

My dear people,
 The CATHOLIC WEEKLY'S Christmas Eve edition featured an article by Karl Schmude on the current state of affairs regarding religious freedom in Australia. Sadly, most Catholics would not have read it, as very few buy Catholic periodicals. Karl was once the Librarian at the University of New England in Armidale. In 1981, at my request, he gave a major lecture at our Diocesan Marian Congress. Presently he is a founding Fellow at Campion College in Sydney. Recently, he was honoured by Pope Francis.

He argues that while we are aware of a savage persecution of Christians in the Middle East and elsewhere, we are not sufficiently conscious of the subtle but unmistakable atmosphere of intimidation, and likely legal prosecution of Christians in Australia and other Western societies. The plebiscite on same-sex marriage is the latest episode alerting Catholics and other Christians to the rising likelihood of legal challenges to their faith.

Maintaining beliefs privately is one thing, but as soon as these beliefs are asserted publicly, and practised in institutions such as schools and hospitals, they will become subject to a new form of pressure gathering force in Western society. The new persecution cannot be underrated. Pope Francis has called the present-day assault on Christians in the West the 'polite persecution'. We were being invited to surrender quietly, to comply without complaint, and to be embarrassed for not fitting in. (The older generation will remember that we were once called 'left-footers', meaning that Catholics were out of step with the rest of society.)

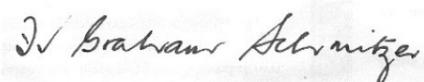
A recent report by the Catholic international charity, Aid to the Church in Need, has highlighted the extent of the oppression of Christians worldwide, especially in Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia, North Korea and Vietnam, Nigeria and the Sudan. And in China, Catholics loyal to Rome are still persecuted. Christians today are more severely persecuted than at any other time in history. The world's media is oblivious to this. The stories of modern martyrdoms have failed to capture the imagination of political leaders. Yet in our own land there is a similar process of elimination occurring. Paul Kelly, Editor-at-Large of THE AUSTRALIAN, gives a good summary.

"The Western secular democratic state was founded on a negotiated harmony between secularists and Christians about the ultimate questions. The model allowed homage to both God and Caesar. Contrary to current misconceptions, the secular state was neutral between believers and non-believers, and between different believers—a system that allowed religion to flourish. The laws of the State and the laws of the Church co-existed in a tolerated and often fruitful settlement that facilitated a successful society. But this is now collapsing.

"The emerging differences are fundamental given the promotion of gay marriage, the push to legalise killing in the name of humanitarianism, the restriction of free speech on the basis of causing offence, the promotion of gender fluidity and the rejection of the boy/girl gender paradigm, and the manipulation of schools for ideological, sex, gender and climate programs. The scope of the new morality extends even further—into how children should be raised, the structure of family life and the deployment of multiculturalism to weaken Christian symbols". (One parliamentarian last month wished his fellow members a 'non-denominational Christmas'.)

A lesson to be learnt from the same-sex plebiscite—the struggle over legalising same-sex marriage was not finally decided on the merits of the argument, one way or another; or even a consideration of the broader consequences of same-sex marriage, especially in relation to children. The argument was shaped by the manipulation of language. The emotional plea of 'marriage equality' pre-empted any real discussion of the issues. Those who disagreed were regarded as homophobic. (Some television stations refused to air the NO argument.) The argument came to be about the supposed equality of a particular minority, rather than about the meaning of marriage.

The second lesson to be learnt—our culture now appears to be losing the appetite for freedom, replacing it with 'equality' as the overriding social and political value. You see, freedom involves risks, and western society seems to be resistant to risks. Almost without sensing it, we are breathing an atmosphere of social intimidation, which is now buttressed by laws. Archbishop Fisher recently lamented that we belong to a society where morality is dictated by big business—Qantas etc. The most recent survey of Australian universities reported that they now implement policies to curb rather than guarantee freedom of speech, relying instead on claims of 'diversity' and 'inclusiveness'. Australia used boast of being a land of religious and secular freedoms.



Fr Graham Schmitzer
 Parish Priest

PARISH AND SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION UNANDERRA

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School Principal	Mr Philip Moore
Parish Secretary	Mrs Agnes Jerald



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 Parish website: www.unanderraparish.org.au

PROGRAMME FOR THIS WEEK

Monday	Jan 15	No Mass

Tuesday	Jan 16	Adoration: 4:30-5:30pm Mass: 5:30pm

Wednesday	Jan 17	Saint ANTONY Mass: 7:00am

Thursday	Jan 18	Adoration: 4:30-5:30pm (Reconciliation available) Mass: 5:30pm

Friday	Jan 19	Mass: 9:30am

Saturday	Jan 20	Saint SEBASTIAN Mass: 7:30am Reconciliation: 5-5:30pm Vigil Mass 6pm

Sunday	Jan 21	3rd SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Masses: 7:00am, 9:00am 10:45am (Polish)

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

Recently Deceased

Ester FERRARINI

Anniversaries

Doreen BLATTMAN, Ernie KURTZ, Tomo MARVSIC,
 William BUTLER, Mgr Francis DEIGNAN

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B

14TH JANUARY 2018

READINGS: 1 SAM 3:3-10,19; 1 COR 6:13-15, 17-20;
 JN 1:35-42.

We have now begun what is called "Ordinary Time" and are already into its second week. This year's Sunday Readings are from Year B or Year 2. (If the number of the year is divisible by 3 (eg 2019) then it is Year 3 and so forth.)

Year 2 is the Year of Mark, but today the Gospel is actually taken from Saint John, respecting an old liturgical theme of the year beginning with a presentation of who Jesus actually is. St John shows this well. In today's passage John the Baptist calls Jesus 'the Lamb of God', hinting at future sacrifice, and Andrew calls Jesus the 'Messiah', the One the Jews had been waiting for.



But a major theme of today's Readings is that of call and response. In the **First Reading** we have the call of Samuel, who played a large role in the building up of Israel. It was through Samuel that Israel received its first kings. This paves the way for the Gospel's story of the call of the first disciples—Andrew, John, and Peter. The call of Peter is highlighted because of the important role he played in the first community. In the two Readings we are dealing with a unique and specific call from God, what is more commonly called a vocation.

At the beginning of another year, then, we are all reminded that each of us, through Baptism and again at Confirmation, has been called by God to further His Kingdom here on earth and to build up the Church, the Body of His Son.

Rosters of next weekend			
Sat, 20 th	Church Cleaning	M Lloyd, J Allen, J Haywood	
	Lawns	Peters Family, Winner Family	
	Acolytes	Lectors	Welcomers
Sat 6pm	A Carlotto	A Kelly	Volunteer
Sun, 21 st 7am	A Michielin	S Walsh	Walsh Family
9am	N Dwyer, C Carolan	R Green	Y Brunero, S Michielin
Counters	B & P Walker, A Kelly		
Children's Liturgy	Holidays		

PARISH ACTIVITIES

Catholic Women's League: 2nd Thursday of the month, 10.30am
St Joseph's room. New members welcome.
Contact: Barbara 42711584 or Margaret 42715804

St. Vincent de Paul Conference: Tues, 7.30pm St. Joseph's room

Parish Pastoral Council: 2nd Monday of the 2nd month, 7:30pm
St Joseph's room

Nursing Home Masses

Hillside Nursing Home: 1st Tuesday of the month, 2pm

Figtree Nursing Home: 2nd Tuesday of the month, 10:45am

Villa Maria Nursing Home: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 9:30am

Refreshments after the 9am Mass on 1st weekend of the month.

ORDINATION OF BISHOP-ELECT BRIAN MASCORD

Please note the date for the Ordination of Bishop-elect Brian Mascord is now confirmed as follows:

Thursday, 22 February 2018,

on the Feast of the Chair of St Peter, Apostle

7:00 pm at WIN Entertainment Centre,

Corner Crown and Harbour Streets, Wollongong

Principal Consecrator: Archbishop Anthony Fisher

Assisting Consecrators: Bishops Peter Ingham and Bill Wright

PARISH SEATING AT THE ORDINATION OF BISHOP-ELECT BRIAN MASCORD

Our parish will be seated together as a group at the Ordination of our new Bishop-elect Brian Mascord at 7:00pm on Thursday 22 February 2018 at the WIN Entertainment Centre, Wollongong.

The parish will need to RSVP by 1 February, so could you please fill out your name on the clipboard if you would like to attend the Ordination.



Gospel Reflection

God's call is mysterious;
it comes in the darkness of faith.
It is so fine, so subtle,
that it is only with the deepest silence within us
that we can hear it.
And yet nothing is surer or stronger,
nothing is so decisive and overpowering,
as that call.
This call is uninterrupted:
God is always calling us.

CARLO CARRETTO

YOU
HAVE NOT
CHOSEN
ME
I HAVE
CHOSEN
YOU

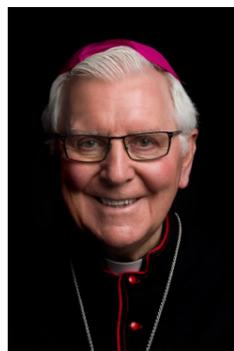
REGIONAL FAREWELL MASS FOR BISHOP PETER INGHAM | WEDNESDAY 31 JANUARY 2018

Fr Ron Peters—on behalf of the Northern and Central Illawarra regions of the Diocese—has warmly invited our parish to attend a **farewell Mass for Bishop Peter Ingham at 7:30pm on Wednesday 31 January 2018 at St John Vianney's Co-Cathedral, Fairy Meadow** (Cabbage Tree Lane).

Bishop Peter will preside at the Mass and it will be a great opportunity for parishioners to say their farewells.

Refreshments will follow immediately after the Mass.

No RSVP is necessary.



"We must look before us, do what we do well, and refuse undertaking too much."

St Mary of the Cross 1898.

Tomorrow, January 15 is St Mary's Birthday. She was born on this day 1842 in Fitzroy, Melbourne.

Samuel had been born in response to his mother's prayer. To show her thankfulness, she dedicated him to God. He had been educated and brought up by the priest Eli in the shrine of Shiloh. One day he heard a voice calling him. Voices can be dangerous. People have done dreadful things while claiming that a voice had told them to do it. Hence, the need for discernment and advice from a wise person. Samuel sought guidance from the elderly priest. Under Eli's advice, Samuel responded to the next call: "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening". In this way he received his vocation as a prophet. He played a large role in building up the kingdom of Israel—in fact, he was the instrument through whom Israel received her first kings.

In the Gospel we have St John's version of the call of Jesus' first disciples— Andrew, John and Peter. Their call came about in a much more down-to-earth way. It came through John the Baptist, and the invitation of Jesus Himself. Who knows in what way a person's call makes itself heard? We might think, after hearing Samuel's story, that we would have to hear God's voice clearly calling if He wanted something of us. When I was a little boy, I thought that if God wanted me to be a priest, an angel would appear at the bottom of my bed. I'm still waiting!

We commonly speak of this call as a vocation—to be called, for the initiative is always with God. The 'call' is always His. And every call demands a response. It may take many forms, and be fulfilled in different ways. It is not likely to be as dramatic as was the call of Samuel, or as 'real' as that of the first apostles. Yet God is always speaking to us in the depths of our hearts, calling us to intimacy with Himself, and to be His co-workers in the world. Rather than a voice, His call is usually more a tug at our hearts, which we feel at quiet and reflective moments in our lives. Sometimes this may make itself felt in a very forceful way. But most times it is likely to be as gentle as a breeze.

Certainly, God's invitation to intimacy with Himself, and His call to be disciples, flows directly from our reception of the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, and this should be well explained to candidates. But to hear God's more specific call, we need to be people of prayerful reflection—all the time, for God may ask us from time to time to change direction. A good example is Mother Teresa of Calcutta. She was originally a Loretto Sister, but over time realized God was asking her specifically to concentrate on serving the poor. Some of the priests of our Diocese were originally priests or brothers in Religious communities.

Please make prayer for vocations a priority in your life. There was a movement some years ago, encouraging Catholics to attend an extra Mass a month for the theme of vocations. Sadly, it has waned. Consider taking it up (again).



St Vincent de Paul Unanderra Conference

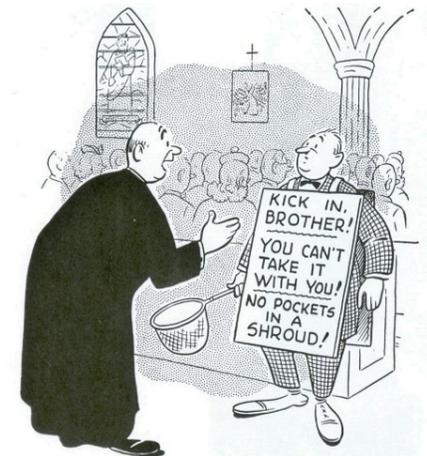
The Conference would like to thank all the generous parishioners who again supported the Vinnies Giving Tree and the Vinnies Christmas Appeal. Thirty four Christmas Hampers were distributed and toys given to fifty eight children supporting those in need within the parish area.

The Vinnies Christmas Appeal raised \$2,691.10 from the three Christmas Masses. All money raised is used to support the poor of the parish. The Unanderra Conference receives over ten requests for food, rent assistance or help with electricity every week. Your support is much appreciated and the society supports in you in prayer.

NOTICE FROM SRS JOAN AND MARGARET

We wish all Parishioners a very blessed New Year and it is with deep gratitude we thank you for your generous response to our Christmas Appeal. We have been able to send \$800 to assist orphan children in Aleppo. These children's parents were murdered by the ISIS Rebels for their Christian faith. An orphanage has been set up and the money will help to supply, food, clothing and education for these little children. You are remembered daily in our prayers in our Chapel which is available for anyone who would like a quiet time for prayer. Just contact us. May God bless you all abundantly for your generosity. You have saved us from going on a diet.

— Srs Joan and Margaret.



"We appreciate your spirit, Burnett, but there are certain ecclesiastical formalities."