

MOORE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE NEWTOWN HAS A NEW LOOK

Moore Theological College's new ultra-modern building, (picture below) now dominating the corner of Carillion Ave and King Street Newtown was dedicated by *Archbishop Glenn Davies* and officially opened by the Governor of NSW *His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley, AC DSC* on 11 February 2017.



For the occasion, hundreds gathered in the main assembly hall named the **Marcus Loane Hall** after a former Archbishop of Sydney and a former Principal of the College. The new enlarged Library will be known as the **Donald Robinson Library**, also after a former Archbishop of Sydney and a Vice principal of the College.

ST JAMES' INSTITUTE HAS A NEW DIRECTOR-Christopher Waterhouse has been appointed Director of St James' Institute, Sydney.

Christopher, a former parishioner at St James' Church, King Street, commenced in late January 2017. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from the University of Tasmania, and has a background in theatre and music event management. He returns from the UK where for part of his time there, he was on the staff of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

ARCHBISHOP GLENN DAVIES APPOINTS NEW RECTOR TO ST ALBAN'S PARISH EPPING

Bishop Ross Nicholson has been appointed as Rector of the Parish of St Alban's Epping.

Ross Nicholson was formerly Rector and Area Dean of Willoughby and more recently Bishop Missioner in the Diocese of Tasmania and part-time Rector of St John's Launceston, Tasmania.

Speaking to the *Southern Cross* magazine, *Bishop Nicholson* said he and his wife, *Jenny*, are really looking forward to engaging with the Epping congregation and the local community. He said "I had a look at the demographics of Epping and something like 25 percent of the population is Mandarin speaking, so there's the potential for reaching out into that community. Children's ministry is another area I'd like to engage in – it was one of the things we also did in Tasmania".

Bishop Ross Nicholson is being inducted into the Parish by the *Right Reverend Chris Edwards*, Bishop of North Sydney at a Commencement of Ministry Service on Friday 24th March 2017.

CHINESE CHURCH GROWTH IN SYDNEY

The Rev David Wong, Rector of Granville (pictured), has been appointed Canon of St John's Cathedral, Parramatta by *Bishop Ivan Lee*, with special responsibilities for Chinese church planting in the Diocese.



Bishop Lin said: "The numbers of people migrating from China are rapidly increasing and Mandarin is now the second-most spoken language in Sydney after English."

"*Canon Wong* will also be ENC's Chinese Ministry Consultant – a position funded entirely by donations."

"David's role will be to plant, grow and strengthen Chinese-speaking congregations and ministries throughout the Diocese"

"These new congregations and ministries will start alongside English-speaking ministries, whether it's a fresh church plant or it becomes part of an established English-speaking church."

sydneyanglicans.net

ANGLICAN CHURCHES IN AND AROUND SYDNEY ARE USING THE FORTY DAYS OF THE LENTEN SEASON AS A TIME OF SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR THE GREAT CELEBRATIONS OF THE DEATH & RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

PARISH CHURCHES ARE PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATING IN LITURGIES, PRAYER, BIBLE STUDY, REFLECTION & MEDITATION.

For information, see the Anglicans Together website;

WWW.Anglicanstogether.org

'ORA ET LABORA'

Greetings in Christ



Easter is the Principal Festival of the Christian Year.

It is the time we proclaim, 'Christ is risen!' - a declaration of the triumph of love, the hope of resurrection, and the possibility of new life. It is also a statement about the nature of God, humanity and the created world around us, for it acknowledges that we are in a process of change and that we need to make good and healthy decisions in this process. These three words, and the festival from which they come, stand at the centre of our faith.

The celebrations at Easter can be very grand and uplifting - while it lasts. The experience of many, however, is that the mundane realities of life quickly return and the joy and hope of Easter fades. **Moreover, and sadly so, for most people in our country Easter has no meaning at all, except perhaps as being yet another public holiday.** Nevertheless, the spiritual poverty of much of our world should not surprise us, for it has been forever thus.

The physical presence of Jesus himself did not change many people in his own time, nor did the experience of resurrection. Nevertheless, there has always been those who have seen, believed, understood and been changed because of the experience of resurrection in their lives. Easter therefore provides many things for us to reflect upon, including the narrative, the symbols, the mystery and the experience.

The Easter Event

What are we to make of the empty tomb? From the earliest times, there have been many theories as to why the tomb was empty. Even the ancients tried to

rationalise away the emptiness of the tomb. After all, very few people in the time of Jesus believed in resurrection, except perhaps in the vaguest of spiritual terms. A physical resurrection was considered a most unlikely possibility. **However, the empty tomb suggests to us that the resurrection was not just a 'spiritual' thing, but was also 'physical'.**

Matthew's Gospel describes the two 'Marys' going to Jesus' tomb and becoming the first witnesses to the resurrection. They came and expected to find a secure tomb where Jesus' body lay, but instead they found the confusing sight of an open and empty tomb, with a man nearby proclaiming that Jesus had risen. They quickly returned to the disciples who were in hiding, and on the way met the resurrected Christ. **Having returned, the women became the first evangelists - telling the disciples the 'good news'.**

Now, the gospel accounts of the resurrection do differ from each other. Nevertheless, putting aside the points of view of the gospel writers, I wonder what the women actually saw and what effect it had upon them. It would seem that the disciples did not believe their 'good news' and needed to see for themselves - and what did they 'see'?

The good news was shared with the apostle Thomas, but he would not believe until he saw for himself.

The gospels describe many sightings of the resurrected Christ; however, not all recognised him at first. Just as Thomas' response to the 'good news' was a sceptical 'seeing is believing', so too might we reasonably question the message

of resurrection today. Nevertheless, people continue to experience the resurrected Christ and come to believe in him, even today. So, what do people see?

Symbols of Easter

Easter worship brings together several important symbols and actions that provide an insight into the Christian life-journey, or pilgrimage. Indeed, they give expression to the occasions upon which we can encounter the resurrected Christ.

* **Light** - is a sign of 'knowledge' and 'understanding', brought into our spiritual lives because of the presence of Christ in the world. Seeing may well be a great aid to believing, but we cannot see while we are in the dark - we therefore need enlightenment.

God has created us and given us the capacity to understand his presence in the world.

* **The Word** - which is our sharing in God's revelation through the history of his people, and the message it contains for us today. The story of the people of God is also our story and the story of God's presence in the world even now.

* **Baptism** - which is about recognising that we are part of God's kingdom today, which is to be found in the church. We describe it as becoming God's sons and daughters and understand that God's Spirit lives in each one of us.

* **Eucharist** - which is a sign of the process of gathering,

offering, transformation and nourishment of God's people. **Through this we remember Jesus in history as well as acknowledging his ongoing presence through the people of God in the world today.**

These are signs of process - reflecting both 'being' and 'becoming'. Our lives are not static, but instead are in a constant state of change. Part of our calling is to allow God to transform our lives so that we may become the people that God wants us to be. This is part of the mystery of the Christian faith - a faith that is both now but also to be experienced more fully in the future; a faith that is both present in the world but is also transcendent - uniting all things 'both visible and invisible' in God.

Consequences of Easter

It is of no surprise that, for most people, the questions of identity, purpose, and the health and happiness of our lives are of primary concern. Our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being is of importance for each of us. Moreover, all of these aspects of our lives need the experience of resurrection.

On Good Friday, we commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross. It is a day of mixed emotions, on the one hand, there is the grief that comes from the sharing of the story of the violent death of Jesus; but on the other hand, we know the outcome of the story and of the hope of resurrection, so there is also joy and thanksgiving.

Nevertheless, the reality is that without death there is no resurrection. Good Friday remains a time to grieve and mourn, which is a necessary condition for resurrection; here suffering is not excused or ignored, but rather cries out for redemption and justice. We can therefore identify with the sufferings of Christ and link our

own sufferings with his.

Resurrection therefore becomes a principle for the Christian life. It acknowledges the tragedy of human existence known through brokenness, sin and death, and recognises our need for God through reconciliation, transformation and new life. All of this is achieved because of God's love for his people and through the self-giving love of Jesus that found a defining moment for his followers on the cross.

At the Greeting of Peace, we proclaim; *'we are the body of Christ: his Spirit is with us'*. Through these words, we declare that we are people of the resurrection continuing the work of Christ in the world today. So, what do we see in all of this? Perhaps it is the people of God, with all our frailties and failings, offering ourselves to God in service. Through this offering, and the transformation that follows, we are called to be Christ to the world.

Easter then is a mystery - something more to be experienced rather than 'known about'. Just as Jesus offered himself on the cross for the sins of the world and found resurrection and redemption, so we too are called to offer ourselves to God as 'a living sacrifice' and to bring God's love to others.

So, what do we see? On Good Friday, we see brutality and violence wreaked upon an innocent Jesus by a fearful, selfish and power-hungry world. On Easter Day, we see an empty tomb and a resurrected Christ, now living through the faith, hope and love of his people on earth.

This counter-cultural message is not about realpolitik, (which proposed that the death of one innocent man was just collateral damage in the enforcement of the 'peace'); nor is it self-help,

(which is an ailment of the self-centred world that we inhabit); but rather it is about setting aside the desire for power and the exercise of self-interest, and instead working for the well-being and salvation of others. Hence, salvation can be found through allowing our lives to be shaped by God rather than by the pursuit of our own desires.

Resurrection is therefore a choice - an act of the will to take up our cross and follow Christ.

The Reverend Andrew Sempell
President, Anglicans Together

RESIGNATION OF NEWCASTLE BISHOP

The Bishop of Newcastle, the Right Reverend Greg Thompson has announced his resignation. He has cited ill health due to the strain of steering the Diocese through child abuse scandals and a culture of 'cover-up'.

In his statement ***Bishop Thompson*** said: "When I started this journey to right the wrongs of child abuse in the Diocese I didn't expect to be in this position, nor did I expect to uncover systemic practices that have enabled the horrendous crimes against children. The decision to resign was not an easy one, it weighed heavily on my heart. However, I must place the wellbeing of my family and my health above my job."

Archbishop Glenn Davies, Metropolitan of New South Wales, said: "It was with great sadness that I learned of the resignation of ***Bishop Greg Thompson*** from the Diocese of Newcastle.

"In the short time of his tenure as Bishop of Newcastle, Greg has displayed remarkable courage, commitment and dedication in seeking to restore justice for the survivors of sexual abuse."

An Episcopal Shrove Tuesday Pancake Bake Off

Two Sydney city parishes - Christ Church St Laurence, Railway Square and St James King Street came together on Shrove Tuesday evening to raise funds for the support of St Laurence House situated in the Eastern suburbs.

St Laurence House provides accommodation and support to homeless and 'at risk' young people who, for various reasons, are unable to live with their families. Many suffer deprivation, neglect, abuse of some kind, or mental illness. Some are at risk of substance abuse and anti-social patterns of behaviour. All come from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

The aim of St Laurence House is to equip the teenagers with personal, social and living skills which they have often failed to develop. At St Laurence House they are helped to build trusting relationships, to realise their potential and make plans for their future. life

This event was hosted by Christ Church St Laurence in its parish hall, with about 90 people attending.



A highlight of the evening was a friendly pancake-making contest between **Bishop Michael Stead** (South Sydney Region) and **Bishop Robert Forsyth**, his predecessor. It was advertised as an historic event—and perhaps it was; a quick search of the internet revealed no evidence of other episcopal dignitaries attempting to feed their flocks in this manner.



Each bishop was given a quantity of batter and invited to make three pancakes, to be judged by a couple of volunteers from the audience. The question arose at the beginning – was the task to produce pancakes or crepes? – Were they thin pancakes or thick crepes. However what was more important was the colour!

Someone young with a known sense of mischief had hidden food dye in the mix so that when the batter was stirred it miraculously changed colour to Episcopal purple. Or was it Lenten violet?



What the judges lacked in culinary knowledge they made up for in testing the finished product. They concluded that **Bishop Michael** was, by a thin 'scrape', the better 'friar'. The audience had their say when the remains were offered around: most thought the bishops had better stick to sermons.

Acknowledgement to Colin Bannerman, Anglicans Together Website: www.anglicanstogether.org

SHROVE TUESDAY occurs on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, officially ending the Season of Epiphany, and starting the Season of Lent. Traditionally viewed as a day of repentance, *Shrove Tuesday* has in fact become a day for celebration and feasting before the period of fasting required during Lent. The name "*Shrove Tuesday*" comes from the word "shrive", which means to confess and receive absolution.

The concept behind this practice is found in *1 Corinthians 9:27*, where the Apostle Paul states: "*I buffet my body and make it my slave...*". Ironically, in different countries, it has evolved into a day of frivolity and often indulgence, before Lent.

The *Shrove Tuesday* tradition originated in the Middle Ages. Foods like meats, fats, eggs, milk, and fish were restricted in Lent. To keep such food from being wasted, many families had feasts on Shrove Tuesday to use up those foods. **The English tradition of eating pancakes on Shrove Tuesday** came about as a way of using as much milk, fats, and eggs as possible before Ash Wednesday began.

RINGING THE CHANGES AT ST PETER'S, CREMORNE

FAREWELL TO FR NEIL AND HEATHER VEARING

In February the congregation of St Peter's Cremorne gathered together, following Fr Neil's last service to give its thanks to Fr Neil and Heather.

Rector's Warden, Edwina Waddy, said: 'We have benefited greatly from the stability you have brought to us all, and so few really know your -sacrificing ministry to the needy or those near to death. To those left behind, your personal comfort in grief and shock, and the services at their deaths and burials have been tender, comforting and inspirational.

We thank you both for ALL the joys and service you have brought to our people, the guidance you have given me and the other wardens, and the Parish Council, and the greatly appreciated support you have afforded our local Police Force Officers as their go-to chaplain.

'Finally may I acknowledge my assessment of the sacrifices you both have made in accepting our invitation to come to St Peter's, leaving your family and friends interstate, and the sadness of your isolation from Tasmania. I know what a big thing it is to change states when young, and the more so when one has one's mature family to leave behind.



On your return to Tasmania, be assured that you will be travelling with every blessing that St Peter's and its people can place upon you both, and the family you will re-join."



PHOTOS

Above

Fr Neil and Heather holding the icons presented by the parish, painted by parishioner Jane Mills. LHS are the keys and upside down cross of St Peter and RHS is a likeness from the St Peter Window in the apse.

Left: The Reverend Dr Max Wood, rector of St Luke's Church, Mosman spoke on behalf of the local clergy, and gave Fr Neil and Heather a blessing for their new life in Tasmania.

It was in 2009 that Fr Neil accepted the Archbishop's invitation to be rector at St Peter's. Indeed it was a very unusual appointment. The previous 11 rectors all had worked in Sydney Diocese before being appointed to Cremorne – 4 had studied at Moore College. Fr Neil was the first priest to come directly from outside the diocese. Some would call that a miracle.



WELCOME TO FR TIM AND SARAH ST QUINTIN

The Reverend Tim St Quintin has been appointed the new Rector of St Peter's Cremorne. Tim was ordained priest in the Diocese of Sydney. He is currently with the Australian Defence Force Chaplaincy and Assistant Minister in the Parish of St Stephen's Willoughby.

He graduated from UNSW with a BSc, and then as a graduate of Duntroon served 8 years as a regular Army officer, rising to the rank of Major. He transferred to the Reserves to enable him to study for ordination at Moore College before becoming an Army chaplain.

He has mixed with a wide group of people from different backgrounds and views of life. He and Sarah have three school-aged children.

Tim St Quintin will be Inducted by the Archbishop of Sydney as Rector of St Peter's at a Commencement of Ministry Service on Thursday 20 April at 7:00pm. Bishop Chris Edwards will preach. We look forward to welcoming the St Quintin family to St Peter's on that occasion.

Susan Hooke

Anglicanism and the Anglican Communion?

The most common and widely held misconception about the origin of the Anglican Church, is that the King of England - Henry VIII - started the Church of England. Even some ill informed members within the Anglican Church vaguely think this is what happened. However, anyone reading the history of England in the sixteenth century would see how absurd that would have been.

The Church of England has always thought of itself, not as a new foundation, but rather as a reformed continuation of the ancient "English Church" (*Ecclesia Anglicana*). In separating itself from the Church of Rome under the Pope in the sixteenth century, it claimed to itself the character of a distinctly national Church.

In the 21st Century, Anglicanism is one of a number of traditions of the Christian faith. Others include, of course, the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, and the Protestant Churches, which include Lutheran, Baptist, and Pentecostal Churches.

The word Anglican originates in *ecclesia anglicana*, a medieval Latin phrase dating to at least 1246. Originally meaning the 'English Church', in the past two centuries the tradition has spread around the world. Now 85 million people - members of national or regional Churches - call themselves Anglican (or Episcopal in some countries). Collectively these churches are known as the Anglican Communion.

"The 1930 Lambeth Conference described the Anglican Communion as a 'fellowship, within the one holy catholic and apostolic church, of those duly

constituted dioceses, provinces or regional churches in communion with the see of Canterbury.'" - Colin Buchanan, Historical Dictionary of Anglicanism.

The above quote is technically accurate, but misses out on the complexity and richness of one of the world's largest Christian faith communities - now established in over 165 countries.

Anglicans and Episcopalians the world over share aspects of their history, tradition and ways of worship. However no two churches are exactly alike - even within a diocese, let alone a province or a country. This unique '*unity in diversity*' is one of the things that make the Anglican Communion different and unique.

The development of the *ecclesia anglicana* came naturally, with the spread of the English people around the world. Anglican worship outside of Britain began as early as 1578 in Canada.

The Anglican Communion traces much of its growth to the early mission organisations of the Church of England. These were the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK 1698), the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), now known as USPG), and the Church Missionary Society (CMS 1799).

These societies sent missionaries to countries, particularly those colonised by the British. In the 18th and 19th Centuries English bishops led the various dioceses and national Churches that were established in a variety of countries.

A notable exception was the Right Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther who was the first African Anglican bishop in

Nigeria during the latter part of the 19th Century.



The Right Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther
Photo credit: CMS

In 1783, following the American War of Independence the parishes of Connecticut elected Samuel Seabury as their bishop. As the Church of England could no longer consecrate him, he turned to the Scottish Episcopal Church - a move seen as the beginnings of an Anglican Communion with autonomous Member Churches.

Subsequently other national churches gained independence from the Church of England and the world-wide Anglican Communion emerged.

The first meeting of Anglican bishops (seventy six) took place in 1867 at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Longley. This was the first "Lambeth Conference". Now seen as one of the 'Instruments' of Communion, meeting, usually, every ten years.

Today the Anglican Communion is thirty autonomous national and regional Churches plus six Extra Provincial Churches and dioceses; all are in Communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the Communion's spiritual head.

What do Anglicans believe?

Anglicans believe that there is only one God, but there are three elements to this one God: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; that human beings' decision to reject this eternal God and live according to their own standards (sin) causes a relational breakdown between them; that God the Son, Jesus Christ, lived and died to give people a model and a way to be reconciled with God.

Anglicans consider the Bible to be fundamental to life as a Christian and believe that "the Scriptures contain all things necessary for salvation".

Anglicans believe that the Christian life involves regular praise and prayer, both private and public, and that Christians must practise what they preach and pray - both on Sundays (the day when Anglicans normally gather for worship) and every day, as they seek to live out their worship.

Anglicans believe that people become members of God's Church through Baptism, and all Christians celebrate Holy Communion (also known as Eucharist) as a shared 'meal' (of bread/wafer and wine) which they eat together in Jesus' name.

Anglicans accept the major Creeds as expressing their Christian faith: The Apostle's Creed is the statement of faith used in Baptism and Morning and Evening Prayer, while the Nicene Creed is prayed in the service of Holy Communion. (These can be found in any Anglican prayer book.)

Anglicans summarise their basic beliefs in The Catechism (an old word, meaning "what is to be taught"). *[Learn more about these foundations of faith here]*

What's particularly distinctive about Anglicanism?

An important caveat about this question is that if you ask three Anglicans about doctrine you'll get five different answers! Anglicanism's greatest strength - its willingness to tolerate a wide variety in Anglican faith and lifestyle - is also the thing that provokes the most debate among its practitioners.

Anglicans, however, do agree that their beliefs and practices, their authority, derive from an integration of *Scripture* (the Holy Bible), *Reason* (the intellect and the experience of God) and *Tradition* (the practices and beliefs of the historical church). This 'three-legged stool' is said to demonstrate a 'balance' in the Anglican approach to faith contrasting it with Roman Catholic and the Protestant doctrines. The term *via media* when used in reference to the Anglican tradition generally refers to the idea that Anglicanism represents a *middle way* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

Rather than saying **Anglicanism** is *Protestant* - like *Lutheranism* or *Calvinism* - rather it would be more accurate to say it is *catholic* (believing it is still part of God's one Church and having bishops as Church leaders) but *reformed* (in that it shares the principles of other Christian Churches that broke away from the *Roman Catholic Church* in 16th Century) in what has become known as the Protestant Reformation

Do all Anglicans/Episcopalians around the world share the same doctrine?

While *Anglicanism* generally has declared the Bible to be supremely authoritative for matters of doctrine and has broadly subscribed to the *Apostles' and Nicene Creeds*, the thirty eight different provinces/Member Churches and six Extra-Provinceals around the

world have varied greatly as to the status given to the **Thirty-Nine Articles** and other secondary statements of faith (including the 1662 Book of Common Prayer).

They have also varied considerably as to the limits of *orthodoxy* (conformation to the Christian faith as represented in the creeds of the early church) and the appropriate sanctions (if any) for breaching those limits.

A very brief summary of a worldwide common Anglican stance is to be found in the *Lambeth Quadrilateral*, but individual Provinces have established doctrine commissions or doctrine and worship committees to advise the House of Bishops and the General Synod or comparable body on doctrinal issues. The House of Bishops in each Province is generally held to have a special responsibility for guarding the faith and its formulation in each generation.

The Anglican Communion's global committee for doctrinal issues is the **Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity Faith and Order**.

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website:
anglicancommunion.org/identity/doctrine.aspx

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The Afterlife: The Evidence of Near Death Experiences by John Spooner

Sydney, Halstead Press, 2016, pp. 125.

Father John Spooner has written a book that considers the effects of near death experiences (NDEs) on our concept of the after-life. An NDE is “a distinct subjective experience that people sometimes report after a near death episode. In a near death episode, a person is either clinically dead, near death, or in a situation where death is likely or expected”. (p.25)

Fr John, who reports a NDE of his own, is a member of the International Association of Near Death Studies (IANDS), which maintains its own journal on the subject (<http://iands.org/home.html>). The Journal of Near-Death Studies is in its 34th volume. The website of IANDS contains an up to date log of reported experiences.

As I wrote this review, the latest posting was on 8 February 2017. I give this information to show that NDEs are the subject of research and the publication of scholarly articles.

They were the subject of an interview with neuropsychiatrist *Dr Peter Fenwick* on the ABC Lateline on 30 October 2000 (<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/stories/s206217.htm>). I give this information to show that NDEs are a recognised phenomenon and the subject of scholarly attention. I already knew this because, about 30 years ago, one of my university colleagues was also interested in this subject.

I must now digress into a brief discussion of epistemology, the theory of knowledge or how we know things. Much of our contemporary approach to knowledge rests on the possibility of proof. That is to say, we know something when it can be demonstrated by observable proof. It may be, in scientific circles, that the appreciation of proof is not easily accessible to lay persons, but

that does not in itself detract from the principle. Even in everyday matters, however, we rely on simple observation and the accumulation of experience. Some important accepted facts are counterintuitive. For example, it seems to us that the sun rises and sets, whereas the truth is that the earth turns relative to the sun.

In that case, what do we do with a concept such as the afterlife?

The same question might be asked about the existence of God. Contemporary atheists draw a sharp contrast between the kind of knowledge that rests on proof and what they might call unjustifiable beliefs, even imaginary beliefs. We do not need to go to such extremes to understand that some of our experiences may not be open to scientific proof. How, for example, are we to account for beauty?

***Fr John's* book straddles these questions. A large part of it is taken up with case studies of people reporting their experiences.**

Whilst there appear to be many variations, there are common themes. People on the operating table describe out of body experiences in which they look down from above and see what is going on. Subjects report experiences of going into a tunnel, of blinding light, of welcoming others, who might be departed loved ones. They report universal love and acceptance.

Famously, Australian *Frank Packer* had a heart attack that left him clinically dead. When asked whether he had a classic NDE, he is reported to have said that there was nothing out there.

But the reports that are available can be studied in a scientific fashion as much as any other event that

depends on people reporting what they have seen or done. *Fr John* draws out these similarities and differences.

The next question is what the experiences mean. Are they the result of some bodily activity that produces the remembrances when the person revives? That would be to say that the person saw and experienced nothing while clinically dead but that the physical processes produced the report. There are several problems with this response because all our perceptions and activities are accompanied by bodily events, including brain activity. Thus, when we are happy, in love, or sad and despairing, something is happening in our bodies. But we do not then say that we were not happy, in love, sad or despairing.

***Fr John* deals with these alternatives in a chapter called “The Sceptics”.** I think that he might have done more with the alternatives. **The problem here is reductionism, the process by which complex matters are reduced to simpler causes. The key phrase here is that it is “all a matter of ...”.** I am always wary of reductionism and *Fr John's* subject is a likely place to find it.

When *Fr John* links these studies to the afterlife, he moves to another level of knowledge and reality; one that is not open to the same kind of verification that was used to collate the reports of NDEs. This kind of knowledge is based on belief.

We might imagine that a person's prior belief about the afterlife will influence their perceptions of the meaning of NDEs. We might also expect that much will depend on whether a person has experienced the phenomenon, as *Fr John* reports

of himself, or whether the person is, like me, an observer.

The reports collated by *Fr John* show that NDEs often, but not always, change people's views of the afterlife, usually in favour.

There is a theological component to this discussion. People report bliss, light and something approaching universal love. If these are features of the afterlife, we are heading in a universalist direction. That is to say, after death, we are all accepted. Some versions of Christian theology would suggest that this is not the case, that there may be quite different results for

different people. This hints at a larger discussion that *Fr John* does not entertain and nor will I.

***Fr John* has written an interesting book that brings together materials most of us would find hard to locate. The afterlife is an enduring subject of interest.**

In our popular culture, we refer frequently to deceased persons looking down on us or to our chance to be reunited with them after death. Alternative views suggest a continuous process of birth and rebirth leading finally to ultimate rest. Some think that we can communicate directly with the

dead. I make no comment on any of these views but they show how intrigued we are by death and its aftermath.

If you wish to purchase copy of *Fr John's* book, you can enquire of your local book store which, if not holding stock, can get it in for you from the publisher. It is also available for sale at St. James' Church, King Street, and Christ Church, St Laurence, Railway Square.

Michael Horsburgh
Parish of St James', Sydney



NEW CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT LAUNCHED

Equal Voices was launched on the evening of Friday 24th February this year. It is a national, ecumenical and grassroots movement of Christians who are committed to giving an equal voice to LGBTIQ+ fellow Christians in the body of Christ. It will also pursue reconciliation with these our precious siblings.

Inspiring and emboldening us in this process are experiences such as the following, which were shared at a special service of lament and apology held at St James, King Street on that night.

'Since coming out as gay in 2008, I have never felt safe - let alone loved - in almost all Australian Churches. I have been denied the Lord's Supper, asked to leave Bible Studies, and been labeled a threat to Christian community.'

'I'm afraid of the church, I'm afraid of fellow Christians. I can't step into a church building without getting spikes of anxiety and wanting to run as fast as possible in the opposite direction.'

'I grew up being taught by the church that homosexuality was evil and that boys who wanted to be girls were going against God's grand design.'

The Reverend Dr Keith Mascord said "Stories such as these, and they are countless and growing, have prompted us to initiate a **National Apology to LGBTIQ+ fellow Australians** for the damage and hurt we Christians have been responsible for.

"If you'd like to add your voice to the apology, you can do so at: <https://equalvoices.org.au/>

After the official launch of Equal Voices, by Hon. Michael Kirby, on 3rd April, 2017 these apologies will be symbolically presented to representatives of LGBTIQ+ Australians at the Federal Parliament in Canberra.

If you would like to become a member of Equal Voices, or be added to a mailing list to receive up-dates and newsletters, you can do so on the Equal Voices web-site (above). If you are on **Facebook**, if you like or follow the Equal Voices site, you will also keep being up-dated.

Contact:
keith@equalvoices.org.au

'HOMELESS JESUS' SCULPTURE

'*Homeless Jesus*' a bronze sculpture by Canadian sculptor *Timothy Schmalz* has been **installed in 15 sites around the world including in Australia** - at Mary MacKillop Catholic Church Ballajura Perth. There are plans to install one in Melbourne, if funds can be found, outside St Peter's Church Eastern Hill.

The original sculpture was installed at Regis College, University of Toronto, Toronto in early 2013.

St James Church, King Street, Sydney has applied for a faculty for the erection a 'Homeless Jesus' sculpture to be put against the outside north wall of the church.



BOOK REVIEW:

“The Divine Dance: the Trinity and Your Transformation”

by *Richard Rohr, with Mike Morrell.*

I write this review with some fear and trepidation because the main author has a wide following and has published a number of books on spiritual matters.

Richard Rohr is described in the “Divine Dance” as a globally recognised ecumenical teacher bearing witness to the universal awakening within Christian mysticism and the Perennial Tradition.”

I have to confess that this is the first of *Richard Rohr’s* books I have read and I had to google the ‘*Perennial Tradition*’ to find out what it is.

The quick answer to save you time is that the ‘Perennial Tradition’ recognises that there are some constant and recurring themes and truths in all the world’s major religions. “*The Divine Dance*” begins with six pages of glowing reviews from a variety of luminaries but I only recognised the names of three of them – one being ‘Bono’.

Rohr begins by noting that although the Trinity is supposed to be a central foundational doctrine of our Christian belief system, most Christians have little real understanding of it and the doctrine has apparently no impact on the way they live their lives.

If that is the case *Rohr* argues then either the doctrine is not true or else it is badly misunderstood. In formulating a new understanding of the Trinity, *Rohr* takes us back to the Fourth Century Cappadocian

Fathers who suggested that relationships within the Trinity could be understood as a flow, a radical relatedness, a perfect communion between ‘*Three*’ – a circle dance of love. Furthermore they suggested that God is not just a dancer; God is the dance itself.

Rohr takes this language and runs with it. **His first major theme is that the Trinity of the Godhead is relationship.** He argues that early Christian thinking was influenced by *Aristotle* and therefore described the *Trinitarian God* as being substance. He uses the famous *Rublev icon of the Trinity* (also known as The Hospitality of Abraham) to illustrate the concept of God as Three in perfect harmony and relationship. (The icon is on the front cover of the book).

Rohr suggests that the figure representing the Spirit seems to be inviting the viewer to come and join the meal. To quote *Rohr* - “***I want you to take this image into yourself as you read. I invite you to recognise that this Table is not reserved exclusively for the Three, nor is the divine circle a closed circle: we’re all invited in. All creation is invited in and this is the liberation God intended from the very beginning.***”

I found *Rohr’s* emphasis on the Trinity as God revealed in equal loving relationship a helpful image and a welcome relief from Trinitarian language using concepts like hierarchy and subordination.

Welcome, too was his stress on God’s love being the essence of his nature. I liked his statement, ‘*God does not love you because you are good. God loves you because God is good.*’ However, I started to part company with *Rohr* in Part 2 of his book, entitled ‘*Why the Trinity? Why now?*’

In this section *Rohr* takes the themes of the first part of the book and develops them further in ways which I found were not always helpful.

Under a heading “*Essential Ecstasy*” *Rohr* argues that despite what he calls the Trinitarian revolution we still have a largely pagan view of God. He suggests, “*But once you experience this changing of the gods, you have a solid and attractive basis for Christianity as a path – a mystical and dynamic Christianity concerned about restorative justice and reconciliation at every level, here and now. All you have to do today is walk outside and gaze at one leaf, long and lovingly, until you know, really know that the leaf is a participation in the eternal being of God.*” He continues, “*This is God’s suffering: that the species whom God gave free will to has used it to say no to itself, and thus no to most other things too.....That is probably what we mean by sin*”.

Rohr has a strange understanding of sin and regards the whole concept of the atonement as unhelpful. In his view any understanding of Christ’s death bringing reconciliation between God and humanity is to be

rejected because it somehow limits God's freedom to be perfectly loving.

In fact he argues that the Incarnation is the Gospel and that Christ's death on the cross was not really necessary-it is simply an icon to change our minds about God and show that he is perfect love. If that is the case it is strange that all four Evangelists give so much space to Christ's death and resurrection.

After reading Part 2 of *Rohr's* book I was reminded of *Richard Niebuhr's* unforgettable critique of early Twenty Century liberal theology: "*A God without wrath brought people without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.*"

Like the famous 'Curate's egg', this book is good in parts.

Philip Bradford
St Luke's Enmore

NEWS FROM ROME

In February Pope Francis made a historic visit to an Anglican Church in Rome. He joined the congregation at the Church of England chaplaincy of All Saints for a short Choral Evensong service. It included the blessing of a specially commissioned icon and the twinning of All Saints with the Catholic parish of Ognissanti, a Rome church with strong ecumenical ties.

The event comes as part of the 200th anniversary celebrations for All Saints which began with a small group of worshippers holding the first Church of England liturgy on October 27th 1816.

NEW DIRECTOR OF THE ANGLICAN CENTRE IN ROME
The former Primate of the Anglican Church of Burundi,

Archbishop *Bernard Ntahoturi*, has been appointed as the Representative of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Holy See and Director of the Anglican Centre in Rome. He succeeds Archbishop *David Moxon* who retires in June.



Archbishop Ntahoturi, who served as Primate of the Anglican Church of Burundi from 2005 until 2016, has been active in seeking peace in war-torn Burundi and the great Lakes region of Africa.

He said "I am honoured and delighted to have been appointed."

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Jerusalem Archbishop rededicates Israeli Church closed for nearly 80 Years

Posted February 23, 2017 Photo Credit: Diocese of Jerusalem

St Saviour's Church, Acre in northern Israel, closed in the late 1940s was rededicated in February 2017 by the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem, Suheil Dawani.

This rededication follows the re-



opening and re-dedication of St Paul's Church, West Jerusalem in 2011 (which was closed around the same time). There are also plans to begin the renovation of a third church closed in the late 1940s - St. Peter's in Jaffa-Tel Aviv.

The Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, the Most Reverend Suheil Dawani, in his sermon, expressed overwhelming "happiness, gladness and gratitude" and said "the revival of the church and its activities will be a beacon of hope and faith".

The Anglican ministry in Acre was first started by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) when a school for boys was opened in 1874 and a school for girls opened in 1887. Ten years later the schools were closed.

The ancient city of Acre expanded at the beginning of the 20th century to a population of around 9,000; it had six mosques and five churches.

Then at the beginning of the 1940s the Pastorate Committee

bought a piece of land to start a new church building.

The foundation stone was laid in August 1946 and the church building was ready for use by January 1947.

However after the war of 1948 the majority of the parishioners at Saint Saviour's left the city and the church was closed.

Archbishop Dawani expressed hope for the church's future after the rededication:

"Our Christian theology invites us - even though we are diverse in worship, liturgy and theological thinking - to be one body in Christ Jesus.

We are to reach out to those other religions, Muslims and Jews. We do not claim that we have no differences: on the contrary, it is natural to have this kind of diversity. We share in worshiping the one living God and our conviviality for the sake of true humanity which leads us to goodness, security, justice, peace, and prosperity for all.

One of the basic needs that all the world strives for today - especially here in the Middle East which suffers so much through war, violence and

extremism - is for a real peace that restores true humanity.

The spectrum of the tragedy and the bitterness of suffering causes people to fear what the future will hold for them."

"There is a dire need for a new education that teaches people to respect life and to perceive the human person to be of a sacred value because we are all created in the image and likeness of God."



PRAY

Lord Jesus Christ, be with your Church where it suffers especially in your beloved Jerusalem and the Middle East. Keep them in safety and security, dwell among them, and encircle them with your peace so that they be freed from all fear. Amen.