



Annotations

from Australia

The national newsletter of **Christian Life Community Inc.**
 PO Box 5207 MANLY QLD 4179 Australia Web: <http://www.clcaustralia.org.au>

Finding God on the Road

A retreat in daily life for busy people

Simon Bishop SJ, (British Province)



Jerome Nadal SJ, one of the first Jesuits, remarked that for Jesuits, "the road is their home." So it was, at the request of CLC Australia and Felicity Flynn in particular, and with the blessing of Fr Adrian Lyons SJ, (the Jesuit tertian instructor) twelve Jesuit tertians (those Jesuits in the final stage of their formation) "hit the road" to help run retreats in daily life all over the country.

The Jesuits, coming from Fiji, Poland, Switzerland, Germany, Singapore, UK and the USA were sent to Horsham, Warrnambool and Mildura in Victoria; Cobar, Forbes, West Wyalong, Cootamundra and Young in New South Wales; Hervey Bay and Runaway Bay in Queensland and Millicent in South Australia – quite a variety of Jesuits to a variety of places! We were enormously moved by the welcome and hospitality shown to us all throughout our stay. Once off the road, we soon felt very much at home!

There were between thirteen and sixteen retreatants in each place, except in Mildura where, thanks to the help of a Loreto sister, Sr Jennifer Collins as a second spiritual director, it was possible to have twice the number making the retreat. Each spiritual director met with their retreatants individually about six times over the course of the three weeks and then the whole group of retreatants began and finished the retreat together with a time of prayer, sharing and, in my case in Young, a delicious meal! (See photo)

The beauty and gift of individually guided retreats is that each person can open up themselves to God in their own way, in their own time, with their own personality, temperament, gifts and needs. There is no "one size fits all." Let's hear what the retreat meant for some of those involved.

From Louise Manwaring, St Mary's, Young, NSW:

Why did you decide to do the retreat?

I had been feeling a bit angry about the way life was going and was not sure how to find God in misfortune.

What were you hoping for?

To feel closer to God and generally to "move forward" from a long period of grief.

What were your fears?

Quite frankly, that nothing would really change. That I would simply chat away to a compassionate spiritual director (who would nod sagely and send me on my way with an idea or two) but that talking and thinking would just be something that happened with me and in my head, that nothing would change with God. While others seem to "have a friend in Jesus" I was afraid that, either God could not hear me, could hear and did not care (in the sense that I would not be "rescued" because it was simply my lot to endure particular sufferings), or I could not hear Him.

Were your hopes met?

Yes. They really were. The retreat really made me change the way I communicate with God, pray, meditate and read the Bible as well as providing insights and inspiration about my life generally. The retreat led to a more "honest" way of talking to God. I think I have spent a long time telling God what I thought he wanted me to say. A bit like having your "best manners" on when you communicate with your mother-in-law, celebrities or other fancy people! Over the years I could easily tell God how glad or sad I was about life's ups and downs and then throw in a "your will be done" or "help me carry this cross" about it all. Actually telling God how absolutely dreadful I found particular circumstances, how confused I was and how I could not for the life of me understand why this was happening at all or to me or why it could not miraculously change, this was new. Actually telling God I felt angry, lost, isolated from Him. An honest gutsy chat as you would with





Patrick O'Sullivan, SJ

Heart to Heart

Holy Thursday – some reflections on the Eucharist

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, “Do this in memory of Me.”

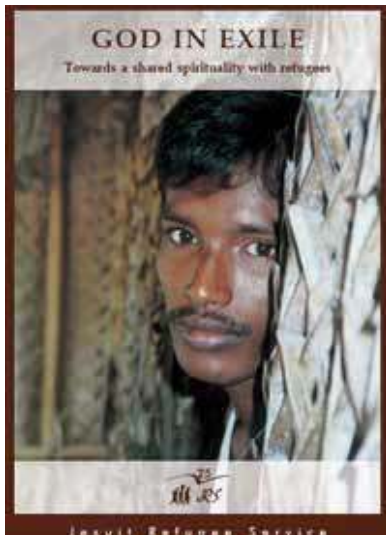
So, we celebrate the Eucharist; we do what Jesus did, in memory of Him. Yet that’s not all that happens; not only do we remember Jesus, but, through the power of the priesthood, the memory comes true. Jesus becomes really present.

And that is one of the reasons why the Eucharist is regarded as a foretaste of heaven. Just as in the

Eucharist, the memory of Jesus comes true, so, in Heaven, all our dearest memories come true: no moment of love, and truth, and goodness and beauty is ever lost; in the end, all is harvest. That’s what the Eucharist guarantees.

It is also important to remember that when Jesus gave us the Eucharist at the last Supper, it was a moment of crisis. He was about to be betrayed, the community was about to fragment, all were about to desert Him – but that was the moment he chose to give us Himself in the Eucharist. He transformed this moment of betrayal and infidelity into a moment of Grace.

So, the Eucharist is the sign of the triumph of life over death, of hope over despair – the enduring sign that God’s unconditional love for us is far, far greater than our human frailties. As St John tells us – “God is greater than our hearts.”



Jesuit Refugee Service

The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. – Leviticus 19:34

The Jesuit Refugee Service provides direct support to newly-arrived refugees in Australia. Many of them only have provisional residency and do not have the right to work until their case is resolved. They can

easily become dispirited as this process can take some months.

JRS has a publication titled ‘God in Exile: Toward a Shared Spirituality with Refugees’ which contains prayerful reflections on the meaning of these ‘strangers in our midst’ and our response to them. It can be downloaded free from <http://www.with.jrs.net/files/GodInExile.pdf> Note: the file is 4.5 MB so it might take a while if you are using a dial-up connection.

The document states:

14. SERVICE. Ignatian Spirituality is geared toward an active mysticism, in other words, a mysticism of service. Initially influenced, perhaps, by his mentality acquired as a knight at the service of the King, and in keeping with his conversion, Ignatius understood himself to be a servant before God and desired to do great exploits for him. With time, he became aware that all his action was only a response to so much good received which you have given me, and therefore, he could only give it back (to you, O Lord, I give it back). To do is to serve the Divine Majesty: it is a way of integrating all activities into a relationship with

God, a means of communicating with him through action. For Ignatius of Loyola service is closely linked with love; it is a way of loving, of showing love, of making the love we have effective. It necessarily leads us to do something for the Loved One, specifically what we have discovered he wants us to do. For Ignatius, to live is in all to love and serve, souls and people.

The NSW ExCo is looking into setting up some regular form of hospitality for refugees in Sydney. If you would like to be involved, send an email to Michael Walker at gloriamichael@bigpond.com to register your interest.

From the Editor

Please send your articles to:

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Articles to be in .doc format (not .docx) and photos to be in high resolution jpg format and separate from articles (not pasted in). Please provide captions for your photos.

Deadline for the next newsletter
31 August
2009



Jenny Mansell-Black

“For the future
of CLC
we dream ...”



Towards the end of 2007, as part of the prayerful preparation for our National Gathering and Assembly “Collaborating in Christ’s Mission” held in January 2008, all our CLC groups were invited to complete and submit the above sentence. St Ignatius always urges us to get in touch with our deepest desires and then to ask God to grant us what we desire.

The discernment process to identify some specific steps that would help Australian CLC to keep progressing in the journey as an apostolic body and thus collaborate more deeply in Christ’s mission, began with the Australia-wide group reflection. It continued over the two days of the National Gathering when the 80 or so members who attended listened to the inputs, prayed with and dialogued about what was presented and what was in their hearts.

The community gathered in Melbourne chose overwhelmingly that the following four areas were what the Lord was calling us to focus on in our way ahead.

- Promotion and visibility (sharing the riches of CLC with others with a special focus on extending the invitation to young adults)
- Formation for Mission
- Ecology and Justice
- Leadership

It was recognised that there would need to be an Integrated plan to address our hope to spread the message of CLC. We recognised that CLC was not widely known and that there were inconsistent messages given and that many even found it hard to answer the question “What is CLC?”

The National ExCo was mandated to work on developing a plan and have been working on this over the past 18 months in consultation with each State ExCo and individuals who had expressed an interest in being part of this dialogue. We are in the midst of developing tools to put in the hands of each member. This will be in the form of a Membership Kit which will be sent out in the next couple of months. We are also developing processes whereby people will have the information and confidence to talk to others about CLC as well as a standardised format to be used in our publicity material so that CLC is recognisable as one national community.

At the Gathering the aim for Promotion and Visibility was that in four years time there be “A bigger bunch of people in community actively living their Ignatian Spirituality”.

Let us all pray and work to make our dream a reality.

Kay Hooper
National CLC President

CLC National Ecclesiastical Assistant

It was with much sadness that the National ExCo accepted the request from Patrick O’Sullivan SJ to step down as our National EA because of his work commitments. We are very grateful to Patrick for his long and continued support of CLC and we are glad that he will continue to write his regular article for Annotations which we all appreciate.

It is with much pleasure that we welcome Robin Koning SJ to this role and we look forward to his accompaniment. His first “official function” will be the National ExCo meeting in June. Let me introduce him:

Robin belongs to the community at St Ignatius, Richmond, and teaches systematic theology at Jesuit Theological College.

He was born in Brisbane and went to school with the Christian Brothers at St Laurence’s College before joining the Society in 1977. During his training, he taught at St Ignatius’ College, Riverview, worked at St Mary’s Parish, North Sydney, and completed degrees in mathematics and in theology.

After ordination in 1991, he worked for five years in the Kutjungka Aboriginal Parish based at Wirrumanu (Balgo) in Western Australia.

After tertianship under Pat O’Sullivan in Melbourne in 1998, Robin went to Regis College, Toronto, to do his doctorate in systematic theology, focussing on issues of inculturation and on the work of theologian Bernard Lonergan. For his thesis, he studied the understanding of meaning and culture in the writings of Lonergan and of anthropologist Clifford Geertz.

Apart from teaching and research, he has been involved with young adult ministry with MAGiS and with overseas students at Melbourne Uni, and is JTC liaison person with Nungalinga College, an Aboriginal theological college in Darwin. He enjoys the company of friends, singing and cycling.



The Philippines Christian Life Community have produced a PRAY CD which is available to purchase through our National CLC office. This CD can be used as a tool for learning how to pray. It consists of different forms of prayer including a Body Awareness, Ignatian Contemplation, Ignatian/ Open Meditation and others for you to use at

home by yourself or possibly in a CLC meeting.

The PRAY CD is \$30 from our National office by phone (07) 3893 0958, email admin@clcaustralia.org.au, or mail to PO Box 5207, Manly Qld 4179. Limited copies available.

a person whose love and friendship means a great deal to me.

What did you discover in the retreat which was new and/or surprising?

I was surprised by the consolation I felt, the grace as well as from the inspiration of ideas that “popped up” while I was praying. To actually stop while reading the Bible and put it aside and just sit instead of read and re-read and intellectualise and speculate on all the possible meanings and motivations of characters and authors, historical references and permutations. Previously, the time I spent praying, reading the Bible and thinking about God was often an exercise in frustration and confusion.

For many, many years I had been attracted to the concept: “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) and was firm in my belief that prayer and meditation were important and should be a vital part of my day. However, the frustration, anger and confusion that “prayer time” brought with it (while on my best manners thanking God and asking him to help see me through life) did not allow for much space for God to actually hear me or me to hear Him.



Louise all ready for finding God on the road!

Drama! I had seen and was well versed in what to do in times of extreme but I always saw myself “putting things together” and being happy and joyful “when it was all over” or “things were back to normal”. I had terrible difficulty being in the present instead of sadness for the past and fear for the future. I knew happiness was not some lucky windfall that depended on money or beauty or good luck in life but to my utter surprise I found myself embracing the present moment and finding a sense of joy and God’s consolation in the midst of misfortune.

What was difficult?

Making the time. It is far too easy to say “I’m busy”. I think we look back nostalgically at other times in history and think others were not busy which is strange. I am sure people had to work “jolly”, for example doing the washing without modern conveniences like washing machines or even electricity and running water in our own homes. They may have achieved less things in a day (compared to our so many hours paid work, travel to and from, a trip to the gym, 3 loads of washing, preparing meals, cleaning, keeping in touch with numerous friends and relatives etc) but they would still be “busy,” usually working physically hard doing one task for a really long time. [For a powerful description of such a life, and the bringing of up Catharine, a Downs’ syndrome girl, read: “Catharine with an A” by Edna Keir, Ginninderra Press, pp. 28-31.]

I think we like to believe we can “do it all” without putting in a lot of time. It was inspiring to see in some of the passages I read during the Retreat how often there is a line referring to Jesus praying. What makes us think we do not

need to “put in the time” when the Son of God needed to?

What was especially consoling?

To feel a sense of peace and grace while praying. To stay with and follow up on a thought that popped into my head while praying and see how fitting and relevant it was to my life, when my initial reactions had been the opposite. The insights of the spiritual director reflecting back things in a way I had not thought of before were also invaluable. I am a person who spends too much time thinking, pondering and stewing about things. To see something in a different light, with God’s light, was wonderful.

How would you like to deepen this experience?

Firstly, spend more time praying and meditating and secondly to have some support in spiritual direction through ongoing conversations where possible, other retreats, reading.

Do you have any suggestions for anyone who might be considering doing this sort of retreat themselves in the future?

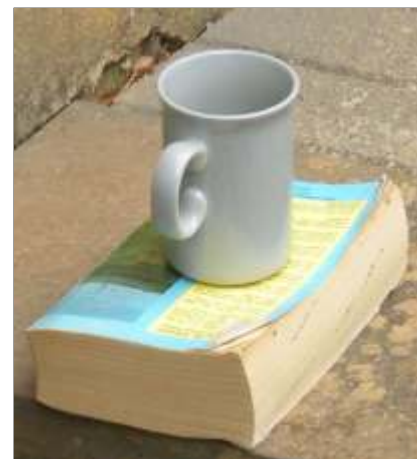
Jump in! We are all different. Your experience is likely to be completely different to mine as will be your relationship to God, style of praying, way of thinking, life experiences. If you genuinely want to feel closer to God, to improve your relationship, invest some time in the Retreat. After all, you have an awful lot to gain and nothing to lose. The saints themselves spent time looking for God and worrying about the same things. Dear St Richard of Chichester (1197 to 1253) over 750 years ago prayed: “May I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly, day by day.”

From Mary Brown, Sts Michael and John, Horsham, Vic.

I decided to sign up for the Retreat in Daily Life because I found my prayer had become dry and boring and I was easily distracted. Having previously experienced the benefits of a rich prayer life, I hoped that the retreat would help me get back on track.

At the outset, my director suggested going back to basics and following a more structured prayer routine. Rather than launching straight into prayer, I spent more time preparing to enter into God’s presence either by reciting a short prayer expressing openness or listening to an appropriate hymn on my iPod.

My director also gently but firmly encouraged me to be quite clear and specific about my desire in prayer and to listen to God’s desire for me. In the process, I discovered that my desire was rather ambivalent. While I wished to deepen my relationship with Jesus, I became aware of an underlying fear of abandonment in close relationships.



Finding God in all things

Over the course of the retreat, I realised that I was returning to the same life event over and over again as a reason for my fear of intimacy in my relationship with Jesus, and sounded like a broken record returning to the same sticking point and never getting to the centre of the disc. I was holding on to an old resentment that had actually been long since forgiven and grieved over, but for some reason I just couldn't let it go and move past.

Naming my desire clearly and talking about it openly with Jesus as with a friend definitely helped me move past the sticking point and enliven my relationship with him again. It has also helped my way of relating to people in daily life – the people who used really get under my skin are no longer a source of such irritation to me.

Needless to say I am delighted with the retreat experience.

From Fr David McCallum SJ (New York Province)

No matter how young or “mature” our retreatants were, my sense is that each person found the retreat to be an outstanding opportunity to grow interiorly, and to become more intimate with God. While many of us carry on a sort of second hand relationship with God, thinking about God and “praying at God,” the retreat offered these men and women a chance to develop a lively and personal “first hand” relationship with Jesus. Each day, they committed between 30 minutes and an hour to prayer using the scriptures and specific methods, most of them from the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Through these daily exercises, the retreatants experienced healing, encouragement, inspiration, and a deep sense of God's loving care for them.

While it certainly is very nice to get away for several days of rest and quiet away from our daily routines and commitments, it is sometimes very difficult to return to our lives and weave the thread of our retreat experience back into the day to day. The beauty of the RIDL is the way that we discover God's presence in and through our relationships, our jobs, and the ups and downs of life. The fruit of such an experience left our retreatants feeling exhilarated, enriched, and more deeply rooted and grounded in the love of God.

As a Jesuit completing my formal formation here in Australia before taking my final vows, I feel indebted to the staff and community of Sacred Heart Parish, Mildura, and the retreatants in the RIDL for bringing me more in touch with the power of God's Spirit to bring us to the fullness of life. Thank you!

A possible preparatory prayer (and morning offering!)

*Lord, show me who You are,
Let me see with Your light, whatever You want me to see,
Lead me to wherever You want to meet me, so that,
I may know You more intimately,
Love You more whole-heartedly and
Follow You more closely,
To Your greater service, praise and glory.
Amen.*

Ecology & Social Justice

June 5 is World Environment Day – a time to reflect on what Ignatius said in the Fourth Week of the Exercises – “first, love is act, not talk; it shows itself in the deed done, not simply in words spoken. Second, love works itself out in mutual sharing, so that the lover always gives to and receives from the beloved – everything: gifts, money, convictions, honours, position.”

Gwen Daly shares with us an example of this, which happened on Pentecost Sunday recently. Gwen belongs to the *Friends of St. Joseph's*, Kincumber, NSW and this group have been successful in a fundraising application to the Commonwealth Government for \$20,607. This money came from their Coastcare Caring for Country grants program.



So on May 31st of this year they have been active in two Endangered Ecological Communities of coastal salt marshes and swamp oak forest by way of regeneration. They were armed with shovels, gardening tools etc. to help revitalise the area. Part of the funding was also provided for an extension of the boardwalk to the Stations of the Cross around the lake and for a baseline frog survey to establish frog diversity and the possible presence of the endangered Green and Golden Bell frog.



I'm sure Gwen and her group experienced something on that Pentecost day of the “I am that living and fiery essence of the divine substance ...

I shine in the water, I burn in the sun and the moon and the stars” as expressed by Hildegard of Bingen.

*Chris Gardner
Co-ordinator for Ecology and Justice*

SA

CLC Australia began in South Australia forty years ago. So we are privileged to have senior membership which includes a community of octogenarians. Diana Herd (right), the final member of Emmaus to gain the honoured title in March this year, celebrated the occasion with son, John and brother, Julian Slatterie SJ, saying Mass in the midst of family in Victoria. Great grandchild, Mikayla arrived in April to appropriately seal Diana's status.



Emmaus resulted when Pilgrims discerned that CLC relied upon its communities to provide for its future through community members taking on leadership of new groups. It was from Emmaus, that Fred Nixon's came to guide our Hillbilly group. His guiding included experience, for us, of the "quality of presence" of Emmaus members to whom Fred introduced us.

Emmaus continues to provide example to us of support and, perhaps, particularly through the quality of their aging, insight into the significance of our own aged presence. As they become less mobile, we are drawn to them for their great gift of wise silences and questions.



Joan Still (left) celebrated her birthday on April 14. Her CLC is Beachcombers, which contains Rhonda Seymour, also 80. Joan is pictured dressed for a visit to Government House to receive acknowledgement of her service to the Vincent de Paul Society for thirty

years. Joan is part of the discussion group which prepares celebrants of Confirmation and First Holy Communion. How fortunate we are, as a community, and how fortunate is the wider community: for their service is, and has been, much wider than CLC. The title of Lucy Herd's poem "My Daring Caring Grandma" and the quality of relationship in the humour in lines

*"She's amazing on her lap top
With new hips she just can't stop.
Her flippers make her fast in water,
We're getting taller and she's getting shorter.*

surely capture the essence our CLC charism.

Looking for sponsors for Annotations

More and more people are requesting a printed copy of Annotations. However, it costs \$400 to print Annotations each issue. We currently photocopy each issue which, of course, reduces the quality of the photos, text readability and appearance of the newsletter.

If you would like to sponsor one or several issues of Annotations – maybe you would like to promote your business through Annotations – please contact Jenny Mansell-Black at the CLC head office 07 3893 0958.

QLD

CLC Queensland gathered together at the Faber Spirituality Centre on May 17 to meet and greet old friends and new. We reflected on the achievements of 2008 and what we would like to achieve in 2009. Eucharist was celebrated by Father Greg Jacobs who arrived in Brisbane in January to join the Toowong Jesuit community. He was given a warm CLC welcome and an open invitation to join a CLC group.

It was a very prayerful day and we were delighted to be celebrating in the John Drury room. Fr John gave much to CLC and his presence at our gatherings is sadly missed, in particular by the Jindalee group, who were blessed to have him as their guide for twenty years. We were also given a taste of the Progress in Divine Love retreats being given at Faber through May and June. This is a 'light' Spiritual Exercise retreat based on the Scripture and first Principle and Foundation. Some CLC members have already commenced it.

Our presence at the Faber Centre's new home at Bardon, a tranquil, leafy suburb at the foot of Mt Coot-tha was due to Chris Gleeson SJ and the Faber team. They have extended an invitation to CLC to use the centre for any activities. We are most grateful for their generosity.

Farewell Norbie

The Jesuit community in Brisbane has lost a much loved member with the death of Father Norbert (Norbie) Olsen. Norbert died suddenly on Sunday May 10 and was farewelled beautifully and movingly at St Ignatius Church Toowong on Friday May 15. Mourners came from all parts of the Australia and from Malaysia to celebrate the life of this "angular thinker, engaging homilist and serious scholar of things that matter". He was also skilled in the culinary arts and the Jesuits will miss his Sunday night dinners, but perhaps not the washing up afterwards. In the words of Fr Chris Gleeson, "Vale, Norbie, for now".



Photo courtesy of Province Express



Sr Delphine O'Shea

Delphine passed away on Friday May 29 in the company of her fellow Missionary Sisters of Service. Delphine dedicated many years to sharing the riches of Ignatian spirituality through the Spiritual Exercises, spiritual direction and CLC. She was a member of the Queensland Faber Team of Ignatian Spirituality and together with John Drury, was a facilitator of the Arrupe Program for forming givers of the Spiritual Exercises. Delphine recently moved to Canossa at Oxley where Fr John resides and she was blessed by his presence shortly before her death.

The following is an extract from an article published in the Catholic Weekly last year.

Faith vital in politics, uni and family life

A CONVERSATION with RON MULOCK, Penrith boy who became Deputy Premier of NSW

By BRIAN DAVIES
1 June, 2008

Q. You mention the Newman Society: your faith travelled from school to university with you?

Yes, a smooth transition. I made some terrific friends in the Newman Society – close friends of mine to this day. Fr Roger Pryke was the chaplain, down-to-earth and, in a cool, sensible way, mentored us through those years of transition. I remember one experience; we went to a camp one weekend up near Penrith, little knowing then that was where I'd later start a new life.



other's faith journey: really absolutely vital for what we were to go through. Later on Desley, when I was still in Government, joined a Christian Life Community, an Ignatian spirituality group – that would be about 23 years ago. And when I retired from politics in 1988 I was invited to join, too, and the group's still going. We meet fortnightly, in our home it happens, and we share how God has been in our lives the preceding couple of weeks and we share the Ignatian way, seeing God in all things, in all people. That's been an absolute gift.

Q. New life indeed: local solicitor, alderman, Mayor of Penrith and, eventually, in 1971 the local member, at the same time raising a family; so where and when did you meet your wife, Desley.

A group of us went to a law informal at the Sky View Lounge, I think it was called, in Phillip St. Anyway I was with a nurse from St Vincent's Hospital and Desley, also a nurse at St Vincent's, was on the same table. Not long afterwards, my eldest half brother Dick's wife had quite unexpectedly died at the hospital and I'd stayed with Dick through the night. As I was coming away about 6 o'clock in the morning I bumped into Desley. We had a chat and I said: 'Do you mind if I ring you?' That started it, not all smooth sailing – there was a break of about 12 months in our friendship – but in 1955 we became engaged and married in May 1957.

Q. Children?

Five; but sadly we lost two: Peter when he was 16, a cerebral palsy child; he developed an infection and wasted away. Then nine years ago we lost John when he was 38, from a rare lymphoma. Our second son Paul provided the bone marrow for a transplant and everything seemed to be going well when John's immune system suddenly failed and he eventually died. Tragedies, devastating sorrow, emotionally exhausting.

Q. And your faith?

Our faith brought us through; no two ways about that. A few years before Peter's death we met Br Jim Kelly of St Dominic's College, Penrith, where the boys went to school, and he had what came to be known as the Kelly Gang and we met some wonderful people and we were able to have much more faith formation and to share more deeply each

Q. At the same time you'd moved into public life. How did that happen?

In 1965. After the council struck a new rate, there was a rescission motion to reduce it by a halfpenny in the pound. This really got me because so much needed to be done around Penrith, so I decided to have a go; I found a running mate and we got in – genuine independents; the other independents were actually Liberals.

(Ron's Labor links as an alderman were later formalised – "we made it the Labor territory it became because of Penrith's growth and our policies," he says. "Labor is where my roots are. One brother was an active trade unionist, the other an ALP branch member and an uncle took me to a Doc Evatt election meeting in 1939 when I was nine. Besides, my mother was a ferocious anti-Menzies, Lang Labor supporter." At council Alderman Mulock opened up important council practices to public scrutiny. His community profile in Penrith was towering. In 1971 he became Labor member for the State seat of Nepean and five years later went into government under Neville Wran.)

Q. First, separate portfolios – Justice, Corrective Services and Mineral Resources; a preference?

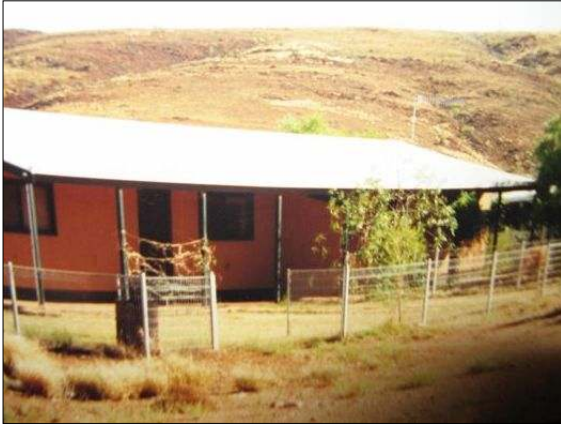
No, they were all OK. The big ones came later, in 1981: education, health and transport; as well, in 1984, Deputy Premier to 1988.

Q. Was faith a part of your life in politics?

Yes, Sunday Mass and a morning offering and a night prayer. My best source of spiritual contact was Br Kelly's gang, including a couple of camps a year spiritually focused but only for a weekend, but it kept the spiritual fires going. When finally I could join Desley's group, we've been deepening and sharing our faith and spirituality ever since.

Return to Pipalyatjara

Helen Cantwell



In the March edition of Annotations I recalled my early experiences from my five year stay at Pipalyatjara on the Pitjantjatjara Lands.

I am looking forward to spending July this year at Pipalyatjara again. Since leaving the community, I have maintained contact through the family of a deaf child who has spent several months each year in Adelaide in order to develop Auslan (the national language of the Deaf). The reason for my stay has little connection with this, but rather with a weekly meeting, which was arranged for me by Anangu, for my stay amongst them in their country.

My husband, Jeff, had left after staying a few days to help unload the few chests of goods I'd brought to set up the fully kitted and very comfortable accommodation provided to teachers at that time. As it was Sunday morning, I made my way to the area in the centre of the community marked by a cross raised to head-height by a rectangular frame of cast iron from which suspended a cast iron pipe which could be sounded like a bell to call people to the area. It was never used in this way during my 5 year stay in Pipalyatjara. The three shady trees, in a cleared sandy space and roofed three-sided corrugated iron shed with floor raised to near waist-height which gathered round this mark of Christian presence in central Pipalyatjara and with the inevitable rock formation behind it which resulted from Anangu ancestry speaking the landscape into existence, came to be the area where I was privileged to attend a regular Sunday meeting.

On that first Sunday I sat cross-legged on the sand and read my Bible alone. I was thrilled by the physical and social dexterity of the group of 10 year-old boys who made their way along the road circuiting the space, and hovered near. I'd been there half an hour, when one of them approached me and asked "Are you here for church?" To my yes response, he said "There isn't church this week. But there will be next week." And that's how it was. Every Sunday I made the kilometer or so walk from my home to the church, some members of the community were there to make sure that I wasn't disturbed by that awful aloneness that white-fellas so readily impose on themselves.

Mutuality is one of my guides to appropriate action. And it seemed to me that our meetings contained this element. I was equipped with Pitjantjatjara Bible and hymn-book. Anangu were still leaving to travel in whatever vehicle had become available to cover the hundreds of kilometers their business took them. A heavy blanket was the first thing grabbed to provide shelter, for often the journey was made

on the back of a truck. Anything after that depended on the amount of time available. Often as not, the Bible was not top of the list, and anyway, was valuable to the family staying behind.

Whatever the quality of my presence in the community, I was a strongly identified Christian through my attendance at the Sunday meetings and part of the travelling "Inma" programme which was arranged to visit the community at least once a year to provide Christian teaching. So on my return to Adelaide, included among the phone calls I received, were requests for training in church leadership. I passed this request on to those responsible for coordinating ministry to the 'Lands. I had a sense, however, that greater provision would be appreciated. So, when the Tertian Retreat offer arrived, with a suggestion that it was particularly aimed at providing for country areas, I thought that this might be the provision that was needed. Arthur Leger, a Jesuit from the Pacific Islands, who has facilitated the interface between Indigenous and Christian spirituality in that region, has accepted. Just what dialogue occurs will depend upon how



Anangu are best able to take advantage of the time we have, to be in Pipalyatjara.

We expect that the number of people who make their way to the community and the length of their stay will be a good indicator of our contribution. This is the football season, which is a significant factor in determining who will be able to be at Pipalyatjara. The National Football League salary is available to Indigenous players and is rigorously sought through training in the Indigenous Community Competition. Many are only able to return to their own community for a couple of the mid-week days. The travelling ministry programme followed the matches programmed while I lived at Pip. I can't see our contribution, which I envisage more in the style of a CLC meeting, being part of the programme. Those unable to get to the match venue may value their opportunity to meet with us.

As one of the men walked away with me from one of the Sunday meetings, he said "Helen, this is what we went to the mission for. People think that we went for food. We didn't. The old law isn't working any more. We need to develop new law." The Pitjantjatjara Bible is a wonderful example of the work that has gone into this. It is my hope that ongoing engagement with this great work of their forbears, extracting from it the history of Jesus' Law of Love and weaving it with the moral and geographical knowledge of Traditional Law, will strengthen the base for life decisions for those Indigenous people who make the decision to remain, in their country as its custodians.