

BRISBANE AND THE SPIRIT OF VATICAN IIARCHBISHOP FRANCIS RUSH

When Archbishop James Duhig died on 10 April, 1965, he was in his 94th year and had been a bishop for almost sixty years.

Dr Tom Boland, the archdiocesan historian, has written, elegantly as always "His last crowd scene was his best; it will never be topped. His funeral cortege moved through the silent streets of the business centre of Brisbane. It seemed that its great heart had stopped with his. The city and the state sensed that the past was now truly the past, so much of it had remained alive beyond its time in the life and action of this prince and prelate. Now, with him, it was gone.

"I know then that I should write (his) biography to stay that going for the church and faith of Queensland. A new era had arrived and a new kind of leadership was required. It was time that he should leave us, but a glory had departed from the land."

Such was Archbishop Duhig's gigantic stature that the year of his death would have been a landmark in the history of the Brisbane church even if it had not been the year that the Second Vatican Council ended. Catholics everywhere remember 1965 as the year the Council closed: Brisbane remembers it just as well as the year James Duhig died.

Archbishop Patrick Mary O'Donnell came into his inheritance after having been coadjutor with the right of succession for sixteen years. Archbishop O'Donnell had been Archbishop for six months when he went to Rome for the fourth, and last session, of the Council. To talk of the Brisbane church since the Council is to talk of the years when Patrick O'Donnell was archbishop and of the thirteen years that followed his resignation in 1973. I could argue that the most inappropriate and the least impartial witness to ask to comment on these last twenty years is the one who for almost thirteen of them has been at the centre of the local church's life.

In those twenty years the outward shape of the archdiocese changed spectacularly. In 1966, the population of the Archdiocese of Brisbane was 1,004,594. In 1986, the population was about 1,737,288. The number of Catholics increased in that time from 251,148 to about 410,000. The planning officer of the archdiocesan Education Office assures me that this archdiocese is the most rapidly growing diocese in Australia. In 1965, there were 288 priests, of whom 183 were diocesan and 105 religious. In 1986, there were 326 priests, of whom 195 were diocesan and 131 religious. In 1965, there were 108 parishes. Twenty years later there were 116 parishes. Whatever else about it, the history of the Brisbane church from 1965 to 1986 is the story of the efforts the local church has made to appropriate the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and to implement its teachings.

An Extraordinary Synod in 1985 found the presidents of the world's hierarchies agreed to an amazing degree on the way the teachings and spirit of the Second Vatican Council have been received. To paraphrase what the bishops wrote "the great majority of faithful Catholics received the Second Vatican Council with enthusiasm. There can be no doubt that the reason why the Council was accepted and its teachings adhered to was because the Holy Spirit was prompting the church to respond in that way.

"We admit that the picture is not all light. There have been shadows falling

across this post-conciliar period. The shadows were thrown partly from an incomplete understanding and lack of application of the Council, and partly from other causes."

All those things can be said of the Brisbane church. The great majority of our practising Catholics accepted the Council enthusiastically: a few resisted it. The picture in Brisbane as elsewhere has been one of light and shade. We, too, have to admit, as the rest of synodal bishops did, that there were instances of "partial and selective reading of the Council ... superficial interpretation of its doctrine ... presentation of the church as a merely institutional structure devoid of mystery."

There have been occasions when "too much" has been said "of the renewal of the church's external structures and too little of God and the Christ" when there had been "a failure to distinguish between the desirable openness to the world which the Council called for and an undesirable acceptance of a secularised world's mentality and order of values."

"Secularised" is one of several forms of a word which was heard often in the synod hall and found its way into countless discussions before and after the synod. The synod's final report discerned in affluent nations an ideology characterised by "pride in technical advances", "an idolatry of material things" and "a blindness to spiritual realities and values". In a submission to the plenary session of the synod, referring to what Pope John Paul II had written in 'Catechesi Tradendae', I spoke of the clear "secularisation" of our society and our failure to give men and women a clear and exciting vision of Christ and his church.

In 1985, the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his Good News seemed more difficult in a climate that in some ways was less propitious than it had been twenty years earlier. It happened that Cardinal Williams and I had a meal with the Pope a few hours after I had spoken in the synod hall. The Pope referred to it. I was able to say what inspiration you and I have drawn from the theme he had kept developing since his Inaugural Mass in 1978 - Jesus and Man; Jesus Christ, Light of the Nations, and men and women who can find in Christ and only in him their true meaning and full dignity.

Later in the synod in a small English language group of twenty-two (one of the nine so-called 'Circuli Minores' of the synod) I referred to my earlier use of the word "secularisation". I was beginning to fear that the word, through overuse, might be misunderstood. It might seem to be a repudiation of the optimism of 'Gaudium et Spes' (The Church and the World in Our Times), the last document of the Council. When I talked of a secularised society I was not repudiating the goodness and beauty of creation. To deny the goodness of God's creation and the good, of which modern science and technology, with God's help, are capable; the misuse of science; the indifference of so many to God; their preoccupation with wealth, material progress and comfort would be unrealistic. It seemed to me that in a secularised, relatively affluent society like ours, twenty years after the Second Vatican Council, we have to admit that we are not succeeding in exciting enough people with our vision of Christ and the church.

In the twenty years since the Council the effect among Brisbane Catholics of greater opportunity for upper secondary and tertiary education and the higher social standing, which is one of its consequences, had been considerable. Those most affected by such social change are sometimes the least conscious of it. Even some 'practical' Catholics, who have become far more affluent than their forebears, would find, if ever they took time to think about it, that Christ and the church have ceased to be central to their lives and they have lost compassion for victims of poverty and injustice. That is what I am

across this post-conciliar period. The shadows were thrown partly from an incomplete understanding and lack of application of the Council, and partly from other causes."

All those things can be said of the Brisbane church. The great majority of our practising Catholics accepted the Council enthusiastically: a few resisted it. The picture in Brisbane as elsewhere has been one of light and shade. We, too, have to admit, as the rest of synodal bishops did, that there were instances of "partial and selective reading of the Council ... superficial interpretation of its doctrine ... presentation of the church as a merely institutional structure devoid of mystery."

There have been occasions when "too much" has been said "of the renewal of the church's external structures and too little of God and the Christ" when there had been "a failure to distinguish between the desirable openness to the world which the Council called for and an undesirable acceptance of a secularised world's mentality and order of values."

"Secularised" is one of several forms of a word which was heard often in the synod hall and found its way into countless discussions before and after the synod. The synod's final report discerned in affluent nations an ideology characterised by "pride in technical advances", "an idolatry of material things" and "a blindness to spiritual realities and values". In a submission to the plenary session of the synod, referring to what Pope John Paul II had written in 'Catechesi Tradendae', I spoke of the clear "secularisation" of our society and our failure to give men and women a clear and exciting vision of Christ and his church.

In 1985, the proclamation of Jesus Christ and his Good News seemed more difficult in a climate that in some ways was less propitious than it had been twenty years earlier. It happened that Cardinal Williams and I had a meal with the Pope a few hours after I had spoken in the synod hall. The Pope referred to it. I was able to say what inspiration you and I have drawn from the theme he had kept developing since his Inaugural Mass in 1978 - Jesus and Man; Jesus Christ, Light of the Nations, and men and women who can find in Christ and only in him their true meaning and full dignity.

Later in the synod in a small English language group of twenty-two (one of the nine so-called 'Circuli Minores' of the synod) I referred to my earlier use of the word "secularisation". I was beginning to fear that the word, through overuse, might be misunderstood. It might seem to be a repudiation of the optimism of 'Gaudium et Spes' (The Church and the World in Our Times), the last document of the Council. When I talked of a secularised society I was not repudiating the goodness and beauty of creation. To deny the goodness of God's creation and the good, of which modern science and technology, with God's help, are capable; the misuse of science; the indifference of so many to God; their preoccupation with wealth, material progress and comfort would be unrealistic. It seemed to me that in a secularised, relatively affluent society like ours, twenty years after the Second Vatican Council, we have to admit that we are not succeeding in exciting enough people with our vision of Christ and the church.

In the twenty years since the Council the effect among Brisbane Catholics of greater opportunity for upper secondary and tertiary education and the higher social standing, which is one of its consequences, had been considerable. Those most affected by such social change are sometimes the least conscious of it. Even some 'practical' Catholics, who have become far more affluent than their forebears, would find, if ever they took time to think about it, that Christ and the church have ceased to be central to their lives and they have lost compassion for victims of poverty and injustice. That is what I am

getting at when I talk of the malign influence of a secularised affluent society on the life of our local church.

It is, I think in countries like ours, the largest shadow cast over the post-conciliar period. It is no fault of the Council. It is a shadow that will be lifted only by taking notice of the Council's call for renewal in Christ. But enough about shadows! Like the synod in its Message to the People of God "we will not dwell on" them. With the other bishops we give "heartfelt thanks to God the Father, through his Son, for the great grace of this century which was the Second Vatican Council".

We should not be dismayed that twenty years after Vatican II there are still many Catholics who are untouched by it. An historian's recent research into the archives of a north Italian diocese found the bishop, fifty years after the Council of Trent, lamenting that only twenty percent of his parishes seemed to have heard of the Council's catechism. Admittedly, it should be easier to communicate in 1986 than in the years after Trent. However, the mediating of a large complex body of teaching remains an awesome task even in the last decades of the twentieth century. It might be a simple task to pass on a few key concepts. To get them assimilated and put into practice is another matter.

To suit my purpose I give you an outline of the final report of 1985's Extraordinary Synod and fit my comments into that framework. Add to what I have already said the synod's appeal to re-learn the Council, to assimilate it and implement it more fully, and we have covered much of what you will find in Chapter I.

The synod wondered whether the spread of sects, evidenced in many countries today, may not be caused by dissatisfaction with a secularised society and a craving for the sacred. In Brisbane in the last thirteen or fourteen years the phenomenon has been the subject of lengthy discussion in *The Catholic Leader* and wherever Catholics have gathered. How well the local church has avoided the danger of appearing as a mere hierarchical structure or a mere social welfare agency on a grand scale is for God to judge. In these two decades, overworked faithful priests, religious and laity have laboured strenuously to make the archdiocese "a sign and instrument of holiness."

High points in the priests' spiritual and missionary journey were Archbishop O'Donnell's establishment immediately after the Council of what is now called the Council of Priests; the Priests' Assembly of 1983; the deanery system to which the Assembly gave rise; and the Ministry to Priests Programme which began in 1985. Like the synod, I turn to the priests "with particular affection" to thank them for their fidelity to Christ and their compassionate service of God's people.

In the post-conciliar period, the staff of Banyo Seminary bore, I think, a much heavier burden than before, coping with a decline in vocations and an uncertainty among candidates for the priesthood, which was only a reflection of the restlessness among youth everywhere. Fr Maurice Duffy and the staff of the seminary continued heroically to perform what is in many ways the most difficult and most important task in the Queensland church. They managed to elicit from the students a generosity which is as great as that of any youth of the past.

This is as good a place as any to throw in a word of encouragement to the many forms of youth apostolate active in the archdiocese, to recognise, as the synod does, the intense thirst for God that is manifesting itself especially among youth and to assure young people that, in the words of the synod, they are "our hope".

Religious congregations have been to the fore in efforts to assimilate the

Council's teaching and make it part of the church's life. I could not exaggerate my conviction, confirmed by all my experience as a bishop during this period, that the church is incomplete without the religious life and that faithful sisters and brothers of 1986 lose nothing in comparison with the greatest of the past. Since the Council, another seven religious congregations have made Brisbane their home. In 1965, there were 131 religious brothers and 1328 religious sisters; in 1986, 150 brothers and 1091 sisters.

I think that for a few years after the council there was a decline in prayer life almost everywhere. The synod's reference to popular devotion masks a conviction shared by most of the bishops present, and I think by most of our thoughtful priests and people, that in the name of the Council there was often a foolish and impetuous abandonment of popular devotions without much thought of putting anything in their place. The upsurge of interest in prayer which has characterised the last ten years is, I think, our greatest reason for hope.

Br Andrew of Calcutta, Australian Superior-general of the Brothers of Charity, when in Brisbane, told me that what amazed him, even more than the countless small caring groups he found everywhere, was the number of prayerful individuals he came across wherever he went, some going to daily Mass, all living hidden lives of great self-sacrifice, fulfilling their primary apostolate as lay people in their homes and places of work. I agree with him that they must be the great strength of the archdiocese. Apostolic movements, whether of youth or adults, married or single, which appear to be daily more convinced of the need of spiritual and apostolic formation, together with a charismatic movement intent on remaining in all things within the church, have already gone some distance towards satisfying the synod's recommendations.

This may seem an appropriate spot to allude to the New Code of Canon Law published on 25 January, 1983, and to the Matrimonial Tribunal whose work has escalated since the Council. I mention the Tribunal here to stress that far from being a mere machine for the administration of law it is a noble pastoral enterprise that has to do with a great sacrament and the pursuit of holiness.

Even though the synod is correct in saying that the Council's constitution 'Dei Verbum' (The Word of God) had been "too neglected", an improvement in our people's interest in and knowledge of sacred scripture has been one of great benefits of the Second Vatican Council.

The introduction of a new cycle of liturgical readings and the insistence on the importance of homilies have given our people a familiarity with sacred scripture that they did not have before. It is one of the most unnoticed effects of the Second Vatican Council. Without being fully aware of it our congregations assimilated the Word of God into their worship and lives. As never before, sacred scripture became part of the prayer life of priests, religious and laity. Almost unheard of before the Council, scripture services and scripture study groups became common-place.

Interest in the church's world-wide missionary effort is reflected in the archdiocese's annual contribution to the official mission aid societies, which increased from \$78,000 in 1965 to more than \$500,000 in 1985.

The Catholic school, complementing the Catholic family, remains a great tool of the local church's "self-evangelisation" as the synod called it. In 1965, approximately 27,000 children were educated in 105 primary schools in the archdiocese. In 1986, there were 111 primary schools educating 31,000 children. The small increase is explained by our inability to provide sufficient primary places in the developing areas.

The number of secondary schools increased in the twenty year period from forty to forty-six. This figure is deceptive because in the process of development a number of tiny secondary schools were closed and replaced by secondary schools with huge numbers. There were 11,000 secondary pupils in 1965, and 22,000 in 1986.

In twenty years, the administration of education in the archdiocese, further complicated by the responsibility to account for every cent of government funding, has become an enormous enterprise which has demanded the genius and industry of many people and received from them a commitment, generous far beyond the call of duty. Fr Barney O'Shea, whose association with Catholic education pre-dates the Council, remains the Vicar of Education.

In 1965, there were only a few more lay teachers than there were religious. In 1986 there were twelve times as many. All of which only underlines the importance to the archdiocese of McAuley College, which took its first lay students in 1973 and which the archdiocese inherited from the Sisters of Mercy in 1976, and agreed with the other bishops of Queensland to make a provincial project in 1981.

Any reference to evangelisation in the archdiocese would be incomplete without some mention of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and its work of catechesis in State schools; of the Adult Education Office whose evolution and ministry to the archdiocese in this period merits a lecture of its own; the Institute of Faith which was established in September 1976 to accredit faith educators and provide educational courses for laity and religious wherever the need arose.

Paragraph 64 of the Council's document on the liturgy stated "the Catechumenate for adults comprising several distinct steps is to be restored and to be put into use at the discretion of the local ordinary." Six years after the Renewed Christian Initiation of Adults was tested at Goodna, we have experienced enough to pass judgment on it. It is a powerful means of evangelisation and one of the most exciting things that has happened in the Brisbane church. In 1986, sixty parishes accompanied about 300 candidates on their journey towards their full reception into the church at the Easter Vigil. In all those parishes, everyone, almost without being aware of it, was drawn into the missionary endeavour of the whole community.

Fr Barry Copley, the Director of the Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission and founder in 1978 of the Brisbane Institute of Pastoral Liturgy, took a first giant step towards liturgical renewal in the local church when in 1969 he embarked on an imaginative publishing programme. Then as assistant at the cathedral, he began to provide the revised liturgical texts for the crowds of people who attended St Stephen's every day of the year. When visitors from other places expressed interest and asked for copies, he commissioned Leader Press to print his Sunday and daily Mass books. In sixteen or seventeen years several million copies have been distributed. The Director of the Liturgical Centre would say that now that the texts have been revised and put into the people's hands, there is in process the long slow labour of bringing worship to life in the parishes, institutions and groups of the Brisbane church. Such liturgical renewal, according to the synod "is the most visible fruit of the whole conciliar effort."

The synod called the ecclesiology of communion the central and fundamental idea of the Council's documents. The *Catholic Leader* carried Dr Michael Putney's reflections on that and other theological statements in the synodal document.

When I talk of the intimate communion of all the faithful of the archdiocese in

the Body of Christ, which is the church, my mind goes to the unforgettable Archbishop Patrick O'Donnell who for eight years was the focus of the Brisbane church's unity and to Bishop John Gerry and Bishop Jim Cuskelly MSC, who with utter loyalty and brotherly charity have stood beside me at its centre; the former since 1975, the latter since 1982. Any mention of collegial spirit would have to include an acknowledgement of the good achieved through regular meetings of the Queensland bishops and contact with all the Australian local churches in the Conference of Australian Bishops. Such links with other local churches grew in importance in the years since the Council and merited the special attention of the Extraordinary Synod.

Because the church is communion (and these again are the words of the synod) there must be co-responsibility at all levels. In this context I could not exaggerate the importance to the Brisbane church of the Council of Priests and of the deaneries which were established as a result of decisions made on the advice of all the priests at Assembly '83. On the last morning of the Assembly, 9 July, 1983, I said that if only the decisions made as a result of the priests' Assembly were implemented, we would go a long way towards extending responsibility for the Brisbane church to all its members. The decision which I had most in mind was the decision, which after being refined, was implemented with the commissioning of nine deans in August, 1984.

In each of the deaneries, a dean is responsible for the pastoral care of priests and deacons; he promotes and co-ordinates common pastoral care in his region. I have called it "an application of the principle of subsidiarity. To what extent that principle applies in the church is a question that the synod said deserves serious study. Through the deaneries as they develop, many priests are feeling supported as never before. The hope is that because of the deanery structure, parish communities will feel less isolated and be inspired, encouraged and given new life by their neighbours. At the centre of each deanery, the dean exercises a real office as pastor of his fellow priests and co-ordinator of their missionary endeavour. On the night the deans were installed, I said that "gifts have to be used, and given a chance to be used effectively, if deaneries are to grow. Opportunities for consultation have to be available and availed of."

On that and many other occasions, I recommended to everybody "the wider use of the network of communication already provided by parish councils focussed on the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council." The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council met for the first time on 30 March, 1974. By 1986 it met for one day three times a year. The Pastoral Council, like other commissions and committees erected in the twenty years under consideration, is nothing but a means of better achieving that participation and co-responsibility that the synod (and the Council before it) spoke about.

Comment on structures cannot omit mention of the Archdiocesan Office, the administrative hub of the local church, which has evolved mainly during the last thirteen years. Enough to say that my experience as a bishop in the twenty years under review presents me with the paradox of men and women administrators and secretaries achieving profound appreciation of the church's inner meaning through the day to day performance of administrative tasks. The evolution of diocesan offices in a number of Australian dioceses in that time is quite a story. It is a story especially of a few exceptional key men and women heroically serving God in the bishop, priests and people who are the local church.

There are no structures which are not always in need of improvement or replacement. The Council of Priests can be counted on to be always on the alert to monitor their evolution, just as it monitors its own. Bishop Cuskelly, as the Vicar for Pastoral Planning, watches over all.

The cause to which one of those more recently established commissions is devoted was given special mention by the synod. The Ecumenical Commission will take heart from it. The last document to come out of the Second Vatican Council provided the jumping-off point for the last chapter of the synod's final report. 'Gaudium et Spes' was (to translate literally) a "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of this time". This time was 1965. The synod points out that for us, this time is 1985. While pointing to the changed signs of the times, the synod clearly reaffirms the substance of the Pastoral Constitution's teaching.

I would like to concentrate for a moment on what it says under the heading "Preferential option for the poor and human advancement". I quoted it when I launched Project Compassion in St Stephen's Cathedral. "Following the Second Vatican Council the church became more aware of her mission in the service of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised. In this preferential option which must not be understood as exclusive, the true spirit of the Gospel shines forth. Jesus Christ declared the poor blessed and he himself wished to be poor for our sake."

Bishop Gerry accepted the office of Vicar for Social Welfare some months before he was appointed bishop in 1975. The inauguration of the Social Welfare Commission on 15 February, 1981, was the culmination of years of his careful planning. That day I drew detailed attention to a bewildering array of health and welfare agencies that serve the Brisbane church and community. Now is not the time to list them. If I make an exception of Centre Care it is because, although as the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau it came into existence in March, 1959, its rich maturing has been feature of the post-conciliar period. The story of health and welfare services in the archdiocese since the Council could be subject for someone else's lecture. Enough to say that the commission's mandate is to be "the eyes, ears, conscience and voice" of health and welfare in the Brisbane church.

"The Church", according to the synod's final report "must prophetically denounce every form of poverty and oppression and everywhere defend and promote the fundamental and inalienable rights of the human person. This is above all the case where it is a question of defending human life from the time of its very beginning, of protecting it from aggressors in every circumstance and of effectively promoting it in every respect." The people who are this Brisbane church continue to face questions of injustice, many of which have been around all the time since the Council: the destruction of the unborn, poverty, unemployment, peace, the rights of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. Individuals and groups of concerned people continue in their endeavour to see such problems clearly and to judge them in the light of the Gospel.

In this context, may I repeat what I have said elsewhere about the role of a bishop as I see it. A bishop has the right and an obligation to proclaim inviolable human and Christian principles of justice. He has a right and indeed an obligation to say that justice must be done and must be seen to be done. It is a different matter when it comes to the practical application of those principles. When there are several defensible ways of applying principles to a particular situation, a bishop should not be expected to throw the weight of his office behind one way or another as if to say that this way and in this way only can justice be achieved. With other bishops of the synod I signed the final report on the twentieth anniversary of the day, when as one of the Council Fathers, I signed 'Gaudium et Spes'. The Pastoral Constitution's teaching remains relevant. But with the synod, we need to take notice of the changes that have taken place in these twenty years. The signs of our times are different. Everywhere, as the synod's final report says, there is an increase in hunger, oppression, injustice and war, torments and terrorism and every form of violence. All this obliges us to deep reflections so that we can interpret these new signs in the light of the Gospel.



It seemed to those who sat down with the Pope that "in these present difficulties God wishes to teach us more clearly the value and importance of the cross and the central place it must occupy in our lives. But when we Christians speak of the cross we do not deserve to be labelled pessimists." Neither do we deserve to be accused of excessive optimism. We prefer to be seen as realists who put all our hope in Christ, who died indeed, but rose to conquer death and evil.

We should pray God to give us the saints for which the synod prayed and of which the church and the world are in sore need.

**Most Rev F. R. Rush DD, Archbishop of Brisbane.**