analysed: we are privileged, in these pages, to be able to share some of the fruits of this important work. ■

**NOTES**

1. Komonchak, 1995. p169
2. Hastings, 1991. p460
3. Sullivan, 2007. p69
4. Power, 2010. p44
5. Mogabgab, 2010. p2

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# Joining the dance in South Africa

*Such an educational charism encourages people to gather, to share faith, to explore meaning, to display generosity of spirit, and to propose a way forward for education particularly of the less advantaged ... (Champagnat Journal Mission Statement)*

**J**EFF CROWE, in the last edition of *Champagnat*, wrote an article entitled 'The Dance: Missionaries Now'. There was a strong plea that others join the dance. I would like to share one such Marist dance that has gone on for more than 20 years and has involved hundreds of young people, and their teachers and parent communities, many who come from Australia not from Marist Schools but with Marist Connections.

Just to give you some perspective, I will give a short history: the dance is set in South Africa, and involved the Marist Brothers in that province. At the beginning of the 1980s the Brothers rose to the challenge of specifically working with the poor, in a country where more than four million people were displaced from their homes and forced to move in to often-unsuit-

able isolated areas. After careful evaluation they based one project in the Moshaweng valley, which is an area now in the Northern Cape province of South Africa some 120 km north-east of the town of Kuruman. Br. Anthony was one of the founders and certainly the man who brought so many plans to fruition over the past 20 years. I had the honour and privilege of working there as a Marist Brother from 1996 to 1998.

In the early 1990s groups began to come from Germany from Frankfurt International School. Over the past 20 years more than a thousand young people, from all over the world, with teachers, parents etc., have taken part in the program. To quote the above article 'We have become involved in the people's lives and struggles'. Some of these people with Marist

## LETTERS

connections have come from Australia.

The typical group of between 40 to 50 people (the majority of whom are students from Years 11 and 12) spend two weeks in the desert after a lot of preparation in the home schools. The work concentrates on the desert schools and their needs. So there is some teaching, distribution of food packages, building of classrooms and provision of school materials.

Some Australian schools are involved but currently none of them are directly Marist schools. Jeff Crowe's call to arms is appropriate, possible and timely. We are currently involved in 15 villages

serving some 15,000 people but in the whole region there are some 180 schools in many very poor isolated communities.

We can all resonate with Marcellin's prayer 'If you do not come to our aid we shall surely fail. But it is not our work that fails but yours, for you have done everything for us'.

Australian Marist schools and our schools everywhere are invited to join in. They can and will make a difference. ■

**Ambrose Kelly, Director  
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**CHARLES GAY FMS** made his first vows in 1960. He gained his degree in Economics and German from Glasgow University (Scotland), and in Religious Education from Mater Dei Institute, Dublin, Ireland. He gained postgraduate degrees in Ethics (MTh) and Canon Law (MA) from London University (England). After 17 years of teaching mainly Religious Education throughout secondary school, he became an Adviser and Inspector in Religious Education for 15 years, in the Westminster and then in the

Southwark Dioceses of London. From 2003 he spent five years teaching theology at a University College in Nairobi, Kenya. He returned to Glasgow and is now based at Ushaw.

**JULIETTE HUGHES** is the Assistant Editor and TV columnist for *Champagnat: an International Marist Journal of Education and Charism*. A freelance writer, she was the regular TV columnist for the print version of *Eureka Street* and has had many reviews, opinion pieces and features published in *The Age*. She was a regular Ethics columnist at the *Sunday Age*. She is currently completing a novel.

**VERITY GUITON** is completing a Bachelor degree in Environmental Sciences at Deakin University. She is a freelance poet and songwriter and in recent years has travelled extensively to work and study in Quaker peace and justice programs in the US and in the UK.

**CONSTANCE LEWIS** was Principal of Fairfield State School in inner

---

suburban Melbourne for 12 years before retiring to be a successful mixed farmer on the outskirts of Neerim South in Gippsland, in the eastern region of the state of Victoria. An accomplished musician with a Bachelor of Music from the University of Melbourne, and also a dynamic first defender in what was then called 'ladies' basketball', in the Melbourne Catholic Parishes Basketball Association, Dr Lewis was educated at Santa Maria College, Preston. Her thesis, 'Provision for the Education of Catholic Women in Australia since 1840' was supervised by Dr Donald Cave; her examiners were from Sydney and Dublin.

**BILL MCCARTHY FMS** is a holder of degrees in Arts, Education (University of Melbourne) and Theology (University of Fribourg, Switzerland). His PhD was gained from Monash University. He taught for many years in secondary schools, then for the Australian Catholic University. He is a Marist Brother who has worked from 1999 at Divine Word University, Madang,

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# Song without words

## *Reflections on charism*

DESMOND CONNELLY

WHEN HUMPTY DUMPTY used a word, as he emphatically asserted, it meant neither more nor less than he wanted it to mean. Alice wondered if one word could be made to have so many different meanings.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the lyrics of a song made popular by the music group 3T complain of occasions when words seem to have no meaning.<sup>2</sup> 'The Sentimental Bloke' took up the same theme: 'What's in a name, what's in a string of words?' he plaintively asked.<sup>3</sup> In *Dreams From My Father*, the old poet 'Frank' warned the youthful Barack Obama against allowing himself to be trained 'to manipulate words so they don't mean anything anymore.'<sup>4</sup> In 2003 Christopher Gauker, an American philosopher, raised the question to another level in a detailed exposition of the topic 'Words Without Meaning'. For him they are symbols shaped by personal qualities of the sender and subject to interpretation by parallel qualities in the receiver. However, a range of wordsmiths from orators to advertising executives clearly believe strongly in the immediate and powerful meaning of particular words.

What of the word 'charism'? Current usage seems to provide examples that would satisfy every position from Humpty Dumpty's to that of the professional wordsmith. In recent times it has slipped comfortably into popular parlance where it has the basic meaning of a quality possessed to an unusual degree by a particular individual. In this sense it is often used as a synonym for terms such as charm, likeability, leadership, power or persuasiveness. Its introduction into professional discourse over the last eighty years or so is attributed to the German sociologist Max Weber. For



him the concept was integral to a particular kind of authority or leadership. In much quoted verses from more than nineteen hundred years ago St. Paul spoke of charisma as a singular quality or ability coming as a gift from God to a chosen individual to be used for the benefit of many.<sup>5</sup>

In some contexts religious congregations give the word a sense very similar to that used by Paul. For them the lives of their founders provide evidence of a distinctive, profoundly spiritual and certainly potent quality. The kernel of their exceptional appeal was the clarity of their vision and their tenacity in pursuing the path they believed God called them to take. Persuaded by the strength of the founders' conviction others were led to support them in promoting within the church new developments informed and sustained by their spirit.

Accordingly, a key proposition underlying the reflections in the next few pages is that in essence charism is a kind of dynamic force with three interrelated components: an essential catalyst in the form of an inspiring leader, a worthwhile cause, and a body of ardent followers assisting that

individual to achieve a common goal. In the early pages of an interesting and informative exploration of aspects of the work of the Marist Brothers in Australia, Braniff gives a brief overview of some of the confusion characterising attempts to describe how the combination of these three components might be manifest in a modern school environment.<sup>6</sup> The various situations to which 'charism' is applied in the present journal encourage further exploration of the special significance of the term. The aim of the present article is to make a contribution to that task from a layman's perspective.

#### CHARISMATIC FIGURES

For some sociologists charisma ultimately defeats attempts to analyse it. For non-professionals it may be best understood when exercised in situations with which they are relatively familiar. Within the last 50 years Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Teresa and Brother Roger of Taizé have been recognised as powerfully charismatic. A string of notable maestros across Europe acknowledged the inspiration they had received from the orchestral conductor Arthur Nikisch. Musicians who had previously worked under his baton are said to have immediately performed better when he entered the rehearsal hall.<sup>7</sup> Periods of major conflict can bring charismatic personalities to the fore. Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy are examples. Both men are seen as having possessed a level of personal magnetism that impacted immediately and strongly on others, moving great numbers of them to enthusiastically and energetically accept their leadership. When Churchill became Prime Minister several months after the outbreak of World War II he soon aroused, and in fact came to embody, the dogged determination of the British to resist the aggressor unwaveringly. In a Gallup Poll published in August 1940 his countrymen gave him an 88 per cent approval rating. As for Kennedy, in the judgement of Schlesinger, Special Assistant to the President, he tapped his country's idealism and infused a generation with a passion for public service.<sup>8</sup>

The powerful impact of figures like Kennedy and Churchill continues to be remembered with gratitude, affection and honour. When Churchill died ten years after he quit public office, his was the first state funeral for a commoner in Britain in fifty years. In 2002 he was voted number one in a BBC poll that aimed to identify the one hundred greatest Britons.

In relation to the former US President, Thomas Brown concluded that over the period since his death ‘the magical public appeal of the Kennedy image’ has remained quite unaffected by conflicting views about him among professional commentators.<sup>9</sup> Continuing esteem is reflected in the numerous cases where foundations, places, structures and facilities carry his name. Do such facts suggest that the two men are significantly more than treasured memories in the histories of their respective countries? In Churchill’s case, Pelling (among other biographers) records that as fears of invasion began to recede, another kind of leader was judged necessary by the British electorate.

When an election was held after the war, Churchill was voted out of office. He later returned to lead a not-particularly-distinguished government before finally retiring from public life. Ramsden describes how intense admiration for him faded over a relatively short time, his once-strong impression on public thinking both at home and abroad proving to be transient. After a greatly acclaimed hour on the stage he departed laden with his country’s esteem but appears to have had little effect on national affairs since.

While Kennedy’s life was prematurely ended by an assassin’s bullet, some of his force and allure continued through the long public career of Edward, the younger of his two brothers. When Edward died in 2009, any Kennedy influence on US social and political life seemed likely to diminish quickly. As Schlesinger attests, JFK left behind a glowing and imperishable memory, yet in his close colleagues’ view, nothing said or written since his death had come close to recapturing the exceptional qualities he displayed as a man and as a President. The dynamism he exuded in life had died with him. What remained, stirring and profoundly felt though it might have been, was of a different order.

#### ONGOING INFLUENCE

In this respect Churchill and Kennedy joined a long line of personalities who strode like titans through the story of their times, but whose detailed achievements are now largely the realm of professional historians. With changing circumstances and the arrival of new kinds of challenges, the energy and inspiration of former leaders may be easier to honour than to perpetuate. When they die, replaced by memories or records of their words and deeds, the original charism associated with them evolves to a

second and usually static phase. In most cases this appears to be the norm. But is it necessarily so? Can there be a third phase to the charisma? The influence of Mohandas Gandhi<sup>10</sup> over recent generations supports at least a tentative affirmative response. Deeply spiritual, severely ascetic, totally committed to the struggle for freedom, Gandhi was quite extraordinary. Over a period of more than fifty years in public life he became renowned as a courageous, selfless and tenacious foe of all forms of tyranny. People came from various parts of the world to experience firsthand his teaching and example. He himself was a prolific writer, while to the present day fresh studies by others add to the scores of publications exploring his words and deeds. Accordingly it is not surprising that he made a deep impression on the social, political and moral attitudes of his day. In his case, many would argue, charisma was exceptionally strong.

When figures of such stature die their followers mourn for something irreplaceable. It is a certain compelling quality giving the leader an aura that captured their idealism, energised them to embrace his cause, and helped sustain them in the opposition they invariably encountered. The aura faded with his death. In an impromptu radio address on the evening of Gandhi's assassination, Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, lamented the loss:

The light has gone out of our lives ... Our beloved leader ... the father of our nation is no more ... we will not see him again as we have seen him these many years. We will not run to him for advice and seek solace from him, and that is a terrible blow ... <sup>11</sup>

The loss of such a personality can be fatal for any movement. Yet followers who have imbibed the true spirit of their leader know that while in life he was a necessary catalyst, he was not greater than the goal inspiring him. Now more than ever his fight and his dream have become theirs. Because Gandhi's focus was on a quality of human living that should apply to men in all ages and places, his vision not only embraced the world of his time but extended far beyond it. Nehru directed the thoughts and emotions of his countrymen in this direction as he continued:

The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that ... has illumined this country these many years will illumine this country for many more years, and a thousand years later that light will still be seen in this country, and the world will see it, and it will give solace to innumerable hearts.<sup>12</sup>

**PURPOSEFUL EFFORT**

Nehru did not expect the situation he foresaw to occur without considerable effort. As Judith Brown relates, the image and memory of the Mahatma remained a constant and precious presence in Nehru's life, a reference point to which he often personally returned, and one to which he commonly made public allusion. Moreover, agencies were already in place to make Gandhi's life and message an enduring inspiration.

Almost thirty years before he died, Gandhi had secured the presidency of the Indian National Congress and ensured that colleagues who shared his vision succeeded him in the role. He converted the Congress from an elitist to a mass organisation committed to working against caste differences, poverty, religious and ethnic discrimination and untouchability. When he died he left behind as devoted disciples people of considerable social and political influence who were determined that the message of his life would not be forgotten.

To the present day the Congress Party claims to be faithful to Gandhi's ideals and in particular to have a special regard for the welfare of economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society. In 1995, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of his birth, the government of India launched an annual award as a tribute to the ideals he espoused. This 'International Gandhi Peace Prize' is presented to an individual or institution judged to have used non-violence, or other methods favoured by Gandhi, to contribute in an outstanding manner to social, economic and political change.

At least equally important in projecting Gandhi's influence to later generations is the Sabarmati Ashram established by him to further his political and moral campaigns. After his death it evolved into a multi-function facility dedicated to preserving and propagating his vision and to being a cogent source of inspiration and enlightenment for visitors. The hundreds of thousands of Indians and foreigners who arrive each year suggest that its impact is likely to continue well into the future.

Decades after Gandhi's death, the Dalai Lama, Aung San Suu Kyi, Desmond Tutu and Cesar Chavez are just a few of many world figures to hail him as an exemplar par excellence. For Barack Obama Gandhi is a personal hero whose teachings and ideals indirectly helped transform American society through the civil rights movement. In 2009 the US President urged his countrymen to use the occasion of Gandhi's

**TABLE 1: ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN TRANSMISSION OF CHARISMATIC FORCE ASSOCIATED WITH FOUNDERS OF RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS.**

**NOBLE CAUSE**

**INSPIRING INDIVIDUAL  
AS NECESSARY  
CATALYST**

**ARDENT FOLLOWERS  
SUPPORTING LEADER**

Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three (1)	Phase Three (2)
<p><b>PERIOD: (IN RELATION TO RELIGIOUS)</b></p> <p>Lifetime of Founder and short-term aftermath.</p> <p><b>CRITICAL FACTOR</b> Founder as potent focus of identity and action.</p> <p><b>KEY FEATURES</b> Pragmatic strategies for applying Founder's vision in relevant practical situations.</p> <p><b>FOSTERING ACTIVITIES</b> Recruiting of members; efforts to gain social, political and ecclesiastical establishment of agencies, facilities and institutions in accordance with the vision of the Founder. et al.</p>	<p><b>PERIOD: (IN RELATION TO RELIGIOUS)</b></p> <p>Consolidation stage following deaths of founder and closest collaborators.</p> <p><b>CRITICAL FACTOR</b> Founder cherished as an abiding and revered memory.</p> <p><b>KEY FEATURES</b> Concerted efforts to have the Founder formally and informally honoured.</p> <p><b>FOSTERING ACTIVITIES</b> Veneration of images of the Founder; prayers addressed to the Founder; invoking Founder's example to aid in fostering idealism and a stronger spiritual life; canonisation efforts. et al.</p>	<p><b>PERIOD: (IN RELATION TO RELIGIOUS)</b></p> <p>Time and circumstance increasingly remote from socio-cultural conditions of Founder's lifetime.</p> <p><b>CRITICAL FACTOR</b> Founder as inspiration, motivating/energising force, and constant reference point.</p> <p><b>KEY FEATURES</b> Application of Founder's vision to personal life and to current specific socio-cultural contexts.</p> <p><b>FOSTERING ACTIVITIES</b> Authorised ongoing reinterpretation of Founder's spirit; prayerful reflection on Founder's life, vision and aims; fostering and publicising activities bearing the hallmark of the Founder. et al.</p>	<p><b>PERIOD: (IN RELATION TO LAY PERSONS LINKED TO CONGREGATION)</b></p> <p>Time and circumstance increasingly remote from socio-cultural conditions of Founder's lifetime.</p> <p><b>CRITICAL FACTOR</b> Founder as revered guide to attitudes and behaviours.</p> <p><b>KEY FEATURES</b> Instruction and reflection on how Founder's vision may be shared, developed and applied.</p> <p><b>FOSTERING ACTIVITIES</b> Formation programmes to promote the Founder's vision and special aims; regular discussion of how the Founder's spirit may influence programme and character of institutions. et al.</p>



*Aung San Suu Kyi*

anniversary to renew their commitment to live his ideals and to celebrate the dignity of all human beings. Through the first decade of the 21st century the inspiration of Gandhi's life and message has apparently been alive and well.

Such a development, taking followers well beyond treating the departed leader as an admired icon, represents a new manifestation of the potent influence of the leader, in other words, a third phase of charisma.

In terms of the effective transmission to posterity of the inspiration of charismatic personalities, therefore, three positions can be distinguished. Phase One is evident in their lifetimes, when there is a challenging cause, the dynamic interaction of inspiring individuals and a critical mass of followers directly influenced by them. The formal approval of the movement's goals by legitimate authority is a major goal, but it may not be fully achieved until after the passing of the leader.

Arguably these two sets of developments should be seen as in effect inseparable. Together they are a manifestation of phase one of the charisma associated with leaders. For at least a short time after their death, their message, attitudes and ideals may keep on informing and sustaining the activities of the movement they initiated.

However, as time passes after the deaths of leaders, what continues may become not so much a stimulus to endeavour as continuance of the ir story: their life and work held in memory, even revered, but not really an active focus of identity and action. Their charism has moved into Phase Two. While the dead leaders continue to be revered, the movements to which they gave impetus come to be maintained not so much by their spirit as by the qualities of their successors and the value placed on their current activities by particular societal groups.

Yet leaders whose spirit was demonstrated to be exceptionally powerful may continue to have an influence long after their deaths. Determined followers can succeed in setting in place particular structures and procedures that perpetuate the leaders' inspiration, motivation and energy. As a result, subsuming Phase Two, it is possible for a Phase Three charism to emerge as a continuing factor in the activities of the organisation.

#### FOUNDERS AND CHARISM

The aim of the Sabarmati Ashram is to have Gandhi's ideals serve as a beacon for all generations. But the mere 62 years since his death give no guarantee that the aim is realistic. Reassurance may come from the resemblance of the means used by the Ashram to the measures implemented by the Christian Church in keeping the charism of Christ strong throughout almost two thousand years.

The Church has constantly preached and interpreted the Gospel message, it has given pragmatic guidance to all in being truly Christian in their thoughts and deeds, and in every age it has identified outstanding exemplars of Christian living. Such saints have often generated an inspirational force of their own, energising others to take them as guides in the following of Christ.

Many founders of religious orders have been from a similar mould. They may have dwelt very little on the extension of their personal influence beyond their lifetime, but they channelled their energies into establishing institutions or agencies that aimed for good, tangible and lasting outcomes in areas such as social welfare, education and health care. Their potent appeal was the initial driving force behind the establishment within the Church of a host of valued activities. For how long could such force continue to be felt? The Second Vatican Council's 1965 *Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis)* urged

religious institutes to constantly return to their original spirit, to their founder's vision and special aims, and to abandon works which today are less relevant to the spirit and authentic nature of the community.

Superiors-General of a number of congregations are said to have repeatedly urged their members to return to the sources of their distinctive spirituality and history. With the passage of time and the move into new eras and new cultures, congregations have had to cope with an increasing range of social and cultural changes and diverse attitudes of mind and heart. It would be understandable if the impetus from their founders had weakened, to be replaced to a substantial degree by the imperative of using initiative and flexibility to adjust to unanticipated circumstances.

In terms of the normal operation of a congregation, over a number of decades – and at least in some significant respects – the charism of founders may have been manifest largely in its second phase. The founder's life may have become just a treasured memory, a kind of venerated artefact.

Post-Vatican 2 pragmatic plans were doubtless set in place to effect a 'return to the sources' – to strengthen Phase Three where the authentic spirit of the founder would increasingly be an inspiring, energising and guiding factor in the life of the congregation. What components might one expect to find in such plans? The purposeful action taken by the Church in relation to the message of Christ suggests some potentially effective, and possibly even crucial measures.

The first is constant engagement in the ongoing reinterpretation of the founder's words and actions, the second encompasses various ways of fostering the assimilation of their essential message, and finally there is the initiating or supporting of activities that indisputably bear the founder's hallmark.

With regard to the first of these measures, it can be difficult to transmit the life and message of the founder to later generations. This can be especially the case, for example, with a religious body founded some centuries ago and now active in various regions of the world.

The members of the congregation will include many with little understanding of the language and social and cultural environment of the founder. For them, and probably for others also, translation of original records of words and deeds is helpful, but far from sufficient. Translation

is partly craft and partly art, and both are handmaids to interpretation.

The intent behind original writings, it is generally accepted, can be quite inadequately and even incorrectly conveyed because of the choices made by translators. Since documents from earlier eras remain open to interpretation in various ways and on different levels it is important to draw on substantial expertise to have them speak to followers in today's circumstances.

With regard to implementing the second measure, it would be surprising if the formation and ongoing religious development of Religious did not highlight the importance of prayerful reflection on an authentic interpretation of the founder's life and message. Action taken in relation to the third measure could include the identification of particular members who are or were clearly imbued with the genuine spirit of the founder.

Depending on circumstances, this could lead to locating them strategically so that they act as a leaven in the general body; it may involve supporting particular initiatives they propose; in some instances it may be judged helpful to publicise them as examples of what it means in today's world 'to faithfully hold in honour ... their founder's spirit and special aims'<sup>13</sup>.

It is perhaps a reasonable supposition that the meditation necessarily associated with measures such as those outlined here would be not only a source of energy for the spiritual life of the Religious but also a strong influence on their attitudes and actions as they contribute to the mission entrusted to their congregation.

#### SCHOOLS AND CHARISM

Most congregations are not contemplative; they were approved to help carry out the work of the Church in designated fields such as education where the vision of their founder was expected to be a motivating factor. The withdrawal of Religious from some areas of education has been accompanied by considerable discussion about maintaining the charism of the founder in schools now staffed almost exclusively by lay people. It is appropriate to examine how such an outcome might be achieved.

When the schools were staffed predominantly by members of a religious congregation, it was taken as a given that their schools had a singular character closely related to the founder's vision and message.

As the teachers had been exposed over a lengthy period to an array of similar formative influences, it could be expected that the nature of the subsequent and perhaps dependent interactions among them and then between the teacher group and their students, would be at the heart of the special character distinguishing the school.

A critical variable in the interactions would have been the degree to which the charism of the founder informed the actions and attitudes of individual members. To take three cases at random, the more strongly the spirit of Ignatius or Marcellin or Mary Ward influenced the two sets of interactions, then the greater were the Ignatian, Marcellin or Mary Ward dimensions in the distinctive characters of the schools. But the repeated requests for congregations to return to the spirit of the founder suggest that the special character of their schools may have been rather more Jesuit than Ignatian, more Marist than Marcellin, more Loreto than Mary Ward, and so on.

Be that as it may, as congregations progressively withdrew, they rightly sought to have the founder's spirit continue as a formative influence in their schools. The associated imperative of infusing lay staff with the spirit of the founder presented a formidable challenge. A probability to be confronted was the emergence of an alternative scenario. In its document on the Apostolate of the Laity the Vatican Council urged lay people to take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation and to infuse a Christian spirit into the community in which they live.<sup>14</sup>

Among the teachers in Catholic schools there are doubtless many who seek to respond positively to such directives. Over time, the priorities of such staff, the nature of the interactions among them and their subsequent interactions with the students, could well significantly modify the special character distinguishing what was originally a school staffed almost totally by religious.

A feasible development could be that schools of this type would move into a transition stage, evolving steadily to a situation where the founder's phase two charism remained significant, but the schools took on a character that better reflected the enhanced role of the laity in the new millennium.

Such considerations notwithstanding, it is surely a worthwhile goal to have the admirable example and inspiration of the founder continue as

a major influence. Accordingly a number of congregations have comprehensively addressed the task of maintaining the founder's spirit in their schools. The Society of Jesus is one of them. Over the last twenty years or so it has implemented a program that in a number of respects reflects the measures outlined above in relation to making Religious more attuned to their founder's aims and spirit.

To confront the new issues facing Jesuit schools, the Society aimed to strengthen the common spirit they saw as transcending pedagogy, curriculum and school life. According to the former Superior General, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, that spirit is derived from the inspiration, values, attitudes and style to be discovered through reflection 'on the lived experience of Ignatius' and on the ways in which his vision has been shared, developed and applied down the years.<sup>15</sup>

In 1993 Kolvenbach, described the program as having three outcomes. The first was a statement of values, principles and guidelines detailed in the 1986 document: *The Characteristics of Jesuit Education*. It was supplemented seven years later by practical teaching strategies set out in *Ignatian Pedagogy: a Practical Approach*. Thirdly, there were to be long-term staff-development programs to apply the 1993 document to the specific needs of each region.

As stated in the Introduction to the 1986 document, countless lay people and members of other religious congregations have been influenced by the inspiration of Ignatius. So the long-term development programs spoken of in 1993 might be confidently expected to help lay staff imbibe some of the Ignatian spirit of the Jesuits they replaced.

There is evidence that projects of this kind have had some success: signs of Phase Two charism are evident in many schools formerly staffed principally by Religious. At one level, pupils commonly exhibit acquaintance with the life of the founder. At another, the label 'charism' is used as a rhetorical flourish, as a literary allusion is employed to add colour to a narrative. There are also many instances showing how the words and actions of teachers are influenced by the founder's message and spirit.

As lay staff are known to have diverse levels of religious belief and practice, the evidence of charism at work no doubt results from the efforts of particular individuals who are singular in not only being committed Christians but also in having embraced the vision of the founder.

Nevertheless, advancement to a form of phase three charism could be more problematic. If developmental influences actually affecting pupils are to include attitudes and ideals of the respective founders, lay staff will need to include a critical number who have shared in and been guided by their inspiration.

Such a result may come in part from discussion of paradigms, pedagogy, curriculum and school life. It may be facilitated through words about values, attitudes and traditional style. It may be more likely to arise through substantial formation programmes along the lines of the three measures outlined earlier in relation to having Religious themselves more responsive to the vision of their founders.

In the millennium of the laity such programmes may be most practicable and effective if a significant part of the teaching staff were educated to be 'Lay Associates', or belonged to some modified form of secular institute affiliated to the religious congregation. Any such formation programme is bound to draw heavily on the example of the members of the congregation in whom the legacy of the founder is primarily invested. Clearly perceived 'to live and operate out of their own special charism'<sup>16</sup> they may then more readily transmit it to others.

Table 1 summarises some of the main elements involved in maintaining the charismatic force associated with founders of religious congregations.

Among the early teachers of the present writer, and recalled with esteem, gratitude and affection, were some talented, modest, exemplary Marist Brothers. To me their special character cannot be neatly encapsulated in some construct of words, some skilful weaving of formula and catch cry. Through prayerful meditation the message of their founder had come to them insistently yet intangibly, a song without words, impelling them to strive to bring the music of Marcellin to ever finer melody.

Reflecting on the quality those Brothers might bring to schools today, I think of them cutting through the superficial sophistication and gadgetry-obsession of many modern youth to see in each of them a 'work in progress', a great potential for good existing alongside more than a trace of Jean-Baptiste Montagne<sup>17</sup>, desperately needing to make space for God in their young lives. Exhibiting in their own ways the virtues of the unassuming Mother of Jesus, I hear those Brothers encouraging their charges to look to Mary as model and guide.

Personifying in various respects the tireless and unselfish zeal of Champagnat, I see them by word and example inspiring their pupils to take practical action to bring the light and love of Christ into the lives of others. If lay staff who now replace those admirable men can come to be similarly imbued with the spirit of the founder, the effort devoted to achieving that end would be well rewarded. ■

#### NOTES

1. Carroll, Lewis, *Through the Looking-Glass – and what Alice found there*, chap. vi, p.196, quoted from *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll- II, Through the Looking Glass- and What Alice Found There*, London: The Nonesuch Press, 1989.
2. ‘I realize your words have no meaning ... can’t believe you told me words without meaning.’
3. Dennis, C.J., *The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke, V. The Play*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1915.
4. Obama, Barack, *Dreams from My Father*, New York: Random House, 2004 ed., p. 97.
5. With specific reference to charisma see 1 Cor.12 and 14; Rom. 12, 3-8.
6. Braniff, John, *And Gladly Teach – The Marist Experience in Australia 1872 – 2000*, Ringwood VIC, David Lovell, 2006, pp.1-7.
7. Lebrecht, Norman, *The Maestro Myth*, New York: Carol Publishing, 1992.
8. See Introduction to the 2002 edition of Schlesinger’s Pulitzer-Prize-winning account of the Kennedy presidency.
9. Brown, 1988, p.101.
10. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, was born 2 October 1869 and assassinated 30 January 1948; he is generally known in India as Bapu (Father), and known worldwide by the honorific title Mahatma (Great Soul) that is said to have been first given him by the Bengali poet, philosopher, musician, writer and educator Rabindranath Tagore,
11. Quoted in Chadha, Yogesh, p.464
12. *ibid.*
13. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 2b)
14. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Chapter II sections 7 and 13,

15. Kolvenbach, 1986
16. Arrupe, Pedro, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, 1965-1983, quoted in Kolvenbach, 1986, para. 3.
17. A dying 17-year-old boy whom Father Champagnat found to have no religious faith and minimal knowledge of God.

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# Mary MacKillop

*and the founding of the Josephites*

CONSTANCE LEWIS

*This article is an extract from Dr Lewis' monumental 1988 doctoral thesis on 13 educational congregations. It deals with the heritage and experiences that moulded the spirit of Mary MacKillop, Foundress of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart.*

THE RULES OF enclosure and community life which governed the Orders of Religious women who came to Australia from Europe in the mid 1800s tended to limit their early adaptation to the Australian educational scene to the provision for the educational needs of the middle classes in convent schools. This meant that many Catholic children in poor circumstances, both in the city area and spread throughout the distant countryside in the wake of the gold rushes and mid-century ventures to open up the land, were without Catholic schooling. It was to become the life time work of Mary MacKillop, a young Australian girl of Scottish ancestry, to establish a vast Religious Order of women to provide for the religious education of the children of the Australian working class. Undeterred by the problems of Australian frontier society and opposition from the Australian Catholic hierarchy, Mary MacKillop relentlessly pursued her cause on behalf of the education of the Australian poor.

Mary MacKillop's heritage and family experiences moulded in her a character that could endure great hardship and frustration. She was descended from the clans of the west coast of Scotland which adhered to the Catholic faith through generations of religious and political conflict. 'Inbuilt into Mary's character was the strength of the Highland Scot. Suffering was part of her ancestors' lives and Mary was to know it keenly



*The MacKillop Family Painting by Mary Rose Heriot.*

herself.<sup>1</sup> Pride in their origins typified most the Highland Scots who emigrated to Australia in the early days of settlement.

The family of Mary's father, Alexander MacKillop, emanated from the Lochaber Highlands. Her mother's family who also came from that area was a branch of the MacDonalds descended from Ranald Mor, the chief of Kippoch c. 1513-1547. For centuries the MacKillops and MacDonalds had supported each other in war and peace. They fought together on the side of Prince Charles at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 as they had fought for the cause of Mary Queen of Scots two centuries earlier. Hospitality and generosity to needy relatives were features of these Highlanders' frugal lives. Catholicism helped many families endure their unfair rules of land tenure and probably engendered an acceptance of poverty and unquestioned loyalty to clan chiefs. Their Gaelic heritage was evidenced in that they tended to be romantic, procrastinating, given to spurts of enthusiasm and likely to experience rapid fluctuations of optimism and pessimism. As the life of Alexander unfolds, some or all these behavioural features clearly emerge.<sup>2</sup>

Some knowledge of Mary MacKillop's parents, their attitude to life and religion, their achievements and failures, their influence on their children is vital to an understanding of Mary's inspiration and motivation as well as her attitude to adversity and conflict which pursued her constantly as she struggled in quest of her goal.

Mary's father, Alexander MacKillop, was born on 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1812. Poverty dominated the lives of Alexander's parents. Deeply religious people, they sent Alexander at the age of twelve to study for the priesthood in Rome – many Scottish priests descended from the Lochaber people. At the age of nineteen Alexander returned home without having completed his studies. Ill-health and a lack of temperament for the Religious life appeared to be factors contributing to his decision to leave Rome. In 1831, he entered Blair College, a small seminary in Aberdeen but again left without completing his course.<sup>3</sup>

To a man of Alexander MacKillop's religious fervour and devout Catholic upbringing, the years of education and training in an almost totally ecclesiastical environment must have deeply cemented many of his attitudes to life. His view of honesty and integrity in other men was, it seems, so idealised and strongly principled that it was inevitable that he would be disappointed time and again. His reactions to the business amorality that he encountered in his Australian land ventures appears to have been strongly influenced by his early education and the discipline of Religious teachers.

When Alexander's parents decided to come to Australia rather than submit their children to the grinding poverty that faced them, with prospects becoming grimmer year by year for the Highlanders, Alexander accepted the opportunity to prepare the way for them. Comparatively experienced in travel and foreign places, he welcomed the challenge as a real chance to redeem his fortune. His natural optimism and his family's expectations of his abilities probably induced an almost euphoric feeling at the thought of the project.

Alexander MacKillop was an intellectual. In addition to his native intelligence, far above the ordinary, he was equipped with a first class education which had been intended to prepare him for the priesthood ... He was a gifted scholar, an accomplished linguist, and a formidable opponent in philosophical and theological

debate. When he stepped ashore from the sailing ship 'Brilliant' at Sydney Cove on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1838, Alexander, optimistic by nature and with his exceptional academic background, must have felt that 'the world was his oyster'.<sup>4</sup>

Alexander MacKillop at 26 years of age was immediately accepted into a select group of Sydney lay Catholic intellectuals. After a short but highly successful period in business in Sydney, he moved to Melbourne where again he made a successful entry into the business world and appeared to be in a fair way to becoming a man of substance.

By 1840 Alexander owned a considerable amount of land around the Merri and Darebin Creeks, and towards the end of that year he became a licensed land broker. Also, with few Catholic intellectuals among Melbourne society he soon became a leader amongst Melbourne's Catholic population. At a time with no priests in the district on a regular basis, Alexander MacKillop became renowned for his ability in defending the Catholic faith against all attacks. He soon became one of the best known men in Melbourne, and a person whom all admired.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, when Alexander met Flora MacDonald in June 1840, just two months after she arrived in Melbourne with her parents, he was an up-and-coming man of status as well as a gentleman of some considerable substance. As the future looked bright and secure, they decided to marry almost immediately. After their marriage on 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1840, they went to live in a fine mansion in Brunswick Street, Newtown, now Fitzroy, where Flora settled into her new home as a fine lady of fashionable Melbourne society.

Mary, the eldest of the MacKillops' eight children, was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> January, 1842 in the days of joy and plenty when it looked as if the economic ruin which forced the MacKillops and MacDonalds to leave their homeland was to be changed to an hitherto unimaginable prosperity. Mary was baptized by Father Bonaventure Geoghegan OSF, the pioneer priest of Melbourne who celebrated her parents' marriage. Alexander had been present at Fr. Geoghegan's first Mass in the colony in 1839. He was chosen by Bishop Polding of Sydney under whose jurisdiction Melbourne then was, to act with himself and Father Geoghegan as a trustee of Church funds in that part of the diocese.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of his intellectual abilities and the fact that he had earned the respect of the Church and the community as a capable and efficient financier, Alexander MacKillop was not a practical man, and his impracticality was to cause tremendous hardship for his family. Continuing to speculate in land, sometimes he was very rich, and sometimes he lost money.

The Depression Years of the late 1840s resulted in a down-turn in the MacKillop's fortunes as a result of failed land deals. Optimistic, self-confident and over-venturesome, Alexander allowed himself to be persuaded to join the famous 'Twelve Apostles' syndicate<sup>7</sup> and found himself pushed over the edge of ruin into the insolvency court.<sup>8</sup>

From this financial disaster Alexander MacKillop never recovered. His family had to give up its fashionable house and was to be always poor, dependent on the help of their relatives. To the proud Scot, insolvency was a very real shame. He suffered the agony of humiliation as his wife and young family became more and more reliant on the hospitality of relatives. Thus it was that Mary, the eldest of their children, at a very young age assumed a major responsibility for the stability of the family.

The responsibility for this situation cannot be put on Alexander alone. It seems as though Flora tried to become a 'lady' in the new country, expecting other people to do all the domestic work. Differences in the education of husband and wife contributed to the lack of mutual support and Flora also demanded too much of her children. This resulted in pressures being put on Mary that were quite unfair.<sup>9</sup>

With few schools in Melbourne during this early period, Mary MacKillop received most of her education from her father. Alexander invested in his daughter his considerable intellectual gifts, surrounding her with a richness of secular and religious knowledge. Mary spent her early life in an atmosphere of devout family Catholicism: she became devoted to all forms of religious practice. However, by the time she was 14 years old her father was out of work and the whole course of her young life was to be dictated by the necessity of making a living. As she grew older Mary was aware of 'her father's increasingly erratic temperament, lordly airs and unwarranted optimism'.<sup>10</sup> While Alexander's native poise and self-respect evaporated, as he allowed himself to be destroyed by

his misfortune, and Flora occupied herself with her children, Mary was forced to bear the brunt of the family's poverty.

The family's misfortune stripped Mary MacKillop of any childish illusions, giving her a philosophical attitude towards economic adversity ... She formed a practical determination to develop within her own personal resources compensation for her father's failure. Mary realized that while doctrines of self-help and improvement taught that society could incline towards a superior moral and material enlightenment, there was no miraculous escape from the deadening effect of grinding penury, thwarted ambition and repeated failure. Consequently, Mary did not strive to escape her own poverty but sought to realize religious riches and contentment within it.<sup>11</sup>

In 1860, when she was nearly 19 years old, Mary began to think about becoming a teacher and a nun. She sat for the State School examination for teachers<sup>12</sup> and, as the only Religious community of women in Melbourne at the time was the Mercy Order, she was advised by Father Geoghegan and Bishop Goold to become a Sister of Mercy. The Sisters of Mercy's Academy of Mary Immaculate in Fitzroy was, at the time, a select school catering mainly for the wealthy amongst society. Mary could not see in the work of the Sisters of Mercy at Fitzroy the opportunity she was seeking to help the poor.

Mary realized that for people with very little money the Sisters of Mercy's academy provided little opportunity for gaining a Catholic education. It became Mary's burning ideal to save the lost faith of the working class and the poor through the education of the children. Her Scottish heritage meshed with the downgrading of Catholicism, and the disastrous financial status of her immediate family coalesced [sic] to become the inspiration and driving force of her enduring struggle to secure the means of providing a truly Catholic education for the downtrodden Catholics of the colony.<sup>13</sup>

Mary MacKillop was to become governess to the daughters of her father's sister, Margaret Cameron, whose husband was a wealthy pastoralist at Penola in South Australia. At Penola Mary met Father Julian Tenison-Woods, an English convert, missionary and scientist. Woods<sup>14</sup> was preoccupied with the same educational vision as Mary MacKillop.

He was concerned to provide education for the children of the many Catholics who had spread out through the vast country areas en route between the old gold-digging sites. There were, in fact, no priests and no Catholic schools to cater for the children of Catholic farmers and workers who had settled in remote areas between Melbourne and Adelaide, still at that time part of the Melbourne diocese. Tenison-Woods and Mary MacKillop spoke enthusiastically about providing for the needs of these small scattered communities.

Mary spoke of her desire to serve God as a Religious and of her belief that her father had been intended for the Church but had not persevered. Somewhere in the consciousness of her mind had grown the conviction that the vocation which her dearly loved father had abandoned was to find its fulfilment in her.<sup>15</sup>

From this time Mary put herself in the hands of Julian Tenison-Woods, who became her spiritual director. She was, however, soon to leave Penola to become governess to the daughters of another branch of the Cameron family at Portland, where she remained for three years, first as governess, then as a teacher at the Portland denominational school. Mary brought her family to Portland as she saw her position at the Denominational School as a chance to help re-establish the family finances, but the move only brought her added strain. On 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1864, Mary opened the Bay View House Day and Boarding School for young ladies with the assistance of her family, but the venture failed.

Woods corresponded with Mary, helping to sustain her ideal and encouraging her to try to rise above her family worries. At the time relations between Alexander MacKillop and his wife Flora were not good. Julian thought it best if Alexander was left to himself, as Flora would not have been capable of managing things when Mary left Portland. It is sad that deficiencies in the characters of Alexander and Flora should have led to this. It is obvious that Mary had been the very centre of family, supporting it and keeping it together. Yet in spite of circumstances that could have made her bitter because of all the responsibilities she had to bear, Mary always retained a deep love and respect for her parents.<sup>16</sup>

In the middle of 1865 Woods found himself without a teacher for a private school in Penola and invited Mary to take charge of this school. By the new year, Mary was able to organise her family responsibilities and leave for Penola where her sister Annie had already commenced to teach

the pupils of the school in the church building. Mary rented a disused stable, which her brother converted into a schoolroom. She visited the families in order to persuade them to allow their children to attend, assuring them that they would not be asked to pay if they were unable to do so; she even found clothes for the poorest children so that their parents should not be ashamed of their appearance at school. Thus began the first school of the Sisters of St Joseph, the forerunner of hundreds like it destined to bring the benefits of Catholic education to the children of the poor throughout Australia.

**2. THE FOUNDATION OF THE JOSEPHITES:  
A REVOLUTIONARY RELIGIOUS ORDER DEDICATED TO THE POOR**

While Dr Murphy, the first Bishop of Adelaide, accepted the Government grant made available as a result of the South Australian Education Act of 1857, Bishop Geoghegan who succeeded him in 1859, strongly opposed the system, rejecting it on the grounds of its religious indifference.

Geoghegan set about detaching the Catholic schools from any form of government grants. In the short time that he spent in South Australia Geoghegan established the principle upon which Catholic Church schools there would continue to function and set the scene for the introduction of Religious teachers in the South Australian schools.<sup>17</sup>

The next bishop of Adelaide, Dr Lawrence Sheil, was appointed in 1866 and lost no time in consolidating the direction established for Catholic education in South Australia by his predecessor. In September 1866, Bishop Sheil appointed his secretary, Father Julian Tenison-Woods, as Director General of Catholic Education, Chairman of the Education Board and Inspector of Schools throughout the Adelaide Diocese. Woods realised the tremendous help his position would afford in bringing about his and Mary MacKillop's vision of a new Religious Order specifically structured for Australian conditions.

The dream of Julian and Mary was something totally new in the Australian Church. Established Religious communities originating in Europe had very definite structures which suited European traditions. They had their Mother House, but when new com-

munities were founded in new territories, they were subject to the bishop of the particular place. But the new Institute of the Sisters of St Joseph was to be vastly different. There would be one Mother House and all the Sisters would be subject to the Superior General rather than the local bishop.<sup>18</sup>

Also, because of the rules governing community life, there was at the time no Order of Religious women in Australia or Europe that could have coped with the nature of the scattered rural mission envisaged by Woods and Mary MacKillop. Their idea received the approval of Bishop Sheil when, after hearing Woods' glowing praise of Mary's school, he himself visited Penola and was impressed with her work. Early in 1867, the bishop expressed publicly his support for the foundation of her new Religious Order. The Jesuits were also impressed with the work of Mary MacKillop and throughout the history of the Josephites, the Jesuits have been friends, guides and spiritual advisers.

When in Rome to promote the cause of her Institute, Mary received a great deal of help from Father Anderledy SJ who later became Father General of the Jesuits. From him she received a lot of sane direction for her own spiritual life as well as sound advice on the exercise of her own authority as the Superior of an Order, and secondly, how to relate to the authority of the bishop.<sup>19</sup>

On August 15, 1867, Mary MacKillop took the Religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and the new Religious Order, the Sisters of St. Joseph<sup>20</sup> of the Sacred Heart, which was to have a powerful influence on the education of the Catholic working class in Australia, had begun. Father Woods helped Mary draw up the Rule of life of the Josephites, which drew on elements of both the Benedictine and Ignatian Rules resulting in a revolutionary concept of Religious life for women which had not been tried before.

The Rule framework drawn up by Woods went into extraordinary detail. It was a document of over six thousand words divided into fifteen sections. The first section set out the Objectives of the Institute thus: 'In the name of the glorious patriarch St Joseph, this Institute has been erected for the pious education of children whose parents are in humble circumstances, and thus its subjects may attain either by direct teaching by the management and care of Seminaries taught by others, or by taking the charge of



*Mary MacKillop holding a copy of  
her Life Vows 1869.*

Orphanages to which may be added, where circumstances allow, refuges for destitute persons. The Sisters shall, however, consider themselves principally bound to education, and more to the children of the poor than to others. So that, however urgent other secondary objects of the Institute may be, the schools must be the first care.'The Sisters had to be prepared to take charge of schools in any district, no matter how poor, and they were to live in any house they could get no matter how small. The section of the Rule governing the maintenance of these convents stated: 'The houses shall be absolutely without revenues, and the Sisters shall derive their support entirely from the schools, the institutions over which they have charge, or from alms.'<sup>21</sup>

Mary MacKillop realised from the outset that strong central government was essential to hold together the organisation of small scattered communities necessary for the mobility required to keep pace with the restless movement of people drawn by the promise of security, no matter how short-lived. The concept of a central authority governing small mobile units was outrageous by traditional standards of conventual life for Religious women. The concept of central government was also in direct conflict with the particular authority that the nineteenth-century



*The MacKillop -Woods Schoolhouse built in Penola, South Australia, 1867.*

Irish bishops of the Australian church demanded in the administration of their dioceses. The uncompromising stand which Mary took in defence of the principle of central government brought her into bitter conflict with a number of these bishops. Another strong feature of the Josephites which was to cause some concern amongst the clergy was the democratic attitude in the structure of the Order.

Mary's rejection of the elitism of most convent education of the 1860s in Australia was extended to the conduct of the community itself. There was to be no class structure among the Sisters. The democratic instinct, a noble individualism hating unjust subservience, which observers had noted as a marked characteristic of Australian-born children even in the very early years of colonization, caused Mary to hate snobbery and class distinctions.<sup>22</sup>

A consequence of Mary's democratic inclination was a dislike of having the differentiation within the Religious community of choir and lay Sisters. Mary determined to keep the Sisters as far as possible on the same level, reflecting the Australian egalitarianism and democratic spirit of the era.

The Sister Guardian-General shall be elected by the Sisters. She shall be assisted in her office by two Sisters as consultors. They shall have authority over all the houses of the Institute and shall be elected every six years at a General Chapter.<sup>23</sup>

Initially, many Catholics who were familiar with traditional structures of European convents were suspicious of so radical a departure from established form, but their fears were soon allayed, and the esteem in which the Sisters were held soon began to attract new members to the Order. In the first three years 150 women joined the community, and for the next 25 years, as the Josephites expanded and spread throughout Australia, Mary MacKillop supervised the numerous scattered houses, attended to problems with ecclesiastical authority, conducted programmes of teacher training, and managed the financial commitments of the Order.

The Sisters opened their tiny convents to expand their sphere of operations to include the amelioration of every type of infantile and womanly distress generally anticipating the establishment of a parish and welfare systems. Denied the support of a resident priest, the path-finding Sisters periodically gathered together the scattered threads of the amorphous congregation for Mass prayers and suppletive devotions, keeping alive the flame of faith until the parish linked up.<sup>24</sup>

Mary always knew exactly how the Sisters were getting on, no matter how far distant they were working from Adelaide. 'Right from the beginning she visited each school, or sent someone else in her place. She saw how the Sisters were carrying out their duties, inspected each child, and wrote a report.'<sup>25</sup> She demanded only basic good qualities of the young women who applied to enter the Josephites; there was no dowry requirement, teacher training was given on an apprenticeship basis, and those who could not read or write were taught to do so. The Sisters of St Joseph were not founded to provide higher learning, but to impart a sound basic education impregnated with the Catholic faith, and Mary MacKillop believed, if a young woman possessed appropriate qualities of character, she could be a valuable member of the Order. The rapid expansion of the Josephite schools was promoted by Woods in his role as Director of Catholic Education.

Everywhere Woods went he closed down numerous small schools,

replacing them with schools conducted by the Sisters. His actions annoyed many of the clergy, and generated a critical attitude towards the Sisters. The fact that he was English-born was also a factor which did not help any of the Church activities with which he was associated. Most of his fellow clergy had Irish origins. Naturally, these cultural differences caused problems.<sup>26</sup>

By a combination of circumstances the clergy of the Adelaide diocese came to look on Woods as an idealist totally out of touch with reality, an impractical man of affairs who was managing to get himself into a good deal of debt. Nevertheless, Bishop Sheil was so proud of the work of the Sisters of St Joseph in his diocese that, on his return from Europe at the end of 1868, he granted his approval of the Rule of the new Order. He also invited Woods to address the National Synod of Bishops held in Melbourne in 1869 concerning the work of the Sisters of St Joseph. Some of the bishops showed considerable interest in having the Sisters work in their dioceses, and the era following the withdrawal of government grants to Church schools witnessed a vast expansion of the Sisters of St Joseph as many new schools were opened, vocations abounded, and a new central novitiate was established in North Sydney. Rapid expansion was sustained for many years, and the Order of the Sisters of St. Joseph became the second largest Order of Religious women in Australia after the Sisters of Mercy. When Mary MacKillop died on 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1909, the Josephites were well on the path towards their eventual pre-eminence as educators of Australian Catholics.

From the statistics compiled for the general chapter held after Mary's death, it can be calculated that 11000 women joined her and worked with her for a time or for life during her own lifetime.<sup>27</sup>

Expansion for the Josephites was, however, achieved amidst great hardship and bitter conflict with Church authorities, which could well have destroyed the Order.

### 3. MARY MACKILLOP CONFRONTS THE IRISH BISHOPS OF COLONIAL AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICISM

Mary MacKillop's insistence on central government for her Order brought her into conflict with all the Irish bishops with whom she came in contact during the era of the Josephites' foundation, development and

expansion throughout colonial Australia. From the earliest times, when Bishop Sheil left Adelaide for the First Vatican Council at Rome in 1870, the criticism and antagonism levelled against the Josephites by the clergy gained momentum.

With the appointment of Archdeacon Russel as administrator of the Diocese of Adelaide on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1870, the anti-Josephite priests began to make their protests more vocal, demanding that the schools accept the government grants so that support for the Sisters would become unnecessary. The attacks were strengthened by the extremely bad financial state of the diocese and the debts that Julian Woods was incurring for the Sisters.<sup>28</sup>

When Bishop Sheil returned to Adelaide on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1871, he was greeted by the tense atmosphere of a diocese on the verge of bankruptcy, and by vicious attacks on Woods, Mary MacKillop and the Josephites generally.

Misunderstanding arose as the bishop came under the influence of his advisers, a few ill-chosen friends, incapable of grasping wide issues and intent on gaining the advantage of the moment. Sheil was unable physically or psychologically to resist their pressure. All the criticism of Woods and the Josephites became focussed on Mary. ... She was informed that the bishop was contemplating making great changes in the internal structure of the Institute...The need for the changes arose it was alleged because a large number of the Sisters were illiterate and because a closer supervision of each convent was essential. There was a basis for the assertion of illiteracy but it was so slender that the charge really amounted to slander. In fact, of the eighty or so professed Sisters in South Australia, thirty-six had been teachers or governesses before they entered the Josephites and out of the whole number there were only three who could not read and two who could not write but all of whom were, nevertheless, excellent Sisters who devoted their lives to domestic duties. ...The Commission appointed by Sheil to examine the affairs of the Institute recommended that a number of the Sisters should be reduced to the status of lay Sisters and that each convent should be absolutely autonomous and under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the parish priest of the district in which it was situated.<sup>29</sup>The

full impact of the situation was to strike Mary when she arrived back in Adelaide, and there followed a trail of events and misunderstandings that led to the unfortunate excommunication of Mary MacKillop for disobeying the direction of her ecclesiastical Superior.<sup>30</sup>

Further tension was generated between the bishop and the Josephites when, in the face of objection to Mary's excommunication by some of the community, he threatened that 'he would teach them obedience which they were never taught before, and that if anyone attempted to leave the Institute without his permission, he would excommunicate her at once.'<sup>31</sup>

Without any means of salvaging the situation, Mary was forced to leave, eventually finding refuge with the Jesuits at Norwood. Six months later Bishop Sheil, ill on his deathbed, ordered that the regrettable sentence of excommunication be lifted. The Papal commission appointed to investigate the affair advised that Woods relinquish the directorship of the Josephites. Father Tappeiner SJ, who was appointed the new director, encouraged Mary to go to Rome to seek Papal approval for the Institute as a security against future disruption. James Quinn in Brisbane and Matthew Quinn in Bathurst also waged a bitter conflict with Mary MacKillop over the right of the Josephites to central government.

James Quinn and Matthew Quinn shared an unshakable conviction that they and they alone were the first Superior of all Religious working in their respective dioceses.<sup>32</sup>

The seeds of discord were ominously present from the time of the establishment of the Josephites in both Queensland and Bathurst and were to result in withdrawal or division of the Josephites in these dioceses. The community of Josephites which Matthew Quinn had requested arrived in Bathurst in July 1872, but from the outset, Mary had deep concerns about the proposed foundation because it seemed as though the bishop was going to expect them to undertake activities which were contrary to the Rule. Once the Sisters were established in his diocese, Matthew Quinn did, in fact, regard them as completely and unquestionably under his absolute control. Quinn was totally dissatisfied with the central government of the Josephites, especially so because it was officially declared by the authorities in Rome at a time when he himself was in Rome trying to bring pressure to bear to have the Josephites in

his area accept his plans with respect to diocesan control of the Order. As a result of Mary's defence of her Order before the Papal Court, the Rules of the Sisters of St. Joseph were revised by Rome in 1873. Certain elements were modified but the concept of central government was strengthened.

The extreme practice of poverty enjoined by the original rule was modified so that the Sisters would now be permitted to own their convents corporately, and any postulant who was in a position to bring a dowry with her, could do so. The practice of training novices in each diocese or region was to give way to a central novitiate training, so that the idea of centrality to which the bishops Quinn objected was strengthened by this unifying approach to novitiate formation.<sup>33</sup>

Under the auspices of the new Constitutions the first General Chapter of the Sisters of St Joseph was held in March 1875. Mary was elected Mother General, and four Consultors were elected to assist her in the centralised government of the Order. Matthew Quinn's response to the Roman affirmation of central government in the Josephite Rule was to treat Mary MacKillop to a series of high-handed accusations in such a way as to discredit her in the eyes of the authorities in Rome.

In August 1875, Matthew Quinn wrote to Monsignor Kirby: 'With regard to Sister Mary, there is no danger and indeed no question of a rupture if it be not her own fault. Her claims to govern the Sisters of St Joseph in my diocese are mere pretensions, and her theory of one novitiate for the two dioceses would be simply ruinous, and if I were weak enough to consent to it, might be the cause of grievous scandal for which I would be responsible.' By the beginning of 1876, Matthew Quinn's vengeance against Mary MacKillop showed he was determined to do all in his power to destroy the Sisters of St. Joseph in his own diocese, and if possible, in other parts of Australia as well: 'I repeat for the hundredth time, the Sisters of St. Joseph under the new Constitutions are totally unfit for the circumstances in Australia. You will be glad to hear that everything except these blessed Sisters of St. Joseph is going well in the diocese.' Quinn was to write many letters trying to get Mgr. Kirby to accept his point of view.<sup>34</sup>



*Mary MacKillop, aged 29 years, in the year of her excommunication (1871)*

Matthew Quinn was determined to make the Josephites subject to diocesan authority. Papal approval of the Rule of the Josephites seemed to mean nothing to him, and the conflict only urged him on in his campaign to have central government for the Sisters of St. Joseph destroyed. But in the light of papal opposition to his plan, Matthew Quinn did come to the conclusion that the only prudent thing for him to do was 'to wash his hands of the whole matter as far as regards Mary and her Adelaide Institute. If the Sisters that he brought from Adelaide chose to go back they could, and he would form his own subjects according to the necessities of his own diocese.'<sup>35</sup> Matthew Quinn set about systematically to execute his plan. On Christmas Eve 1875, he assembled the Bathurst Sisters and explained that each was free to choose between remaining in Bathurst and accepting diocesan control under his leadership, or persisting under centralised government and leaving the district. One Sister chose to stay to train the young ladies that Bishop Quinn brought from Ireland as novices for his diocese, the others left. Among other modifications, Matthew Quinn was obliged by Rome to clothe his Sisters in a black habit to distinguish them from Mary's Sisters who wore brown. Foundations of the Black Josephites were subsequently made in the Maitland and Goulburn dioceses which were presided over by the Irish bishops, Murray and Lanigan.

Like Mother Vincent Whitty of the Sisters of Mercy, Mary MacKillop was to have a difficult time in Queensland with James Quinn, but the solutions they chose were different. When the Josephites arrived in Brisbane on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1869, James Quinn was in Rome. From the outset the Vicar-General, Dr. Cani, informed Mary that it was the wish of the bishop that all the schools in the diocese should accept the state grant and thereby submit to some degree to the authority of the State Education Board. However, contrary to his wishes, the Josephites continued to depend entirely for their support on the community which they served.

Dr. Cani, the priests in general and even the Sisters of Mercy, knowing the bishop's decided views on the question of state aid for schools could not understand why she [Mary] was so inflexible about the matter. In their opinion, it was only a small adjustment to circumstances that was being demanded; in her opinion it was a principle that was at stake.<sup>36</sup>

This difficulty immediately raised in the Queensland diocese the issue of central government, and James Quinn's determination to make the Josephites diocesan. 'James Quinn wanted the Sisters to come under the same system of government as the Sisters of Mercy, that is, that the bishop of the diocese in which they live would be their Head Superior next to the Holy See.'<sup>37</sup> When the Roman authorities upheld the concept of central government for the Josephites, a crisis in Queensland became inevitable. There was simply no room for compromise: Mary was convinced of the necessity of central government, and Quinn was equally determined about his position.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1875, Mary wrote to Cardinal Franchi in Rome:

I grieve to say that painful difficulties have arisen between the good Bishop of Brisbane and our Institute. He positively refuses to accept the Constitutions in his Diocese or to continue any further communication with the Mother House in Adelaide. ... I told him if he would not accept the Constitutions, we were all willing that they should remain a year longer in his Diocese, provided they were allowed free communication with their Mother House and that they remained under the Superioress appointed by it. His Lordship, however, insisted that they should be left entirely to

himself, under the Superior he pleased, in no way connected with the Mother House nor allowed to communicate with it.<sup>38</sup>

Mary visited the Sisters scattered in remote areas throughout Queensland, exhorting them to have courage, to be faithful to the new Constitutions and to be respectful but careful in their dealings with the bishop. She also kept in constant communication with the Queensland Provincial, endeavouring to buy time for a favourable resolution. She herself was receiving encouragement from Rome.

He [Monsignor Kirby] begged me to be patient with the Bishop of Brisbane and try to keep on friendly terms with him, trusting in time and his own charity with God's mercy, to bring him round.<sup>39</sup>

By early 1878, trouble was developing in some of the north Queensland schools, so Mary gave instructions to the Superior that, if the Constitutions were in danger, she was to close the schools immediately. Two visits to Queensland by Mary during the year, though strengthening the loyalty of the Sisters to the new Constitutions, did not succeed in settling the main question of how to deal with the bishop's demands for control of the Queensland Josephites. It became painfully obvious by March the following year that no agreement could be reached with the bishop and the withdrawal from Queensland commenced. The exiles were welcomed in Sydney by Archbishop Vaughan. Mary wrote a report of the situation to Cardinal Simeoni at Propaganda Fidei expressing confidence that the Josephites could work happily in the Sydney Archdiocese:

He [Archbishop Vaughan] entirely agrees to our observance of the Constitutions, and makes no objection to the central government, or to the Novitiate in Adelaide, though with regard to the latter he thinks it advisable, if Your Eminence approves, to have a second Novitiate in the Archdiocese. ... In the great education struggle that is before the Church here, a Novitiate of our Order in Sydney would produce a means of doing much to help it, and I have the utmost confidence in His Grace's disinterested goodness.<sup>40</sup>

The first schools to be opened by the Sisters of St. Joseph in the Sydney Archdiocese were at Penrith and at St. Mary's Cathedral. Like Archbishop Vaughan, Archbishop Torreggiani of Armidale welcomed the Josephites into his diocese. The Josephites were not to return to Queensland until about 1900, by which time foundations had been made

in Western Australia and Tasmania (1887); in Victoria (1890); and in New Zealand and the Northern Territory . In Western Australia there developed for the Josephites a conflict over the central government issue similar to that which they had already encountered in the eastern colonies.<sup>41</sup> Also during this period of expansion the central government issue continued to create problems for the Adelaide foundation. With the establishment of schools of the Sisters of St. Joseph in New South Wales, there were fewer Sisters available for work in South Australia, and this caused dissatisfaction among some of the clergy who saw it as proof that central government was against the best interest of any diocese. In addition, Bishop Reynolds also felt most dissatisfied with the transfer of the Mother House to Sydney, and he soon became as determined as the Quinns to achieve local control over the Sisters in his diocese, claiming over them the absolute authority that the Quinns had exerted years before. Thus, in 1883, for the second time in twelve years, the Josephites were to be subjected to a Commission of Enquiry. As at the Enquiry of 1871, which resulted in Mary's excommunication, the Bishop of Adelaide was given false advice by those whose opinion he valued.

With the financial situation of the diocese becoming more and more desperate and the bishop unable to manage finance successfully, the debts which the Sisters had incurred were blamed by some of his advisers as being the root cause of these problems. ... It is true that the Sisters had debts, but these were only a minute part of the problem of diocesan finances.<sup>42</sup>

The outcome of the Enquiry was that Mary was banished from Adelaide and the Sisters of St. Joseph in Adelaide were not to see her again for some thirteen years. Bishop Reynolds accused Mary MacKillop thus:

You no longer have the confidence of the Sisterhood, nor is it in the interests of good order and discipline, of peace or religion that you should remain in the Province. ...With this notification, all jurisdiction with the Sisterhood in this Province ceases.<sup>43</sup>

He kept up his attack on Mary in his correspondence to Monsignor Kirby in Rome:

Mother Mary of the Cross, though deposed, still gives trouble. Her circular letter keeps up the fire of discontent. She wants to get back here [Adelaide]. If this is permitted the scandal will



*Granite slab commemorating the birthplace of Mary MacKillop, set into the footpath outside Lot 11 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Victoria.*

never be obliterated. I cannot for the life of me make out why the unfortunate misguided woman is still allowed to exercise such power. Were it not for her intrigues, the Sisters would be happy and resigned.<sup>44</sup>

The Josephites begged Moran to do all he could to effect the return of Mary to the Mother House of the Order in Adelaide. However, when Archbishop Vaughan died, Mary did not find in Moran, his successor, the champion she had in Vaughan.

At heart, Moran was as much opposed to the Constitutions of Mary's Institute as the other Irish bishops had been. He showed a definite leaning towards the position of those who required diocesan control. However, when called upon to report to Rome on further trouble in the Adelaide diocese he showed himself just and impartial.<sup>45</sup>

One of Moran's great qualities was justice, and he was always just when dealing with the Josephites, in spite of the opposition he must have received from the majority of bishops in Australia, who were opposed to the work of Mary MacKillop and the operation of her Order. At the First Plenary council of Australian bishops held in Sydney in 1885, the issue of the Josephites' centralised government was discussed in detail, with the Irish lobby making its influence felt, and a vote of fourteen to three against central government was registered.

As regards the Congregation, which is called the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the bishops think it opportune that the Convents of Religious houses should be subject like those of the Sisters of Mercy to the Ordinaries of the dioceses in which they live.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the persuasion of such determined pressure, Moran put forward in Rome, on behalf of the Sisters of St. Joseph, presentations which saved them from the worst consequences of the Adelaide Commission. Finally in 1888, with the Decree of Leo XIII<sup>47</sup> which clarified the issue of central government in favour of the Josephites, the major struggle of Mary MacKillop to establish her radical concept of Religious life for women was over, and a period of consolidation commenced.

Father Gardiner SJ considers that the heart of the central government issue was Mary's attitude to law and her concept of authority. 'She had a set of Constitutions in which central government was very clearly stated.'<sup>48</sup> Once the issue of central government, which she was absolutely convinced was essential to the organisation of the small scattered convents of the Josephites, was endorsed by Rome, Mary brought her determined, down-to-earth attitude in overcoming adversity, whether spiritual or temporal, to the situation, and this inevitably precipitated a prolonged and bitter conflict. Mary MacKillop was not nurtured in awe of Episcopal status as was Mother Vincent Whitty of the Mercy Sisters, thus her response to the opposition of the bishops allowed for an alternative solution to submission as a means of survival.

#### 4. MARY MACKILLOP'S PEDAGOGY

In her own family's inability to extricate itself from and rise above its impoverished circumstances, Mary MacKillop had learned that the upward social mobility and the Benthamite-liberal ideal of the greatest happiness for the greatest number would be a long time coming for many of the Catholic working class. Mary contended that the Sisters of St. Joseph should impart to the children of the poor, or at best, the hard working labouring man such things as pertain to their proper station in life.<sup>49</sup>

The Sisters of St. Joseph were to devote themselves entirely to the working class, leaving other Religious Orders or the private teachers those higher branches of learning with which Mary believed the poor should have no concern. Poor children, Mary maintained, required 'an education sufficient to obtain a situation and earn a living, to write legibly, to add up and subtract figures and to communicate'<sup>50</sup>

Such an education, with catechism as the backbone and with every moment of the school day determined by religious aims and impregnated

by a Catholic spirit through prayers, hymns and precursory classroom paraliturgies, was, Mary considered, the most appropriate for the development of the truly Christian working-class women. The elegances and embellishments considered a desirable acquisition for the daughters of the higher classes were excluded as unnecessary accomplishments. The womanly graces and refinements which particularly suggested class distinction were, in Mary MacKillop's estimation, foreign languages and instrumental music. Instruction in these, Mary maintained, would make poor children dissatisfied with life.

How often do not vain foolish parents suffer the far more important educational wants of their children to be neglected ... How often have not hard-working mothers toiled without mercy to themselves and allowed their children to grow up without any idea of the true duties of their state. And, how often too, have not these daughters learned to despise and be ashamed of the poor hard-working mother who had brought them up so idly and in such ignorance of their duties towards God and herself ...<sup>51</sup>

Faced with evidence that many Religious Orders coming from Ireland, particularly before the advent of the various Education Acts, allowed the claims of the higher classes to occupy their primary attention, displacing in some cases their original aim, Mary was against any attempt to pay more attention to those in a position to pay, lest the Order be diverted from its primary identity and dedication to teaching less favoured children. Unlike the schools of the more traditional Orders, Mary MacKillop's Josephites never deviated from their professed objective to offer sound, pragmatic education for the children of the poor working-class Catholics scattered throughout the bush and less privileged city areas. Mary believed in leaving nothing to chance in achieving her educational goal.

Hence, from the outset, she displayed an intense interest in developing appropriate teaching methods. Although she accepted aspirants to the Josephites who were not educated ladies, she was anxious that they rectify the situation to some degree so as to enable them to teach effectively according to her methods. Julian Woods also insisted that the young Sisters be closely associated with the foundress in the schools in order that they might be imbued with her ways and learn her methods.<sup>52</sup>

Essentially, the training of the Josephites as teachers proceeded along the line of the scheme developed in England in 1846 by

Kay-Shuttleworth. This is important because it nullifies claims that teachers trained for her Catholic schools were deficient in preparation.<sup>53</sup>

Kay-Shuttleworth's plan was to take student-teachers into the classroom in order to train them in the art of teaching. In 1839, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, during his time as a secretary to the English Commission of Education, conducted an educational experiment on a large scale: 'new methods of teaching were worked out, continual reforms were adapted to English conditions, textbooks were prepared and methods of training teachers were tested and modified'.<sup>54</sup>

Kay-Shuttleworth recognised that the first priority in any expansion of the country's educational system was to improve the quality and supply of teachers. In 1840, he founded his college for the training of teachers at Battersea, which was deliberately fashioned on the Swiss model, where elementary school teachers learnt their job by undergoing a form of apprenticeship. Kay-Shuttleworth's primary purpose was to prepare teachers for workhouse and district schools, for schools of industry, for schools 'which would reconcile the children of the poor to a life of honest toil, while tasting the delight of mental activity and religious communion'.<sup>55</sup>

Unlike the teacher training institutions of the National Society and the British and Foreign Schools Society, which offered only a brief course which gave teachers the elements of a system of monitorial organisation, the course at Battersea was to be a discipline of body and mind continued over a number of years.

The Battersea course was to create a band of teachers who would go out as reformers, and especially on Pestalozzian principles. Beginning with the concrete Pestalozzi linked up first conceptions with the motive of utility and approached abstractions only as the learner's mind became prepared for them.<sup>56</sup>

Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi was a German-Swiss educator who was influenced by Rousseau's *Emile*. Pestalozzi worked out a theory and method of instruction based on the natural development of the child. He wrote and published *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, which explained his methods and forms his most important pedagogical work, *A Guide for Teaching Spelling and Reading*, and *A Book for Mothers*, devoted to a description of 'object teaching'.<sup>57</sup> The oral and object teaching developed

by Pestalozzi was at that time quite revolutionary, as instruction of children was predominantly memorisation of textbook matter.

The form of instruction worked out by Pestalozzi, based on sense-perception, reasoning and individual judgement, called for a complete change in classroom procedure. What Pestalozzi tried most of all to do was to get children to use their senses and their minds, to look carefully, to count, to observe forms, to get, by means of their five important senses, clear impressions and ideas as to objects and life in the world about them, and then to think over what they had seen and be able to answer questions, because they had observed carefully and reasoned clearly. Pestalozzi thus clearly subordinated the printed books to the use of the child's senses, and the repetition of mere words to clear ideas about things. ... This was an entirely new process, and the first time in history a real 'technique of instruction' was now called for. Dependence on the words of the text could no longer be relied upon. The oral instruction of a class group, using real objects, called for teaching skill. The class must be kept naturally interested and under control; the essential elements to be taught must be kept clearly in the mind of the teacher; the teacher must raise the right kind of questions, in the right order, to carry the class thinking to the right conclusions; and, since so much of this type of instruction was not down in books, it called for a much extended knowledge of the subject on the part of the teacher than the old type of school-keeping had done. The teacher must now both know and be able to organise and direct. Class lessons must be thought out in advance, and teacher-preparation in itself meant a great change in teaching procedure.<sup>58</sup>

Pestalozzi possessed a deep and abiding faith in the power of education as a means of regenerating society, and his work influenced education in Switzerland, Western Europe and America. The great contribution of Pestalozzi lay in that he rejected the teaching of mere words and facts which had characterised all elementary education up to almost the close of the eighteenth century, and tried instead to base the process of education on the natural and orderly development of the instincts, capacities and powers of the growing child, through observation, experimentation and reasoning. In line with Pestalozzian principles Kay-Shuttleworth maintained:

Unless in elementary schools the instruction proceed beyond the knowledge of abstract rules to their actual applications to the practical necessities of life, the scholar will have little interest in his studies, because he will not perceive their importance, and, moreover, when he leaves the school, they will be of little use, because he has not learned to apply his knowledge to any purpose. Kay-Shuttleworth thus advocated the teaching of mensuration, land surveying, mechanical knowledge, the keeping of simple accounts, drawing and design because they were near the experience of the poor and admitted an abundant illustration in the practical concerns of their life. But, important as was the utility motive it was not allowed to exclude others. Drawing was introduced also because of its beneficial influence on taste. Vocal music was taught, partly because it was a means of increasing the sum of happiness of the worker's life, partly because it increased the solemnity and impressiveness of religious worship. Geography was also recognized as important because of the width of outlook it could give and also because, taught in a proper way on Pestalozzian principles, it could provide 'a constant exercise to the reasoning powers'.<sup>59</sup>

These subjects of intellectual training were, of course, subordinated to the ultimate aim of education – the foundation of moral and religious character. Kay-Shuttleworth's course could no doubt be criticized by modern theory as too rigid, too much governed by a time-table and too closely controlled by schedule requirements. No moment of the school day was free from occupation, and rarely was any occupation free from supervision. While discipline was not harsh, the teachers were always within view, giving assistance and advice.<sup>60</sup>

Kay-Shuttleworth always recognised that the three Rs – reading, writing and arithmetic – as important instruments, but he showed also by precept and example the importance of literature, singing, geography, history, manual occupations and simple political economy in the lives of the workers. His conception of the social nature of education and his perception of teaching as a skilled craft were alike outraged by the crude philosophy of 'payment by results'<sup>61</sup> introduced in the 1861 Code of Regulations. The stifling 'payment by results' philosophy was to be

accepted more widely and for a longer period in colonial Australia than in England, where other, more idealistic theories of education were able to counter its impact and negate its widespread acceptance.

In most of the Australian colonies in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, teachers were engaged under a system of 'payment by results' whereby their livelihood was made dependent upon their success in beating the three Rs into their unfortunate charges.<sup>62</sup>

In 1862, ignoring the serious criticism which the Revised Code provoked in English educational circles, the Victorian Board of Education, under Sir James Palmer, was the first in the Australian colonies to impose the 'results system'. Palmer extolled its virtues before the Higginbotham Royal Commission:

It induces regular attendance, it stimulates teachers, it promotes organization, it ensures uniform progress unto the pupil, and by its equitable distribution of this payment amongst the teachers, and by making this payment dependant on their exertions, it enlists them all heartily in the service.<sup>63</sup>

The system was inevitably abused as 'attendance rolls could be falsified, children's ages misreported, talented pupils with infectious diseases kept at school, backward children discouraged from attending and copies of the inspector's questions being passed quickly ahead of him from school to school'<sup>64</sup> Although Education Department teachers of this era were defectively educated, trained in the pupil-teacher tradition, and forced to conform by the 'payment by results'<sup>65</sup> the evidence shows that, in the educational programme of her schools and in the training of her teachers, Mary MacKillop appeared to follow many elements of Kay-Shuttleworth's system, which she combined harmoniously with certain elements reflecting Jesuit influence.

Some idea of this organization may be had from the *Directory* or *Order of Discipline*, published between 1867 and 1869. In the second lowest grade of the school the subjects were 'reading (Part Second of the First Book), hymns, small letters on slates, figures and prayers' (p.84). In the second highest grade, the fourth, the pupils were to read English history, and 'learn same'; they were also to do ancient history, spelling by dictation, writing in

copy books, and arithmetic as far as proportion. Parsing was to be 'nicely entered in books according to the rules of syntax', and in addition to grammar. The pupils were to do Latin and Greek roots and 'write easy essays'. Geography, which was to include mapping, was to be taken from the fourth class lesson as prescribed in the geography text. While the girls did plain and fancy needlework, the boys were taught 'book-keeping by single entry'; double entry, the first book of Euclid and mensuration were added in the top grade (p.84; see details for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> classes). The programme, which varied from day to day, was set down in detail for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the Friday being reserved for repetition of all classes. Thus, for the fifth class, the Monday's programme included grammar, Greek roots, ancient history and poetry; the Tuesday's, geography, Latin roots, English history and Irish history; the Wednesdays, grammar, spelling, ancient history and prose; and the Thursday's mathematical geography, English history and Irish history (p.85). The morning programme, the same for each day, was as follows (p.86):

9.15 Hymn to St Joseph,  
Morning Prayers and Dictation  
9.30 Writing  
10.00 Arithmetic  
11.00 Tasks  
12.00 Examination of Conscience, Angelus,  
Calling the Roll and Catechism  
12.30 Recreation and Dinner  
1.30 Children reassemble.

## Mary MacKillop and the founding of the Josephites

The afternoon programme varied from day to day and from class to class as set out in the accompanying table.

1.30 Children take their places, singing a hymn as they do so.						
	First Class		Second Class	Third Class	Fourth Class	Fifth Class
TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS						
1.30–2.00	Little girls sew, boys copy on slates	1.00–2.00	Reading	Parse on slates	Reading	Parse and enter same in books
2.00–2.15	Object lesson	2.00–2.30	Copy from grammar or geography	Reading	Parse and enter same in books	Reading
2.15–2.45	Make figures and letters on slates	1.30–3.00	MONDAYS AND THURSDAYS Plain and fancy needlework. Boys – Book-keeping, etc.			
2.45–3.15	Spelling and reading lessons	2.30–3.00	TUESDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND FRIDAYS Lecture of gallery lesson – that is, explanation of either maps or science charts, globes, etc.			
3.15–3.30	Exercises	3.00–3.30	TUESDAYS AND WEDNESDAYS Mapping lessons			
			FRIDAYS Darning and patching Boys – Book-keeping, etc.			
3.30 Afternoon attendance marked and children dismissed, singing as they go out.						

The conduct of small schools on such time-tables was made possible by the use of a modified monitorial system, the details for the working of which were set down in the *Directory*. The monitors were selected 'from the most advanced, orderly, and

punctual of the children' (p.81). Those appointed to this office were to endeavour by 'earnest attention, cheerful patience, and tidy, regular habits', to merit not only the approbation of their teachers but the love of their companions as well. One part of their duty was to be in attendance half an hour before the school opened in order to have the slates distributed and ruled. They were to maintain order, especially when marshalling pupils in small groups (p.81) before the teachers for recitation (p.82). To distinguish themselves from the rest the monitors were to wear a 'distinguishing cross of blue or red ribbon' (82).

Besides relying on the help of monitors the Sisters were to cultivate a spirit of industry and appreciation by fostering emulation: coercive methods were frowned upon. The best child of the week in each class was to wear a special ribbon, medal or rosette. The ribbons themselves were to be of different colours, or of different widths, and were to be awarded, not for any particular phase of school work, but on the aggregate of regularity, obedience, tidiness, catechism, merit, and singing (pp.81-82). Elaborate regulations for rewarding marks in each of these areas were laid down. Thus, for regularity, two marks, morning and afternoon, were awarded to each child who attended or was ready to enter school when the bell was sounded. Those who were late lost their marks, and, if late through their own fault, they received a bad mark, which was equivalent to losing five good ones (p.83) Other recommendations in the *Directory* referred to minor points of order and administration (p.88). Those dealing with religion were the most detailed: they referred to religious instruction (p.84), to the prayers to be said and the hymns to be sung at the various periods throughout the day (p.88, Art.20), to preparation for the Sacraments (p.88, Art.9), to retreats for children, and to special devotions proper to certain feast days (p.89).<sup>66</sup>

Through both the influence of Tenison-Woods and direct Jesuit-Josephite contacts, some elements of the *Ratio Studiorum* were incorporated into the Josephite educational programme.

Father Woods had experience with the Jesuits, and certainly through the early years in South Australia there were significant bonds between their Houses at Sevenhills and Norwood with the fledgling Josephite congregation.<sup>67</sup>

Emulation as a positive incentive to encourage attendance, a spirit of industry and application, and the facilitation of acceptable behavioural standards were an inheritance from the Jesuits. The Jesuit *Ratio* was also the inspiration for the annual series of competitive contests conducted by the Josephites.

Viva voce half-yearly examinations were helpful in fostering the public image of the schools; the best pupils from each class were carefully selected to answer the questions of the examining committee before an audience of parents and interested friends. Hymns were sung by all the pupils, recitations were delivered by gifted children and a display of prowess in reading, spelling, arithmetic and other skills made up the programme after which prizes were distributed.<sup>68</sup>

The public exhibitions of Mary MacKillop's schools were conducted to stimulate interest among the children, to impress their parents, and to promote among the community a respect for the thoroughly Catholic educational curriculum offered by the Josephites.

That benefactors donated handsome prizes was an indication of the appeal that the Sisters and their novel religious education had engendered. For example, five acres of land and monetary prizes were offered to successful pupils at Wallaroo Street, in 1868. Similar prizes were offered to children at Maryborough, Queensland, during the Josephite sojourn there.<sup>69</sup>

Mary MacKillop intended that the standard in her schools should be high, and teachers were to be thoroughly trained in order to encourage children in the achievement of this goal.

In Adelaide, when Woods was setting up a basic format for the requirements of Catholic schools in the colony, he requested that Mary provide detailed material about school rules, class time-tables, school rolls, and any material about school life she had available which he intended as standard for the rest of the Catholic school system in the colony. In communicating her programme Mary advised: 'perhaps the enclosed may seem too high a standard for each class – it is higher than that of any I saw in Victoria, but I don't think it is too high – still better judges than I may say so. ... Besides what children learn out of their books, the teachers should help them, and by often turning back and questioning them, help them in remembrance of what they have already learnt.'<sup>70</sup>

The familiarity and intense interest which Mary MacKillop had in teaching methods reflects the absolute dedication she brought to her cause and her desire to ensure that she herself was well equipped to plan appropriate teacher training programmes for the religious in her schools so that they were able to understand the spirit and practical application of her vision.

Mary's organization of teacher training in practical terms was that a junior Sister should be employed for her first six months in subordinate roles such as keeping order and supervising sewing, and only then be permitted to assist in regular class-teaching. The teachers-in-training were to study for the lesson they were to give. Relative to the preparation of their lessons was the presence of the Sisters' own daily horarium of specific times which were to be used for study. These periods of study occurred not only at night on school days, but four hours each Saturday were allocated to the same study. The school Principals oversaw the teaching Sisters preparation of 'object lessons' using maps, science-charts and globes, as well as sentences for parsing for the next day. Under the supervision of the Principal or Teacher-in-charge, a number of classroom activities proceeded simultaneously. The Sisters taught as many as five grades, with divisions within grades, with the help of assistant teachers, pupil-teachers and monitors. Minute instructions were given on the teaching of the various types of lessons. For example: the method of delivery in oral instruction was that the teacher was to arrange the children in rows before her and in delivering the 'object lesson' to do so in a pleasingly simple way.<sup>71</sup>

With up to a hundred students gathered into one room, there would always be several teachers present, engaged in teaching, supervision and correction. As the Josephites expanded, Mary requested that the postulants be sent from various new foundations to the Mother House to be trained in methods.

I would like to keep them here together for a time to discover if they have any idea of teaching. We need to get them into our system before sending them into contact with those who are so ready to pick the system to pieces. ...Though we have good teaching Sisters here, there are only a few whom I can say have got the proper system.<sup>72</sup>



*Mary MacKillop (in wheelchair), April 1908, with her sister Annie MacKillop and brother Donald MacKillop S.J., North Sydney. 'Bobs' is sitting on the front of Mary's wheelchair. Mary MacKillop had a warm corner in her heart for dogs and other animals. Around 1897 Mary was presented with this well-trained and playful Australian Terrier, called 'Bobs'.*

Whereas Woods maintained that teachers would 'learn by doing', Mary MacKillop was sensible to 'the appalling harm caused by sending out young Sisters inadequately formed in the Religious life and deplorably raw and incomplete in teaching'.<sup>73</sup> Commitment to Mary's educational method entailed strict discipline, and consequently the Josephite method was uniform for every school, with little left to individual initiative. Given the circumstances of Josephite educational operation, Mary MacKillop considered that the strongly centralised organisation of teacher training and curriculum development in her schools was essential to achieving the aims and objectives of her educational ideal.

Necessary modifications and adaptations to both curriculum and methodology were made from time to time over the years, but the Josephites moved only slowly into secondary education. As the educational needs of the poor changed with changing circumstances, it became no longer feasible to offer merely a sound primary education.

As secondary education became less the preserve and privilege of the rich and became the right also of the poor, the Institute, in order not to curtail its sphere of usefulness, gradually extended its scope and provided, where necessary, secondary education to at least the intermediate stage. For example: in the diocese of Sydney alone, by 1950, at least thirteen of these schools went to Intermediate stage, and nineteen others were classified as post-primary.<sup>74</sup>

The secondary schools of the Josephites were established especially in the congested, less affluent regions. They taught a utilitarian curriculum, incorporating commercial subjects and domestic science, designed to enhance the job prospects of pupils and to meet the requirements of the public examination system. However, if in the secondary schools established by the Josephites, there arose a demand for a distinctly middle class type of education, the Sisters demurred.

Rather than violate the spirit of their congregation, the Josephites preferred to withdraw their communities and allow other Orders to take over the schools. By means of the staff thus saved the Sisters were able to multiply their usefulness in parts where their special type of help was most needed. ... Thus in 1948, the sisters gave up two of their finest Sydney schools, Clovelly and Drummoyne. In arriving at this decision the General Council said: 'we must offer something worth offering. These schools are in suburbs where the people ask for a type of education which conflicts with the spirit of our order. Sisters would be released for openings in the remote districts'.<sup>75</sup>

**I**n more recent times, the Josephites have joined with the Religious of Other Orders in conducting regional secondary schools in less affluent outer suburban growth areas of Sydney and Melbourne. They have also sought to amalgamate with other colleges of Catholic education to maintain their reliance to contemporary society.

Their teachers' training college at Mount Street, North Sydney, was founded in 1913, and for many years fulfilled the purpose of training the Sisters of the Order for work in their many schools throughout Australia. In the early 1950s, the Josephites agreed to train members of other Orders which did not have teacher training schemes of their own, and in

1958 the first group of Lay students was enrolled in the college. During recent times, the emphasis on advanced education, the vast increase in the student population, the decline in Religious vocations and new directions in Catholic education were to result in profound changes in the Josephite teacher training college.

The Sisters of St Joseph handed over the administration and maintenance of the college to the Archdiocese of Sydney in 1971 and from that time, the college's affairs were administered by a Council. The first lay Principal was appointed in 1973 to oversee a predominantly lay staff and lay student body. In 1974 the college submitted to the New South Wales Board of Higher Education its Teacher Education Programmes as courses of Advanced Education. These were approved as Diplomas in Teaching in Infants, Primary, Junior Secondary and External Studies. The College obtained further approval for a Bachelor of Education, Primary, which commenced in 1981 and in 1982 a Bachelor of Education in Junior Secondary commenced.<sup>76</sup>

In 1982, the Josephite Catholic Teachers College amalgamated with Polding College, conducted jointly by the Good Samaritans, the Marist Brothers and the De La Salle Congregation, and the Christian Brothers' Mount St. Mary College, to form the Catholic College of Education, Sydney, a large modern multi-campus educational Institute.

**T**he Sisters of St. Joseph, who emanated from social revolution in Australia as the various colonies strove to share in the advance towards nationhood, were founded by a young Australian who was truly a woman of her time.

Mary MacKillop was an Australian brought up in the midst of the many evils she tried to describe, but with a vision that extended past the turn of the century and the federation of the colonies to our years and beyond.<sup>77</sup>

There was an Australian essence about all that she did. At all times, she was very down-to-earth, open and logical in her attitude to her mission. 'Her vision sustained her through a lifetime which included moments of high drama, anguish and suffering as well as years of hum-drum toil and struggle'.<sup>78</sup> In a climate of critical comment, the traditional Irish male outlook was contrived against Mary MacKillop and her Order.

The reaction of the suffragan bishops and clergy ... was a reflection of the contemporary Irish masculine attitude towards subservient woman. To these Irish clerics it was intolerable that in a missionary diocese with a minority Catholic population, a young colonial-born nun with undiluted Scottish blood, with an Englishman as director, could be a Mother Foundress at twenty-four years of age.<sup>79</sup>

In the struggle towards the emancipation of women, and the promotion of Catholicism in this country, Mary MacKillop must be considered a pioneer in her own right. 'As a social reformer, she had been spoken of in the same context as Caroline Chisholm, and today she is being seen in parallel with Mother Teresa'.<sup>80</sup> She had the courage and perseverance to resist compromise in relation to her revolutionary vision because she was convinced of the rightness of what she was doing. Mary MacKillop was a woman of true Christian virtue. She had a deep respect for the innate dignity of humanity, and a compassion which heightened her vision of a better life for the poor. ■

#### NOTES

1. W. Modystack, *Mary MacKillop – A Woman Before Her Time*, Rigby, Adelaide 1982, page 13.
2. c.f. V. Feehan and A. MacDonell, *In Search of Alexander MacKillop*, pub. by the authors, 1981, pp.1ff, copy RSJ Archives, Sydney
3. c.f. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-11. For details of Alexander MacKillop's early life c.f. also D. Graham-Campbell 'Chapel on the Hill' in *The Scots Magazine*, December, 1979, pp.324-337
4. also O. Thorpe, *The Life of Mother Mary of the Cross*, Burns and Oates, London, 1957, pp. 4ff. – Thorpe suggests another reason for Alexander's leaving Rome. A.M. Power, RSJ, *We Are Her People – Mary MacKillop – A Woman of Australia* Pub. privately, 1982, p.3., RSJ Archives, Sydney
5. M. Sheil, RSJ *Notes of Interview with author*, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1984 at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Hawthorn, Victoria, pp.3-4. Sr Marjorie Sheil, an historian of the Josephite Order, was researching the life and work of Mary MacKillop as part of the process of preparing her cause for canonisation.
6. O. Thorpe, *The Life of Mother Mary of the Cross*, Burns and Oates, London, 1957, p.6.

7. The 'Twelve Apostles' syndicate was involved in the Rucher Affair, a financial crash in Victoria in the 1840s. c.f. 'Garryowen' Edward Finer, *Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835-1852* Vol. II. Melbourne, 1888, Chapter 52 passim.
8. O. Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p.7
9. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, pp.13-14
10. O. Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p.7
11. W. McEntree, *The Sisters of St Joseph of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in Queensland, 1869-1880*, a thesis submitted as partial requirement for the degree of B.A. (Honours), University of Queensland, 1978, pp.9-10
12. Mary MacKillop's Inspector's Report, RSJ Archives, Sydney
13. M. Sheil, *Notes of Interview with author, op. cit.*, pp.5-6
14. c.f. M. Press, RSJ, 'Julian Tenison Woods' No. 5 in *Studies in the Christian Movement*, The Catholic Theological Faculty, Southwood Press, Manly, N.S.W., 1979
15. A.M. Power, *op. cit.*, p.11
16. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.18
17. M. Press, RSJ, *op. cit.*, P.57
18. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.21
19. P. Gardiner, SJ, quoted in *The Advocate*, 8<sup>th</sup> September, 1985 p. iii. Paul Gardiner SJ, who prepared the documentation for presentation in Rome to promote the cause of Mary MacKillop for beatification, counted in Mary's diary that she saw Fr. Anderley 28 times in the 12 weeks she was in Rome.
20. Mary MacKillop's decision to dedicate her religious order to St Joseph was prompted by her Scottish heritage and her father's influence. Alexander MacKillop always had a great devotion to St. Joseph. Also, in the Catholic Church at that time, the only countries which observed the feast of St. Joseph as a day of religious obligation were Scotland and Russia. C.f. M. Sheil, *op. cit.*, p.7.
21. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, pp.33-34.
22. O. Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p.65
23. c.f. Rule of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Capt. 'Of the Sister Guardian-General' RSJ, Archives, Sydney.
24. W. McEntree, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4
25. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
27. J. Ryan, RSJ, 'Mary MacKillop: The Victorian Connection' in *MacKillop*

- Times: A Supplement with the Advocate*, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1985, p.3
28. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, pp.49: 44
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110
30. See Appendix No. 46. An account by O. Thorpe of the events leading to the excommunication of Mary MacKillop.
31. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.68
32. L. Russell, *The Evolution of a Josephite School Principal*, M. Ed. Thesis, University of New England, 1980, p.44
33. O. Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p. 152 c.f. *Rules of the Religious of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart*, 1873, RSJ Archives, Sydney
34. M. Quinn to Mgr. Kirby, 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1875, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1876, quoted in W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, pp. 144ff.
35. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.139.
36. O. Thorpe, *op. cit.*, p.91
37. *Ibid.*, p. 128
38. M. MacKillop to Cardinal Franchi (Rome), quoted in W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, pp.145-146
39. M. MacKillop to Queensland Provincial, October, 1875, RSJ Archives, Sydney
40. M. MacKillop to Cardinal Simeoni, quoted in W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.168
41. P. D. Tannock, *A History of Catholic Education in Western Australia, 1829-1929, with special reference to the Teaching Orders*, M.Ed. Thesis, University of Western Australia, 1964, p.169
42. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.198
43. Correspondence Reynolds to M. MacKillop, 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1883, RSJ Archives, Sydney
44. Reynolds to Mgr. Kirby, 1885, quoted in W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.227
45. A. M. Power, *op. cit.*, p. 126
46. *Plenary Council of the Australian Bishops in Sydney*, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1885, Decree 99, F. Cunningham, Sydney, 1887
47. See Appendix No. 47: The Decree of Leo XIII given in Rome from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fidei, 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1888, which clarified the Central Government issue for the Jesuits
48. P. Gardiner, SJ, 'Progressing along the path to Sainthood, in *MacKillop Time: A Supplement With the Advocate*, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1985, p. ii Paul Gardiner has undertaken for the Josephites the preparation of material for the cause

of Mary MacKillop's canonisation.

49. W. McEntree, *op. cit.*, p.35: c.f. M. MacKillop to Marist Father (Fiji), 7<sup>th</sup> December, 1875 RSJ Archives, Sydney.

50. M. MacKillop (Brisbane), Circular Letter, 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1870, RSJ Archives, Sydney

51. M. MacKillop (Adelaide), to J. Tenison-Woods (Brisbane), not dated. (Woods reply dated 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1872) RSJ Archives.

52. c.f. G. O'Neil, SJ, *Life of the Reverend Julian Edmund Tenison Woods, 1832-1889*, Pellegrini, Melbourne, 1927, p. 143.

53. L.P. Russel, *The Evolution of the Josephite School* Principal, M.Ed. Thesis, University of New England, 1980, p.32

54. F. Smith, *The Life and Work of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth*, Mercury Ltd. London, 1923, p.105

55. *Loc. cit.*

56. *Ibid.*, p. 108

57. c.f. G. Compayre, *Pestalozzi and Elementary Education*, A. Pintoche, *Pestalozzi and the Foundations of the Modern Elementary School*; R. de Guimps, *Pestalozzi: His Aim and Work*; quoted in L. P. Cubberley, *The History of Education*, Constable and Co., London, 1948, pp. 540ff.

58. *Ibid.*, p.74859. c.f. F. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-111.

59. *Payment by Results* was a system whereby County Capitation Grants were to be determined by the results in an examination of the students in reading, writing and arithmetic to be conducted by county examiners. C.f. J. Kay-Shuttleworth, *Memorandum on Popular Education*, Ridgway, Piccadilly, London, 1967, p.10

60. A.G. Austin, *Australian Education, Church, State and Public Education in Colonial Australia*, Pitman, Melbourne, 1965, p.247 Victoria paid its teachers under this system from 1863 to 1905; Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia all experimented with it in the last quarter of the century. Queensland and New South Wales, who prided themselves on having avoided its evils, nevertheless employed a similar system which might be called 'promotion by results'.

61. *Report of the Royal Commission...upon the Operation of the System of Public Education, 1867* P.P. (Vic.), 1867, p. 37, quoted in *ibid.*, p.248.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 249

63. c.f. *ibid.*, pp. 44-47.

64. *Directory or Order of Discipline of the Sisters of St. Joseph*, published

- between 1867 and 1869, pp. 88-89, RSJ Archives, Sydney.
65. L. Russell, *op. cit.*, p.38
66. M. Press, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.
67. W. McEntree, *op. cit.*, p.20. c.f. Records of 'Examination and Prize Giving' at Josephite Schools at Wallaroo Street and Maryborough, RSJ Archives, Sydney.
68. W. Modystack, *op. cit.*, p.28 c.f. M. MacKillop to J. Tenison-Woods, 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1867, RSJ Archives, Sydney.
69. c.f. *Directory of the Religious of St. Joseph*, pp, L. P. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 32ff: H. Sheedy, *The Sisters of St. Joseph and Teaching Catholic Education in Australia*, B.A. (Hons) Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1969.
70. M. MacKillop to J. Tenison-Woods, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1872, RSJ Archives, Sydney.
71. *Idem.*
72. R. Fogarty, *op. cit.*, p.302
73. *Australian Catholic Directory*, pp, 150-151, 156-157, S.A.A.
74. Minute of 13th May, 1947, *Minutes of the General Council*, RSJ Archives, Sydney in R. Fogarty, *op. cit.* p. 296.
75. *Catholic College of Education, Sydney, 1986 Handbook*, Robert Barton Printers, New South Wales, p.11
76. J. Ryan, *op. cit.*, p. iv
77. M. Morley, RSJ, 'A Witness to the Greatness of God', in *MacKillop Times: A supplement to The Advocate*, 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1985, p. iii
78. W. McEntree, *op. cit.*, p.39
79. *The Age*, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1985, p.11

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# What is sin?

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CHARLES GAY

*This is an edited version of a talk: 'Models of Sin and the Sacrament of Penance' given by Br Charles Gay FMS as part of the Adult Education in Faith Programme of St Peter's Parish, Glasgow, Scotland.*

**I**N THIS ARTICLE I PROPOSE to look at the following: the traditional Catechism definition of sin; the inadequacy of the definition; a different model to look at sin; structural or institutional sin; the 'fundamental option'; the implications for the Sacrament of Penance; and a new look at the 10 commandments.

## TRADITIONAL DEFINITION

The traditional definition of sin from the 'penny Catechism' which I have in front of me (though my version is October 1952 at which time I was in Primary Six and the Catechism was priced at sevenpence) is No. 113 and reads: *Sin is an offence against God, by any thought, word, deed, or omission against the law of God.*

I have underlined two words in the definition. The first of these is the word 'God'. As soon as we relate the concept of sin to God we are recognising sin as a religious concept. Therefore those who do not believe in God do not use the language of sin. And for all of us, believers or not, the less place we have in life for God the more we lose the sense of sin. Today there is much talk of us living in a secular society and so living with a loss of the sense of sin. However, do not let us equate 'loss of sense of sin' with 'loss of a sense of wrong'. It is easy for 'religious people' to claim the moral high ground and with it a monopoly of a sense of right and wrong. A little reflection shows, of course, that this is certainly not the case.



Gustave Doré: *the Expulsion from the Garden: the 'law' model of sin requires sanctions and punishments.*

### THE LAW MODEL

The second word I have underlined is 'law'. What we have in the Catechism is an understanding of sin based on a 'law model'. There are several aspects of this model which render it inadequate as a guide to Christian moral living in today's world.

Law tends to be static rather than dynamic, or at least slow to change. Such changes in law are rarely the initiative of the legislator, but tend to come from the bottom up as a result of the experience of ordinary people for whom the existing law is no longer relevant and is an inadequate guide to their life. We might ask – is this what we mean by the *sensus fidelium*?

The law model emphasises the external action and pays little attention to the person placing the act (motivation, circumstances etc). Sin becomes equated with actions and serious sin with serious action. We might ask – is something sin because it is serious or is something serious because it is sinful?

The law model easily leads to a negative approach to life – a concern with avoidance of law-breaking and an attitude of pushing the boundaries. *How far can we go?* is often the result. We all have our own experiences of pushing the boundaries, such as the way we often respond to speed limits while driving and when we think there are no cameras. A seminal way of expressing the moral life going back to the New Testament and before and expressed as a 'natural law' is *Do good and avoid evil*. In the law model the tendency is to stress the avoidance of evil rather than the doing of good. The 11<sup>th</sup> Commandment, 'thou shalt

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not get caught' is often more important than the others! Fear rather than love can become a chief motivating factor in a person's life when based on the law model.

The law model can lead to a sterile list-approach to the Sacrament of Penance and an examination of conscience that is often pot-scraping. This in turn has often been the source of debilitating scrupulosity. The Sacrament becomes no longer a source of nurture and falls out of use.

The law model implies an imposition from outside and so easily leads to a Christian life of exterior conformity rather than to a life of interior conversion. It is a model which requires punishment or sanctions. We could question what image of God this approach leads us to take. Is the God flowing from our understanding of sin that of the strict and angry judge, or that of the God of the Covenant as expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth?

#### THE RELATIONSHIP MODEL

We can, however, change to a relationship model. This one is based, not on an act-centred understanding of morality, but rather on a person-centred understanding of morality and one having a more solid foundation in Scripture. One of the finest definitions of morality I have come across is: ‘

Morality is essentially a matter of respect for persons and the necessary conditions for their flourishing.<sup>1</sup>

When I suggest that such a model has a more solid foundation in Scripture I refer to the story of the Fall in Genesis 3. Here we see the result of sin being described in terms of a three-fold rupture in relationships: there is the human-human rupture expressed in the blaming of Eve by Adam; there is the human-cosmic rupture expressed in the blaming of the serpent by Eve and there is the human-divine rupture expressed in their ‘hiding from God’. We are aware that biblical scholarship looks on the Genesis story not so much as a ‘particular historical event’ as a way of describing the contemporary sinful state of humankind, which the scholars see as one of broken or ruptured relationships.

To illustrate a relationship model and the implications of such a model for the way we approach our Christian moral life we can take the example of a marital relationship.

As a professed religious celibate I am normally hesitant about choosing



*My Kingdom is a place where all people stand  
in their full dignity as My sons and daughters.*

the marital relationship – it is so easy to assume a rather idealistic view of the marital relationship as the norm. But we could also choose a friendship model. I choose the marital model because of its Sacramental basis, in the strict sense of the seven Sacraments of the Church. I parallel this marital relationship with our relationship to God as Christians incorporated into Christ in the Sacrament of Baptism.

The diagram on page 72 is more or less self-explanatory in demonstrating the parallel that exists between a marital relationship and that of the Christian relationship to God.

The marriage begins with the ceremony in which a commitment is made to each other ‘till death do us part’: it is an ideal to strive after. In spite of the high divorce rate the evidence shows that in the vast majority of cases, when a couple come to marriage they do so with every intention of making the marriage last. They believe it really will be till death do them part. But at some stage, sooner or later in the relationship, there will be friction, an argument, something which threatens the relationship and can certainly weaken it. Some form of ‘reconciliation’ (not necessarily a formal apology) is required: it may be a simple gesture of recognition by one and a willing acceptance by the other – again, a simple gesture. Indeed, at this early stage in the relationship both partners may be pleading their ‘fault’ in the matter. This simple act of recognition often strengthens the relationship so that the ‘incident’ might be regarded as a *felix culpa* (happy fault). So, after an ‘incident’ that is one scenario – a simple act of reconciliation which serves to strengthen the relationship.

<b>Married Life</b>	<b>Christian Life</b>
Marriage Ceremony	Baptism Ceremony
(Total Commitment – Ideal) Argument – Weakness	(Total Commitment – Ideal) Fall short of the ideal
<p><b>Reconciliation</b> (Strengthens the relationship against further weakness)</p>	<p><b>Reconciliation</b> (Strengthens the Christian against further falls)</p>
<p><b>No Reconciliation</b> Rift develops, gets wider: the relationship weakens further and leads to gradual separation) Gradual process of neglect</p>	<p><b>No Reconciliation</b> Rift develops, widens. The relationship weakens further to gradual tepidness) Gradual process of neglect</p>
<p><b>Irrevocable Separation</b></p>	<p><b>Indifference and Lapse</b></p>
<p><b>Positive</b> Gifts, Flowers, Chocolates, Birthdays, Anniversaries, Time together</p>	<p><b>Positive</b> Prayer, Good Works, Liturgy, Justice and Peace, Retreats, Time together</p>

However, another scenario after an ‘incident’ could be one in which no gesture of reconciliation is forthcoming. If this ‘reconciliation’ does not take place it may soon lead to another ‘incident’, also small and seemingly insignificant: but the longer a reconciliation is put off, the harder it becomes to offer reconciliation and, indeed, to accept it.

Gradually there is an erosion of the relationship; the couple drift apart and at some stage the relationship has gone. No one can point to a particular ‘incident’ which caused it: rather it is a process of erosion through neglect.

The Christian life often follows the same pattern: it begins with the Baptismal ceremony, the commitment to the ideal (later in the case of infant Baptism) but soon the initial fervour begins to be tarnished and unless something is done by the individual to recognise what is happening, a similar erosion of the relationship to God begins to set in.

On the other hand a gesture of recognition of what is happening, not necessarily the Sacrament of Penance, strengthens one's resolve. One begins to be more alert to what can cause a lukewarmness in the relationship. One can begin to drift in the spiritual life till care gives way to indifference and erosion goes so far that the relationship is gone. Once again there is no particular incident (sin?) which one can say caused the rupture. Rather, as in the marital relationship, it is a process of neglect.

All relationships need to be worked at. In marriage and friendship relationships there are occasions that lend themselves to this building up e.g. anniversaries, birthdays, gifts, special outings, time set apart to be together. This is also the case in the spiritual life of the Christian where the relationship to God is built up through prayer, the annual rhythm of the Liturgy, days of recollection, retreats; time set apart.

In this relationship model, the approach to the sacrament of Penance is quite different: it is a sacramental encounter. The preparation is not an examination of conscience based on 'what I have done' but a reflection on 'who I am'; 'what sort of person am I becoming?' It is the recognition through prayer, meditation and reading of scripture, of who I am in relation to my vocation to be the person I am called and gifted to be.

While there is a close interactive aspect between doing and being there is the traditional moral principle that 'doing follows being' and not the other way round. In this understanding, sin is the refusal to accept the gift that I am, both to myself and to others; it is to put obstacles in the path of my true vocation which is to image God in a unique way: this is both privilege and responsibility.

But this, rather than a weekly event, may be on special occasions in the year such as a time of retreat, a particular anniversary. We recall that the ordinary means of reconciliation in the early Church was Eucharist, not penance. The sacrament, when we celebrate it (and surely it is much more dynamic to think in terms of 'celebrating and living the Sacraments' rather than 'administering and receiving them') becomes not a sterile list of offences but looking at how I respond to the love of God in my life – my attitudes, my motivation, my relationships: 'doing follows being'.

### STRUCTURAL/INSTITUTIONAL SIN

A relationship model of sin helps also to highlight the social reality of sin. Where an individual is in a position of certain social, industrial or economic responsibility, this model also helps to highlight the notion of structural sin and the part an individual can play in it. Structural/Institutional sin is a concept that has come more to the fore in moral or ethical discourse in the last 40 years, particularly as commercial and economic competition has grown with large-scale transnational companies and globalisation: but such sin is not confined to these areas – any institution is prone to it – be it political, economic, social, religious, educational, professional or recreational.

Structural/Institutional sin exists where the very structures, the management style, the modus operandi of an institution and other aspects of the institution's day-to-day practice give rise to injustices, exclude individuals and groups from participation, deprive millions of basic human rights such as food, clothing shelter, clean water; where the very structures of the institution strike at the dignity of the human person such that 'respect for the human person and the conditions for their flourishing' is ignored.

It is very easy to get sucked into such institutional sin because all institutions develop their own attitudes and cultures: it may be a culture of greed, of lack of accountability, a culture of secrecy, a culture of whitewashing when investigations take place. In the last year in the UK we have learned from investigative journalism of the expenses scandals in both houses of Parliament; it appears to be clear that self-regulation in Parliament, (and no doubt in many professions) is abused; the global financial crisis has given rise to the widespread perception of a culture of greed within financial institutions.

In 1993 Britain was shocked by the murder of a black youth, Stephen Lawrence, in South London and the consequent public enquiry into the police handling of the case. The enquiry report accused the police of 'institutional racism'. This was the first time such a phrase appeared in public print. Individual police officers were shocked and angered but there was a racist culture into which many were drawn, probably unwittingly. The Church in the USA and Ireland and elsewhere, as a result of reports into abuse of minors by Clergy and Religious, was accused of having created a 'clerical' culture which made such evils possible over

such a long period. Once again many individual Priests and Religious were angered, hurt and confused by everyone 'being tarred with the same brush'. But a little reflection shows how easy it is to be sucked into a culture of silence or of denial.

I worked for 15 years as an adviser and inspector in Catholic secondary schools and carried out statutory inspections. Certain schools were perceived to be 'good schools' – but in my view they were among the worst. They did not 'walk the talk'. Their glossy brochures proclaimed mission-and-vision statements based on the Gospel but which were honoured more in the breach than the observance. I referred to one such school as guilty of institutional child abuse – not physical, sexual or emotional abuse; but rather, their practices and their hidden curriculum promoted disvalues antithetic to Gospel values. The more perceptive among the pupils saw through what they described as hypocrisy.

And what about the whole world of financial investments? Amongst the greatest beneficiaries of the multi-billion pound pornography industry is the biggest and one of our best-loved search engines, so much used that its name has become a verb in our everyday language. Where do we buy our clothing, our groceries? Do we know anything, do we make it our business to know anything about the labour, trading and other working practices of our retailers? What about the investments of our Religious Institutes and other Church Institutions, be they the local parish or diocese or of the investments of any institution to which we belong, even our local golf club? These are difficult issues: they will not go away: they have to be faced in the light of the Gospel. Do we seek out ethical investments or ethical trading practices such as Fairtrade? Or do we collude in structural/institutional sin through wilful ignorance, silence or simply neglect or indeed through culpable knowledge and greed?

#### THE FUNDAMENTAL OPTION

I want to look quickly at the concept of the Fundamental Option as a way of putting our 'sinfulness' into the context of our whole life and particularly as a way of understanding serious or mortal sin.

Without delving into any philosophical or theological background we can say that the fundamental option is based on certain facts about our life as free persons/agents: viz. that we daily make decisions and choices. But some of these decisions and choices are more important than others

and shape how we make future decisions. Some of these decisions are so fundamental that they shape our moral identity. So the other fact about our daily life as free persons/agents is that the decisions and choices we make and the actions following upon them are not isolated from each other.

The fundamental option represents the core of our moral identity, the orientation and direction of our lives towards the good. Although no one decision will exhaust the fundamental option, all our decisions can be seen as interpreting it and being extensions of it.

There are certainly times in our lives when we do make decisions which are much more fundamental than others: the couple who kneel and publicly commit themselves to each other in marriage; the Religious Sister or Brother who publicly commit themselves to a life of perpetual poverty, chastity and obedience.

These are defining moments in a person's life. If we could only understand our Liturgy better we would see in it key moments in the routine of our lives which reflect these defining moments – the renewal of our baptismal commitment on Easter night, our reception of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation. And what about our regular Eucharist when our fundamental option is revisited when we commit our selves to go in peace to love and serve the lord? All of these are examples of defining or key moments in our lives when our fundamental option, our orientation towards the good, is strengthened and matured and in turn gives meaning to the ordinary choices of our everyday life

Through our decisions and actions there is a slow maturation of the fundamental option as we realise ever more fully the meaning of our life project. As we make individual decisions the contours of our moral identities take shape ... We act authentically. We develop a morally mature personality where there is found a readiness and facility to act in a virtuous way.<sup>2</sup>

**L**et me give you an example from every day life: parenting. I use the mother as an example. Take the mother who constantly denies herself in order that her children do not have to go without. Many readers will have experienced this as mothers and many of us have experienced it as children. A mother may go for years without ever buying herself new clothes so that her children are not embarrassed or diminished in front of



their peers. Mothers in poor circumstances might eat less than is good for themselves in order that their children do not have less than is good for them. This (often daily) self-denial, this heroic, indeed sacrificial activity, can only be understood within the context of motherhood as an option and more specifically within that mother's own understanding of and commitment to motherhood.

Motherhood gives true meaning to these actions: but motherhood not only gives meaning to these individual decisions, choices and actions: these mature and define ever more deeply for a mother the meaning of motherhood. This defining choice and the way of life which follows from it expresses that mother's moral identity and her fundamental orientation towards good.

I chose the mother as my example. It could equally be a father. It could be a carer – of the elderly or of orphans or of the chronically sick or bedridden or of those with some disability. It could be anyone whose basic choice is one of service. In the Adult Education in Faith program in my local parish I recall one speaker, a priest, who told of his experience in the 'confessional'. I checked it out in the Catholic Directory – he was ordained 33 years ago. He said he had heard all there is to hear in relation to sin but never heard a mortal sin.

Since I was sitting in the front row on that occasion I could not see the faces of the audience as I do now: but a strange silence seemed to descend on the audience as if they could hardly believe their ears. But I think that within the context of the fundamental option Fr. Tom's statement makes a lot of sense.

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS<sup>3</sup>

I conclude with this reflection on the Ten Commandments. It fits in with a Christian fundamental option while at the same time demonstrating a positive approach to the Christian life derived from the relationship model and based on the notion of building relationships. If, when I approach the commandments, I approach them as a set of laws, then all I will hear is that certain actions are demanded or forbidden by God.

However, if I note that these commandments are phrased in direct speech, which means that God is speaking directly and personally to God's people, then I will realise that I am not merely dealing with certain actions which are demanded or forbidden, but with true revelation, which will always hear, not ten laws, but the Decalogue, the ten words. And these ten words are words of invitation, which a loving Father is speaking to his child.

*1. My child, I am the God who created you and this whole world for you. I am the God who guards and protects you and now I invite you to live and work with me, as my child, to help build my Kingdom upon earth. Will you follow only Me and work with Me for My Kingdom?*

Father, this I wish to do, but what is your Kingdom so that I may know what I must do?

*2. You do well to ask, My child, for I alone know what My Kingdom is like and so I alone can guide this work. Listen then carefully when I speak to you and honour my words as you honour me.*

*3. My Kingdom is a place where people gather together regularly to listen to My word and to receive comfort and encouragement and to grow in understanding of My Kingdom and their task within it.*

*4. My Kingdom is a place where all honour parents, recognising the great task I have given to parents to work with Me in bringing children into this world and teaching them to live as My sons and daughters.*

*5. My Kingdom is a place where all life is honoured as holy, for all life comes from Me, and where people do not turn on each other to kill and maim, but offer help and support to each other so that all may grow in wisdom and grace.*

6. *My Kingdom is a place where all recognise the holiness of fidelity in the bond of marriage and where there is no adultery, no betrayal, but all bear with each other, supporting each other in good times and bad.*

7. *My Kingdom is a place where there is no stealing, for all know that I have given the world for the benefit of all, and so my children, strive that all may receive what they need for life and happiness.*

8. *My Kingdom is a place where all people stand in their full dignity as My sons and daughters; where there is no denigration of one another, no harking back to past mistakes, but all honour each other and help each other grow in grace.*

9/10. *My Kingdom is a place where all my people are wanted and cared for, where all have the things they need and so there is no jealousy of one against the other, for all share together and work together for my Kingdom. ■*

#### NOTES

1. *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* n.56 produced by The Church of England Board for social Responsibility (BSR), 1987 quoted in Kelly, Kevin T, in *New Directions in Moral Theology: The Challenge of Being Human*, Chapman, London, 1992 (p.27)

2. B.Hoose (ed) *Christian Ethics – An Introduction*, Cassell, London 1998 Chapter on Fundamental Option.

3. This reflection on the Ten Commandments was given at a Conference for Teachers about 20 years ago at the Diocesan Conference centre in Colney in the Diocese of Westminster, London, UK. There was no acknowledgement on the handout.

# Priestly people

BILL MCCARTHY

*Religious Life and Priesthood*. Maryanne Confoy. *Rediscovering Vatican II* series. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008. 348 pages. ISBN978-0-8091-4454-9. US\$27.95.

**R***eligious Life and Priesthood* belongs to an eight-book series that commemorates the 40th anniversary of Vatican II. The book consists of three sections that treat three Vatican II documents: *On the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis)*, *On the Training of Priests (Optatam Totius)* and *On the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (Perfectae Caritatis)*. The three sections consist of 71, 96 and 97 pages respectively. There are 47 pages of Notes. Each of the three sections has four parts that bear the same titles: 'The Document'; 'Major points'; 'Implementation'; 'The State of the Question'.

Common to the first part of each section, 'The Document' is an historical outline of the development of each document

from 1959-60 until the end of the Council in 1965. The rejection of the initial drafts of the preparatory commissions and the revision of the four or five drafts that followed in each case, reflect in large measure the presence of factions variously described as 'progressive and conservative, intransigent and forward looking.' Inevitably, texts were formulated through conflict and compromise, not always to the satisfaction of everyone, but each final draft received overwhelming approval. The prominence of European church leaders in formulating the drafts emerges as the history of each document is traced. Even though this Council was described as the most ecumenical and representative of all church councils, there is no mistaking the fact that the

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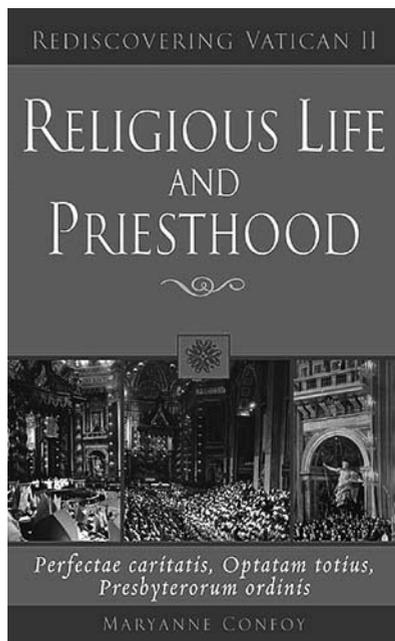
European church was still the most influential in the formulation of these Vatican II texts.

Confoy uses a commentary style of approach in *Major Points*, providing an examination of each of the three texts, article by article. Included are an explanation of important elements, differences from the teaching of the past – sometimes as far back as Trent – and an indication of strengths, problems and inadequacies of the various articles. A careful reading of the introduction to *Major Points*, is advised, since it highlights new developments and movements that will be considered in the pages ahead.

In the treatment of Parts I and II, 'The Document' and 'Major Points', boundaries are set for Confoy's remarks: in Part I by the historical facts relating to the development of the three documents and in Part II by the nature of the texts. In her treatment of Part III, Implementation, Confoy has more freedom to set the parameters herself.

For instance, she can consider the implementation in a country or countries of her own choosing, which makes good sense; for how else can the implementation of these three documents be examined on a global scale when there has

been no unified response to them, and where documentation would be vast in some areas and meagre in others? She is free to discuss certain topics at some length, such as the problems of women



religious in America. Furthermore, Confoy uses, in the order of their publication, documents issued during the 40 years after Vatican II – papal statements, letters, speeches, and responses within the community of believers – as a framework for the discussion on implementation.

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In *The State of the Question*, Confoy considers the current situation with its problems, these include the drop in vocations, the decline in numbers of priests and religious, the 'protestantisation' of the Church, sexual abuse, polarisation within communities and the diversity of the Catholic community. She strikes a more positive note when she refers to the growth in the numbers of laypeople actively involved in ministry, the empowerment of laypeople by religious, the surprisingly high level of energy for mission and ministry shown by women religious in spite of a great loss in numbers, and their ministry with the poor. Important suggestions are then made for future directions.

These suggestions, more specific and numerous in the case of the training of seminarians, include improvement in the screening and selection of candidates for the priesthood, the training of seminarians to encourage lay people's charisms, an improved preparation to cope with the celibate life. As a help to priests, the example of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles is put forward as a possible model for change in ministry and ministerial practice. The writings of Sandra Schneiders, Diarmuid O'Murchu and Joan Chittister are

recommended as educative and inspirational for religious.

A prominent theme is the cause of women, which is obviously dear to the heart of Confoy. She is critical of the anti-feminist attitudes and discrimination against women in a male-dominated church, manifested in many ways, e.g. the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the absence of a female voice at Vatican II and the conservative reactions of the Vatican towards women's congregations in America in their efforts to effect renewal and adaptation. Confoy puts forward important considerations concerning the ordination of women.

Less well represented are religious brothers who might feel disappointed that specific references to them in relation to *Perfectae Caritatis* are confined to two sentences and a few statistics. Although not as numerous as religious sisters or religious priests, religious brothers have taken renewal seriously and they have played a significant part in church life on a world-wide scale.

From time to time reference is made to the 'common priesthood of the baptized' as though it was now well understood by the baptized. There is no denying the importance of the reality expressed by this phrase, but this reviewer

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doubts that it is well understood by the laity as a whole and he would find it difficult to recall a sermon or homily in which either the phrase or the concept was used, let alone explained.

While the readership intended seems to be universal, the two parts, *Implementation* and *The State of the Question*, focus primarily on USA, which has a large Catholic population and a significant proportion of the world's religious and priests, who would probably constitute the largest readership. There is an occasional reference to other American countries, but scarcely a reference to regions such as Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. However, many readers outside USA will find aspects of the US experience comparable to their own and they should be able to relate to the content without difficulty.

The writing is lucid and logical. It is well documented, indicating the breadth and depth of reading behind the book. The Notes are worthy of study as they provide valuable additional information. While the documentation is a feature of the work, the author also provides her own criticisms and insights. Part V, 'Further Reading', consists of a list of Vatican II documents, works consulted and

books recommended for further reading. A valuable 10-page Index completes the work.

The book has achieved its aim of educating people on the origins of the ecclesial ministry Council documents, their meaning, the response to them and possible directions for future action.

The presentation may not please everyone. Confoy is critical of fearful Catholics who have a vigilante mentality and who report priests and theologians to higher authorities for what they perceive as a betrayal of their ministry. Also, Confoy does not conceal the shortcomings of priests and religious and the mammoth task the church faces to deal with its problems.

The book contains much food for thought for priests and religious, and it will provide them with many discussion points. It will be enlightening for anyone with an interest in the Catholic Church, and it should find a place in tertiary courses of study. But anyone with an open mind and an interest in the Catholic Church will find the book stimulating and informative. ■

## FILM REVIEW



# Precious much

ALICE WILLIAMS

*Precious, based on the novel Push by Sapphire*  
Dir. Lee Daniels, MA15+

**Y**ES, THAT REALLY is the title given by Lee Daniel and the producers, lest any lazy reviewers neglect to tell you where the story came from.

It's 1987, and Claireece 'Precious' Jones is a morbidly obese 17-year-old, kicked out of school, living in Harlem with a mother who makes Joan Crawford (who supposedly beat her daughter with wire coathangers) look like Carol Brady. There are occasional appearances from her father, a man who

has already given her one child ('Mongo', short for Mongoloid). During the film he pops in again to impregnate her with a second.

It could be depressing and awful. But director Lee Daniels has taken a character whose story would so easily lend itself to a maudlin 'misery memoir' genre piece (or worse, something painfully worthy and preachy) and crafted a film breathtaking in its honesty and intensity. The surprise is that it is uplifting and at times even very funny.

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Precious is easy to ignore, hidden behind her enormous weight, a heavy fringe, and that impenetrable face. Newcomer Gabby Sidibe plays her with a devastating restraint, for Precious is a teenager ground down by years of emotional and physical abuse. At times she mumbles incomprehensibly, her beautiful face resolutely closed and impassive. But it springs to life in her many fantasies of herself as a red carpet glamour queen, a pop idol and object of desire to a boy (who in real life pushes her face-first into the footpath). These light touches come at the darkest points of Precious' life; it's interesting to see how Daniels treats the fantasies as Precious becomes stronger within herself.

She finds support from her teacher (played by Paula Patton) and the motley group of disenfranchised young women who make up her classmates at the alternative school she attends. The teacher (implausibly called Blu Rain) is perhaps a weaker point in the film: she is a rather unbelievable character – impossibly beautiful, impossibly saintly and impossibly wise. Mariah Carey surprises with a wonderfully understated performance as a social worker, and is a good match for Mary, Precious' demonic mother, (played by Mo'Nique, better known as a

comedian). Another musician (Lenny Kravitz) plays a nurse's aide who represents for Precious the more human/humane men of the world.

But the real powerhouse of the film is Mary. She must be one of the most despicable mothers in cinematic history: Mo'Nique plays her with a brooding menace that has your heart beating faster every time she appears on screen. It is a performance all the more extraordinary for the way she makes it possible to sympathise with (or at least understand) a perpetrator of the kind of abuse that is unfortunately so commonplace. For her alone it is worth seeing the film, for the experience of watching one of society's common monsters unmask itself.

Executive producer Oprah Winfrey has said that she hopes that after seeing the film, few people will find it possible to ignore another Precious, and the film is dedicated to 'Precious girls everywhere'. And though the film is far from perfect – there is a major plot point in the final act regarding Precious' future that little is made of – it could be said that the film is more about what she has risen above rather than where she is going. Yet there is such a rare grace and truthfulness within this film, that it is not to be missed. ■



## Virtual virtues, real crimes

VERITY GUITON

*Avatar*

Dir. James Cameron, M

**B**EING STUNG FIVE dollars for 3D glasses resembling Kristin Stewart's Ray-Ban Originals and paying full price on cheap skate Tuesday dampened the excited anticipation I'd been feeling for what promised to be a really

good film. Twenty bucks poorer, my friends and I took our seats begrudgingly and looked at each other apprehensively as we hesitantly put on the required specs. Finally however, as the lights went down and we settled

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into the beginning scenes of James Cameron's *Avatar*, we were instantly captured, disarmed and won over.

*Avatar* is a futuristic fantasy showing love, war, loss, personal triumph against evil forces through spiritual awakenings and connection to one's inner self and the land. *Avatar* educates a new audience about colonialism: its heroes fight against amoral businesses who exploit pristine natural areas for industrial mining without any respect or concern for indigenous cultures or sacred land.

Conceptually, the movie is based around a newly discovered planet near earth named Pandora. Throughout the movie it is cleverly implied that Pandora exists as a living computer game with human 'avatars' entering and exiting in precise biological forms of themselves as Pandora's native people (the Na'vi). In other words, your human self is given a different form as a Na'vi.

Pandora as a planet is utterly beautiful, conveying vast and untouched forests full of gargantuan trees and dense understories that resemble prehistoric foliage. When the sun is set and night has settled in, the forest is shadowed in something similar to a black light, making everything glow softly. Individually

the plants show an almost uncanny likeness to Earth's marine plants and animals, comparable to the natural world depicted in *The Dark Crystal*. The most precious are the blossoms that fall from the 'Tree of Souls': they appear at first to be weightless, floating jellyfish.

The 3D effect makes you feel as if you are walking through the jungle with the Na'vi: Cameron achieves a sense that is magically immediate and often suspenseful. When confronted by the forest mammals, you feel a strong urge to jump out of your seat or hide behind your fingers. But the film's greatest achievement is to make you feel more than sensory experience: you feel sadness when the forest is attacked, admiration at the Na'vi's dedication to fight against the large mining corporation, dismay at the film's many examples of human deceit – and then you are made to feel joyous by its message of community, spirituality and peace.

The storyline itself, detached from the 3D whizzbangery, is maybe a little simplistic – perhaps too near the story of Disney's *Pocahontas*. First we are introduced to a dutiful young man named Corporal Jake Sully (Australia's Sam Worthington) who is paralysed from the waist down and happy to assist in a

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government-run organisation after being dispatched from the military. Sully's presence is requested so he may work alongside what is really a colonising power whose ambition is to increase the wealth of an Earth-based corporation. It is very quickly understood that the directors of the corporation are greedy and corrupt and have no care or concern for the Pandoran people or environment. This threatens to destroy the Na'vi land and cultural and spiritual identity.

There is tension in the middle of the movie as to whether or not Sully supports the corporation or the Na'vi. Sully must decide whose side he's on: he must discern his way through a struggle between what is right and wrong, and also his allegiance to the American government. There is never much doubt which way he will decide.

One could say that *Avatar's* storyline is predictable because of the underlying messages that describe our own lives as a global community. Throughout human history indigenous people living in balance with nature have been murdered and robbed as colonial conquerors despoiled nature to make money. *Avatar* may even be telling us that the only way we can learn is to step inside another person's life and/or culture;

especially if it is somewhat alien to our own.

When the *Avatar* curtain is lifted, James Cameron puts across copious social and environmental messages. For example, although it is understood that the Na'vi are humanoids, or a different species of human, they are our biological and spiritual superiors. They are ten feet tall, physically stronger, athletic and share a strong and literal bond with nature. This means they can fight, flee, hunt and prey without fear of oppression due to class, race, gender, or religious and/or political status. They are not too fat, too thin, too rich or too poor. They find peace with what they can connect to (i.e. either themselves, each other and/or nature).

In Pandora, finding a connection to something is both literal and spiritually symbolic. Through a biological ability that we humans don't have, the Na'vi can 'hook themselves up', as it were, to trees, plants and animals so they can become tribal warriors.

On a more human level, this is similar to how a person turns on the computer to begin a lengthy and enjoyable game of *The Sims* or *World of Warcraft*. Interpreting Sully's commitment to Pandora and his avatar depends on the outlook of the viewer. When taking

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a step back it can seem beautiful and exciting.

But the movie can also leave you feeling slightly uncomfortable: Sully is paralysed from the waist down, and so his escape into Pandora can be seen as at least partly self-interested. Either he favours his avatar because he wishes to pursue a genuine desire to assist the Na'vi in the battle to save their homeland and culture. Or is he is trying to escape into an addictive and powerful fantasy, where he can walk again, indulging in the illusion and convincing himself that his free will is being served?

A common phenomenon in real life is the active/addictive video player, committed to their online virtual identity and ultimately seeing the real life and relationships as limiting, tiresome and unsatisfying.

However, James Cameron may not be celebrating the phenomenon of an avatar; he may be trying to portray a deeper message by using the craze of modern technology and computer games to show how living beings can 'see' each other.

As the consumerist society developed we have in turn developed a strong sense of 'selfhood' that often decreases the acknowledgment of the 'other'. In *Avatar*, the Na'vi say 'I love you' by

using the phrase 'I see you'. Saying the words 'I love you' can have a lot of meaning and symbolism, truly expressing how one feels about another human being. However, Rabbi Fred Guttman from the Temple Emmanuel, North Carolina, comments that saying 'I see you' implies looking at another person, not as a rival, but as another one of God's creations.

Ultimately anything good can be used casually and can become self-serving. The rich and powerful in the movie are depicted as greed itself and destroying the Home Tree is like the total destruction of oneself and society. In turn it is destruction of the spirit, community and religion.

*Avatar* is truly worth watching. It's even worth dishing out a few extra dollars to see it in 3D. The performances were enjoyable, especially that of one of James Cameron's favourites, Sigourney Weaver. In the end it's absorbing, insightful, and quite an adventure. ■

# Getting the horrors

JULIETTE HUGHES

WATCHING THE THREE-part documentary *True Horror* on SBS was a bit like watching *Mythbusters*: most of the time, truth presents as more commonplace and less fantastical than the fevered imaginings of the unscholarly. Increasingly the god of the gaps has become the devil of the gaps in our understanding: the demigods and demons of mythology are our culture's spiritual Polyfills. In the popular imagination, supernatural abhors a mystery just as nature abhors a vacuum.

*True Horror's* relentless docudrama unfolding its version of the origins of vampires, werewolves and Frankensteinian monsters was disturbing. The truth behind the myths is inconvenient and uncomfortable: indeed the

monsters and demons of novelists' imaginings begin to look positively cuddly beside humanity's grisly realities – Rwanda, Year Zero and looming over all, that reminder of the deepest human evil, The Holocaust. That last was proof that all that Western civilisation and the Enlightenment gave their society could not save Germany from being in thrall to the worst in humanity under Nazism. Urban sophistication, science, philosophy, art and music, even obedience, are no defence against becoming evil in thought, word and deed. Ignorance and superstition then, are not the only enemies of the human soul.

But such ethical inquiry was obviously not in the remit of this rather slick British docudrama. The view taken by the makers of

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*Iconic scene from the 1921 German  
Expressionist vampire horror film  
Nosferatu, directed by F.W. Murnau*

*True Horror* was to make a collage of talking-head historians and heavily pointed dramatisations of scenes from one historical example of the origins of each of the monsters under examination.

History then, is as malleable as any other kind of story: the facts for each monster presented

in *True Horror* are based narrowly on historical research of a single era, which is deceptive: demonic entities such as vampires and werewolves existed in legend and art as far back as the Romans, the Babylonians and the ancient Egyptians. *True Horror* ignores all these, placing the source of vampire

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myth only with Vlad the Impaler in the 15th century and that of werewolves only with one German serial killer in the 17th century. And as for Frankenstein, resurrecting corpses has been the obsession of mad-scientist-sorcerers from time immemorial, not simply since the publication of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein: a Modern Prometheus*.

T.S. Eliot had Thomas à Beckett saying 'humankind cannot bear very much reality'<sup>1</sup>. When faced with human evil it is all too easy to deny; witness the dreadful success of Holocaust deniers on the internet.

So, watching *True Horror* at least caused this reviewer to reflect that mythical werewolves are cuddly puppies compared with Nazis. Even *True Horror's* own presentation of the history of the Werewolf of Bedburg, the cannibal serial killer and rapist Peter Stubbe, has little shock value in a world that has known Jeffrey Dahmer and Adolf Eichmann.

So Count Dracula begins to look positively angelic – or at least gentlemanly – beside the history that inspired Bram Stoker's novel. F.W. Murnau's disturbing film *Nosferatu* was much closer to (though less horrible than) the 'real' Vlad Dracul the Impaler, the 15th century despot of Wallachia,

who was given to ghastly torture and murder on a vast scale, sparing no-one, even babies.

But just as disturbing is the fact that he was praised by some of the church's hierarchy, including Pope Pius II, as a strong Christian leader, holding back Islamic hordes from Europe's doorsteps.

His methods of doing so should have given the church authorities pause, but unfortunately didn't. It is reported that when the vast Ottoman army of Sultan Mehmed II arrived on the borders of his kingdom they were confronted with the sight of 20,000 impaled corpses, a veritable forest of the dead. They had been placed there by Vlad's mercenaries to strike fear into the invaders. It worked. The army retreated and 'Christian' rule was saved in Wallachia.

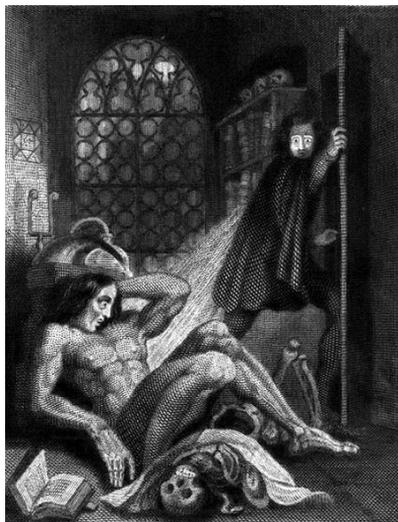
When confronted with histories like these of death, torture or both, one needs to remember the histories of Christians behaving like Christ rather than Satan: we need to be able to remember Oscar Romero, Maximilian Kolbe, Oskar Schindler and Irene Sendler. Otherwise it becomes easy to despair of humanity.

Such heroes of the Holocaust bring to mind the Frankensteinian experiments that were performed by the wretched Dr Mengele; *True*

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*Horror*'s final episode was all about the experiments of one Giovanni Aldini, a scientist whose pitiless curiosity no human dignity, no spirituality could soften.

Mary Shelley's novel was based on the exploits of this real human being whose actions were so much more cruel and uncaring than her fictional Dr Frankenstein, a flawed person who still has moral discernment and pity. The real Aldini was



*Illustration from the frontispiece of the 1831 edition of Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus by Mary Shelley. Illustrator: Theodore Von Holst*

an ominous precursor of the real psychopath Mengele.

So if a mad scientist with a heart is only a literary creation, the

question that arises for me is 'Is science essentially psychopathic'? Does science need to be overseen by committees of ethicists in order not to go mad? But then who oversees the ethicists? For if one starts to shackle scientific inquiry, it becomes scarily easy to end up like Texas, where creationism has to be taught beside evolution in science classes.

But the results of science unhampered by ethics are all around us. Consider the uses to which our best brains are put, from vivisection, agribusiness' destruction of the environment and distortions of global economy that still sees a billion people malnourished, to the machinations of Big Pharma or weapons research, it can be tempting to say 'yes, keep an eye on these dangerous lunatics'.

Yet science is, or should be, about objective truth, not about pursuing political or corporate agendas. It should be completely independent: only then do we get our Einsteins, Paulings, Curies, Pasteurs.

All these were nurtured in environments that fed their souls as well as their bodies and minds, so that in their search for knowledge they did not lose their hearts. It is tempting to say 'not lose their humanity' but unfortunately we do need to have something stronger

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*Promotional photo of Boris Karloff from Frankenstein as Frankenstein's monster. (1931)*

and kinder than mere humanity in order to avoid becoming inhuman.

Truth hurts. Yet if we let it in, we can be like Teilhard de Chardin, who spoke of allowing suffering to part our fibres so that God can enter more fully into us, permeating us with love and grace. But too often we resist.

For when truth is inconvenient, we have, ready-made at our disposal, stories that suit the rich and powerful. Which is why it is easier, say, for so many people to believe that man-made global warming is a socialist (or fascist) conspiracy created by a cabal of 'communists', 'greenies' and scary, shadowy figures (e.g. Al Gore and Prince Charles!) in order to bring about 'One World Government'.

In *The Independent* on 7 February,

there was a report on how oil companies (notably Exxon) have been funding fake 'think tanks' and bloggers to run interference whenever there is any real climate science coverage in the media<sup>2</sup>. In 2007 I wrote a long piece for *The Age* newspaper on the same subject<sup>3</sup>.

For the *real* climate conspirators are the denialists, who have hijacked the whole debate by flooding airwaves, letters pages and the blogosphere with their strident attacks on proper climate science, drowning out the voices of honest science based on environmental balance – and truth. Denialists are in ascendency now, and the real truth is being howled down.

But as Pilate said – what is truth? What indeed is reality? Surely by now after a decade of abysmal reality shows, we should have a healthy scepticism about a 'reality' that comes to us predigested according to the needs of the corporations that run the networks and their advertisers who tell us what's 'good' for us so we can buy it from them.

This just happens to be what is very good indeed for the kind of moguls who deplore taxes, social welfare programs and pesky environmental regulations.

So, lucky as we are in this lucki-

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est of countries, we need to keep reminding ourselves that the price of this luck is not to be lazy, fearful, or prejudiced against the powerless. Again, history has much to teach us in case we are complacent.

On Thursday, 4 March 2010 the ABC will show an important historical documentary, *Contact*. It gives the witness of an Indigenous woman of the Martu people, Yuwali, who was 17 when her first contact with 'whitefellas' was filmed in 1964. Now aged 62, she tells of her group of 20, the very last remnant Aboriginal group still living traditionally, without any contact with or knowledge of modern Australia, in the dry Percival Lakes in the Great Sandy Desert.

Australia's authorities forcibly evacuated them because a space rocket test was to be fired from their area. No permission was sought from them for these tests: they were simply rounded up and evicted by officers to protect them from rocket debris. Such insensitive 'benevolence' that utterly disempowers its objects has shamed Australia for two centuries, and continues, unfortunately, with the Intervention. We are still a country with racist policies.

As Yuwali remembers, it is confronting to feel that one is part of a society that can do such things. It's



easy to criticise other cultures but it is taking a long time to get our house in order here in the lucky country.

Facing up to uncomfortable truths is the best way to make a start on it. ■

### NOTES

1. Eliot, T.S., *Murder in the Cathedral*. 1935, Harcourt, Brace and company
2. <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/climate-change/think-tanks-take-oil-money-and-use-it-to-fund-climate-deniers-1891747.html>
3. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/opinion/the-truth-is-downright-dirty/2007/06/01/1180205508019.html>



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