

Party games in darkening Canberra <i>Benedict Coleridge</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">1</a>
Rudd right not to run <i>Frank Brennan</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">3</a>
Film takes sex abuse guilt to the Vatican <i>Tim Kroenert</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">5</a>
Pope Francis' unfinished business with the poor <i>Andrew Hamilton</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">7</a>
The difference one pope can make <i>Neil Ormerod</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">9</a>
Free speech is safe from Conroy's feather duster <i>Ray Cassin</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">11</a>
Post-Saddam Iraq defined by division <i>Kerry Murphy</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">13</a>
Why we didn't stop the war <i>Justin Whelan</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">14</a>
Watching as Iraq crumbled <i>Donna Mulhearn</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">16</a>
Gillard playing chicken with skilled migrants <i>Fatima Measham</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">18</a>
Pope for the Twitter age <i>Beth Doherty</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">20</a>
Sorry I was high <i>Peta Edmonds</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">22</a>
Australia's ten wasted years of war <i>Tony Smith</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">25</a>
Gina's subpoena threatens press freedom <i>Michael Mullins</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">27</a>
A funny thing happened on the way to the Vatican <i>Richard Leonard</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">28</a>
Optional voting dims democracy <i>Patrick McCabe</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">30</a>
Dawn of the Assange cult <i>Tim Kroenert</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">32</a>
Caucusing cardinals trump greedy media <i>Ray Cassin</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">34</a>
Nothing romantic about living in squalor <i>Ellena Savage</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">36</a>
A Jesuit learns to live with a Jesuit Pope <i>Andrew Hamilton</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">38</a>
How Pope Francis will mend a broken church <i>Michael Mullins</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">40</a>
Pope for a new Reformation <i>Andrew Hamilton</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">41</a>
Child soldier learns murder and motherhood <i>Tim Kroenert</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">43</a>
Agnostic prayers for an infirm infant <i>Gillian Bouras</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">45</a>
Nice guys of Victorian politics finish last	

<i>Moira Rayner</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">47</a>
Roman Polanski and the chain of abuse	
<i>Lyn Bender</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">49</a>
A wild new pope	
<i>Barry Gittins, Brian Doyle, B. A. Breen</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">51</a>
Cardinal's legacy transcends gay scandal	
<i>Duncan MacLaren</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">56</a>
The Vatican's tragic farce	
<i>Desmond O'Grady</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">58</a>
We need a pope who can handle the truth	
<i>Brian Lawrence</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">60</a>
Vatican secrecy ensures trivial media coverage	
<i>Michael Mullins</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">62</a>
Lay Catholics can be cardinals too	
<i>Constant Mews</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">64</a>
Benedict's legacy of faith and reason	
<i>Joel Hodge</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">66</a>
Pope for a polarised Church	
<i>James McEvoy</i> . . . . .	<a href="#">68</a>

---

Eureka Street is published fortnightly online, a minimum of 24 times per year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by the publisher.

Requests for permission to reprint material from the website and this edition should be addressed to the Editor.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned.

PO Box 553  
 Richmond  
 VIC 3121  
 Australia

Tel +61 3 9427 7311  
 Fax +61 3 9428 4450  
 Eureka@eurekastreet.com.au

## Party games in darkening Canberra

EUROPEAN DIARY

*Benedict Coleridge*

From his vantage point in Canberra, the renowned Belgian/Australian Sinologist and literary critic Simon Leys (real name Pierre Ryckmans) has recently [translated](#) Simone Weil's essay 'On the Abolition of All Political Parties'.

Ryckmans has obviously a mean sense of humour as well as a serious purpose. His stated aspiration is to 'provide the starting point for a healthy debate' about the role of our political parties — a debate to be illuminated by the insight, and the 'hopeless utopianism', of Simone Weil.

It's tempting to ponder just how much Canberra has contributed to Ryckmans' project. Our political leaders are suffering from the disenchantment of the electorate. Canberra and its political hackery has even less appeal now than it has had for a long time and the Canberra jokes are getting darker — it's gone from being 'Pyongyang without the dystopia' to 'Kabul without the hope'.

And in a recent speech former prime minister Bob Hawke admitted that parliament was held in 'contempt', that it was a 'charade', 'not a real chamber where the issues are discussed on merits'. Instead, 'it's a formality where the decision has already been taken' in party rooms and MPs are expected to toe the line.

In light of this, it may be worth responding to Ryckmans' offer. In an election year it's a call to another kind of discussion — not about policy particulars but about the role of our political parties and whether they are acting as vehicles for effective, creative politics, or not.

When I mention this Weil essay to people — most often those who work for a political party — they tend to smile slowly, narrow their eyes and lean back in their seats. I wonder if that's what Trotsky did in 1933 after he met Weil in Paris (though I'm sure the young political staffers of Brussels and Canberra would resist the comparison).

To a man such as Trotsky for whom the Party — and the political identity it lent him — was everything, Weil must have been maddening: a woman from a Jewish background who studied philosophy and worked in a factory (and who later developed a religious — Catholic — orientation). She might have had left-wing Communist sympathies, but she really didn't 'fit'. (Charles De Gaulle, a party figure of a very different kind, thought Weil was a fool.)

And yet, in a conversation that no doubt upset the hard-nosed Trotsky, Weil scolded him: 'you are the idealist'. What she meant was that Trotsky was blind to the way his party politics obstructed 'real' politics — a politics undertaken by individuals in discerning dialogue with each other.

An important concept for Weil was 'attention' — she thought of prayer, for example, as 'absolute unmixed attention', a contemplation of the face of God. Her vision of politics might be understood similarly, as requiring 'unmixed attention' to and contemplation of the common good. For Weil, political parties, being 'machines that generate collective passions', exclude this kind of attentiveness: 'instead of thinking, one merely takes sides'.

It's possible to see this process at work as people communicate their personal political orientations, whether in parliament, youth political organisations or the media. When people identify with a certain 'political identity' they feel the need to embrace an accompanying

platform of positions generally on a number of 'signifying' issues.

So, for example, the young conservative party member (who of course also identifies with the US Republican Party) feels automatically compelled to be vocally pro-Israel, anti-abortion, pro-free markets, anti-taxation.

It's hard to see how any one political philosophy can coherently incorporate such diverse positions across such separate issues. Believing in 'the sanctity of life' doesn't obviously underwrite support for Israeli settlement expansion at the cost of Palestinian livelihoods.

And of course you could describe a similarly diverse 'package' elsewhere along the political spectrum. Positions that might be totally unrelated come to be associated with each other — they become linked as part of the same hand of signifying issues, which act as markers of an individual's political identity.

But what if you're someone who holds a mixture of positions? You may be concerned about the number of abortions, opposed to gay marriage, but believe markets should be properly regulated by government and that serious government-led climate action is important. What do you call yourself then?

These are deliberately obvious examples but they reveal how the tags of 'conservative' and 'progressive', and the stack of views associated with them, don't readily admit complex political identities. In this way the logic attributed by Weil to the political party, the undifferentiating logic of the uniform collective, seeps into public political discourse. And of course it is institutionalised in parliament, as Hawke bluntly pointed out.

In calling for a more fluid discussion in parliament, for MPs to be allowed to debate legislation without prior agreement in party meetings, Hawke unwittingly echoed Weil: she too looked for a more fluid form of politics, in which elected politicians 'would associate and disassociate following the natural and changing flow of affinities'.

Weil and Ryckmans demonstrate that it's possible to have this kind of discussion. Weil wrote that 'if one were to entrust the organisation of public life to the devil ... one could not invent a more clever device' than party discipline. Not wanting to leave public life in the hands of the devil, now might be a good time to respond to Hawke's and Ryckmans' promptings: to have a conversation about the role of our political parties, 'in the light of Simone Weil'.

## **Rudd right not to run**

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

*Frank Brennan*

There's been a lot of messy politics in Canberra this week.

A complex series of bills was introduced to Parliament regarding media regulation without any cabinet scrutiny. The bills could not be debated in caucus because any suggestion of amendment would have been seen as a threat to the Prime Minister's leadership.

The Government said the legislation had to be passed within a week, and that no compromises would be considered. Going down to the wire, the Government then turned and tried to cut a deal with the Independent Bob Katter who wanted changes to the legislation. Yesterday, the key bills were abandoned. In short, the legislative process was thwarted at every turn. Government was proved to be dysfunctional and the parliamentary processes were perverted.

All this took place against the backdrop of irreversible division and antipathy within the Labor Party.

On Tuesday, Kevin Rudd sent a clear message: 'Unlike others who have used the phrase, when I say I will not challenge for the leadership, I mean it. That means Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or beyond.' Yesterday morning's *Australian* reported that 'Rudd is resisting pressure from supporters to mount a challenge and is adamant he will stick to his promise, made after he lost a leadership ballot to Gillard in February last year, not to challenge the Prime Minister'.

When Parliament resumed yesterday morning, everyone was on edge. In a rare show of bipartisanship, the House of Representatives adopted an apology to Australian mothers who had suffered the fate of having their babies forcibly adopted. Most members of parliament sat respectfully listening to the speech of Stephen Irons, the Liberal Member for Swan, who had himself been a ward of the state. He started speaking at 12.58pm.

You could hear a pin drop as he recounted, 'As a six-month-old baby, I along with two of my siblings was removed from my family due to financial circumstances. We went to stay in institutions. At that point, I was separated from my other two siblings. Growing up in the Irons household, I often thought about my family — "Where were they? What did they look like? Was I the same as them? How many of them were there?"

'I used to walk into shopping centres or football games and wonder if my brothers or sisters might also be in the same place I was and how close they might be. But I knew I would not know them even if I bumped into them.'

The respectful listening on both sides of the Chamber started to dissipate as officials handed notes to senior party leaders. Members started looking at their phones and Blackberrys. Something was afoot.

Irons was greeted with cross-party applause as he concluded his speech at 1.10pm. Those of us in the public gallery surrounded by citizens who had come for the Apology were in the dark until we emerged to find that Simon Crean was outside conducting a live press conference demanding that Prime Minister Gillard call a spill and that Rudd stand for the leadership despite all he had said about not challenging.

The Prime Minister called the spill for 4.30pm. Just before the meeting, Rudd appeared

and announced:

When I say to my parliamentary colleagues and to the people at large across Australia that I would not challenge for the Labor leadership, I believe in honouring my word. Others treat such commitments lightly. I do not. I've been very plain about that for a long period of time.

Secondly, I said that the only circumstances under which I would consider a return to the leadership would be if there was an overwhelming majority of the Parliamentary Party requesting such a return — drafting me to return. And the position was vacant.

I am here to inform you that those circumstances do not exist. And therefore in the absence of any such draft, notwithstanding what Simon Crean had to say this morning, I will be adhering absolutely to the commitments I gave to the Australian people and to my Parliamentary colleagues.

Rudd concluded, 'I am not prepared to dishonour my word which I gave solemnly. I will therefore adhere to that word as I have said before.'

The day ended with Tony Jones on ABC *Lateline* asking a Rudd supporter if Rudd had 'abandoned his own supporters to their fate', 'ordering his troops to go over the top while staying behind in the trenches'.

Admittedly, I'm a friend of Rudd. But I wonder what political morality would dictate that Rudd not be true to his word simply because Crean, acting alone and without Rudd's knowledge or approval, had decided an immediate challenge was now the only available circuit breaker for the woes of a dysfunctional divided Labor Party.

And what would have been gained anyway? A narrow win to Rudd or Gillard would have resolved nothing. Unless there was a groundswell of demand from his colleagues that he emerge from his bunker and lead them, Rudd was right and sensible to stick to his word. Crean had no right to demand publicly that Rudd break his word, even if Crean had rightly read what was good for his party.

In Canberra nowadays, even the sacred words of Irons reflecting on his traumatic childhood count for little when political bad blood is in the air. Great damage is being done to the body politic, its institutions, and to our basic civility. Between now and the election in September, it will be even more difficult for truth to speak to power.

## Film takes sex abuse guilt to the Vatican

### FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence in the House of God (M)*. Director: Alex Gibney. 102 minutes**

The sexual abuse of children by religious is by its nature an emotional, as well as profoundly ethical, moral, spiritual and criminal issue. Films and documentaries about this subject will therefore necessarily appeal to the emotions of the viewer. This can be to their detriment, if the emotional appeal is emphasized over factual detail.

The 2007 film *Deliver Us From Evil* [fell into this trap](#) ; an emotionally harrowing film that leaned heavily on the extensive and graphic testimony of one offending (and only self-interestedly repentant) priest, while failing at times to substantiate some of its more outlandish claims. This is the kind of sensationalism that feeds prejudices and arguably does more to exploit victims than to help them.

*Mea Maxima Culpa: Silence In The House of God*, by contrast, achieves a balance between its powerful emotional appeal and its integrity as a piece of investigative filmmaking.

It begins with a particular case study, that of Fr Lawrence Murphy, a key supporter and later head of a school for deaf boys in Milwaukee. Director Gibney interviews the now adult victims of Murphy, whose atrocities at the school during the late 1960s and 1970s included using the confessional as a kind of lair in which to abuse boys.

After charting in some detail the events at this school and the failure of local church authorities to protect the boys, Gibney broadens the scope to look at the wider American and international contexts, tracing the threads of complicity in neglect or outright cover-ups as far as the halls of the Vatican itself.

One reviewer at the screening I attended left the cinema declaring that the evidence was in: 'Ratzinger is to blame!' The reality, even as detailed here, is rather more complex than that, although the film does little to restore faith in the existing governance structures. Certainly the director's sympathies are firmly with the victims.

The now adult victims sign their stories 'loudly' and clearly (aided by voiceovers from seasoned screen actors) and relate their ongoing efforts to achieve justice. Four decades ago and inspired by the protests of the civil rights movement they even engaged in direct action, printing and distributing flyers that outed Murphy as an abuser. Ultimately their efforts fell on deaf ears. Towards the end of the film they sign 'deaf power'; the battle rages on.

Some of the expert interviewees provide fascinating historical context to the issues of Church governance and of the failure to expose offending priests to the criminal justice system. The film revisits the founding in the 1940s of the Servants of the Paraclete, an order that advocated spiritual rehabilitation for offending priests. To its credit the order envisioned that such priests were to be permanently removed from circulation; that didn't always occur.

The human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson makes an interesting albeit extreme case for the Vatican to be stripped of its statehood — something it achieved in the 20th century thanks to a deal struck with Mussolini while Italy was under totalitarian rule — in order to

expose corrupt leaders to external legal processes.

Another expert muses on one of the fundamentals in the formation of Catholics, suggesting that first communion occurs at too young an age. This, he argues, indoctrinates very young children into the sense of the priest as a figure of awe, which in turn might contribute to their pliability if a priest turns abuser. There is evidence in the film to suggest the deaf boys were enamoured of Murphy in a way that made them vulnerable to his advances.

This is all interesting and relevant stuff that speaks to Gibney's capabilities as an investigative filmmaker.

The film arrives in Australia a year after its American release. There is a sense that it has missed the boat, given that our own state inquiries and Royal Commission into the abuse of children in institutions have gathered steam in the interim. Given, too, that the election of Pope Francis, whose sense of solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, and agenda for the reform of Church governance, have raised the hopes of many Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

In the local context, the film at least serves as a warning of what revelations may be to come. In the context of the international Church, it is a sobering reminder of how much work remains to be done.



## **Pope Francis' unfinished business with the poor**

### THEOLOGY

*Andrew Hamilton*

Pope Francis' desire that the Church should be a church of the poor and for the poor has struck a chord. As did his simple way of living and his evocation of Francis of Assisi when choosing to be called Pope Francis. But his emphasis on the service of the poor will put on the agenda unfinished business from the 1960s–80s.

The relationship between the Catholic Church and the poor was explored most seriously in Latin America. I caught its dimensions most vividly in a dawn trip on a clapped out US school bus to a small regional town in El Salvador.

The church stood in the town square, flanked by the Town Hall, the police station and the court house. It was one of the pillars of a society, identified with those with a little money and power, not with the poor subsistence farmers and unemployed, and still less with the displaced community to which I was heading.

On the bus I chatted to an Evangelical pastor. He was dressed and spoke like a *campesino*, carried his Bible with him, and used to gather people in the shanties on the edge of town. That seemed to be the church of the poor.

That was also the Catholic challenge. If the Catholic Church was to be the church of the poor as the recent Vatican Council had asked, it needed to be where they were, to ask why they were poor, and to allow them to see that the Gospel was good news for the poor. So priests and catechists moved out into the poor barrios, spoke of a God who took each human being seriously, of Jesus as their brother, and invited them to reflect on how the Gospel spoke to their situation.

The poor organised. They were seen as a threat to the wealth of those who profited from their misery. They, their catechists and priests were killed; armed resistance began and led to a civil war in which Catholics were pitted against Catholics.

This reality underlay the different strands of reflection commonly summed up as liberation theology. With its condemnation by the Vatican, the collapse of the Soviet empire and the impact of globalisation on Latin America, the church of the poor became largely a trope of church rhetoric.

The poor were spiritualised or identified with those who lacked meaning in their lives. That left untouched the real poor of Latin America, who increasingly turned to Evangelical Christianity.

When Pope Francis speaks of the church of the poor he certainly has in mind the real poor of the barrios in which he grew up and their fellows elsewhere. He wants them to be at the centre of the Catholic Church and not at its periphery, and insists that their service and the defence of their human dignity in the face of economic and cultural oppression is a central part of the mission of the church. It flows from the Gospel.

Australian Catholics will ask themselves what it might mean in concrete terms for the Catholic Church here to be a church of the poor and for the poor.

Places where it might pitch its tent are pretty evident. Among the poorest people in Australia at present are asylum seekers, Indigenous Australians and the young unemployed, particularly in rural areas.

The difficulties of being a church in which these groups are at the centre are also pretty evident. It would involve presence, accompaniment, priority in human and financial resources, advocacy. Catholic congregations would be small, but eventually people of different faiths and none would find in the church a home.

In the 1960s there was much fairly unhelpful discussion among Catholics about how they could join the poor. They only slowly recognised the paradox that a church can come to be the church of the poor only through the commitment of powerful and resourceful people who are not poor.

The Catholic Church can draw on a long history of giving generously of its human and financial resources to those who are poor, both at home and overseas, through schools, health care and pastoral visiting.

Its institutions now do not serve the poor as directly as they did a century ago. But if they made available their resources to poor communities elsewhere in Australia in order to empower them to educate and care for the health of their members, the exchange of friendship, experience and wisdom involved would gradually ensure that the centre of the institutions and the Church lay outside themselves.

To be a church for the poor is not in the first instance about doing things for the poor. Pope Francis himself warned against the Church being simply a compassionate NGO. It means being inspired by faith to listen to the poor and to help their voice be heard. It also entails accompanying and serving them and calling governments to account when their dignity is trodden on.

In being a church for the poor and of the poor, the Catholic Church has a great resource in symbols. In fact its natural alphabet is symbols, and its most powerful action is also often symbolic.

We need to think only of the encouragement that the new pope has brought and the possibilities he has opened by the publicity given to his movement from palace to apartment, from limo to bus, from baroque to simple dress, and by the report of his washing the feet of women suffering from HIV.

These kinds of symbols can also embody the commitment to be a church of and for the poor. If gestures that privilege simplicity, going outside the boundaries, and solidarity with the neglected poor in Australia took hold in the ordinary life of Catholics and in the ceremonial life of their church, that would be a significant step.

## The difference one pope can make

### RELIGION

*Neil Ormerod*

Amid the general sense of relief and even euphoria over the election of Pope Francis, a Pentecostal friend of mine wondered, what difference can one man make? Given the vast size of the Catholic Church, the diversity of its structures and personnel, what can this one man, already in his mid-70s, do to make real and significant changes? It is a good question.

The first thing to appreciate is the shift in style, some of it symbolic, but not without impact. As the counting of the papal votes was concluded, and the Master of Ceremonies approached Francis with the traditional red gown, he reportedly [said](#) 'No thank you, Monsignore ... Carnival time is over!' Everything about the man speaks of simplicity of life and deep personal integrity. These are deeply engrained habits of a lifetime that not even election to the papacy will change.

This symbolic shift will have a real impact because behind it stands a man of substance and integrity. Already curial officials are toning down the trappings of office and using less ostentatious forms of transport in Rome. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, he railed against clericalism and careerism in the Church.

Not a few cardinals will be wondering where the chips will fall in the new curial appointments, because Francis has a new agenda, not governed by stubborn insistence on orthodoxy as the sole criteria for appointment, regardless of talent. Rather, as he has signalled, his first priority is a concern for the poor.

This new round of curial appointments to head congregations in Rome will be the first sign of real change beyond these symbolic acts. With the priorities he has indicated we can expect more cardinals from the Third World to fill these offices, people who know what poverty means and will place the poor at the heart of the Church's concerns.

This concern for the poor will also drive a new ecological agenda, something already signalled in his post-election press conference and in the homily of his inauguration mass. It is the poor who will suffer the most from ecological issues such as climate change. This is what Caritas Internationale will tell him, if he does not already know.

We can also expect less fussiness about the liturgy, something that flourished with Benedict XVI. Like many Jesuits of my acquaintance, Pope Francis seems to favour a lower liturgy without all the trappings. In a mass he celebrated in a parish in Rome after his election he wore a simple bishop's mitre, sat in an ordinary chair and personally greeted the people after the mass.

A colleague here at ACU has read all his homilies given at various masses so far — each one just a page or two long, over in a few minutes, not theological treatises of 30–40 minutes. Yet each communicated a simple yet powerful message. The inaugural mass gave a clear indication of this shift. With a captive audience of millions, the homily was less than 15 minutes and in language anyone could understand.

Perhaps too we shall see the end of the 40,000-plus word encyclical, at least for a while.

There are currently about 57 cardinals over the age of 72. If Pope Francis is in office for eight years or more (and I think he too will retire about the age of 85) he will have a direct hand in replacing each of these cardinals. Just as John Paul II shaped the college of cardinals for the election of Benedict, so Francis is likely to shape the college for the election

of his successor. This is a long term impact on the life of the Church.

On the issue of clergy sexual abuse, which so preoccupies the Church in the west, we have few indications. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires his record is unknown. But one media source has cited an interview in which he indicated a policy of zero-tolerance towards abusive priests. We shall see how this unfolds in the coming months.

Recently in *Eureka Street* I [argued](#) for a pope to take the Church in a new direction of greater humility, respect and silence, echoing the stance of Cardinal Taglia prior to the conclave. Already the signs are there: a pope of recognisable humility, of genuine respectfulness of others but especially for the poor, and, if not of silence, at least less wordiness. Each of these words, humility, respect, and silence, appeared in his inaugural homily.

And of course he could also call for a new council for the Church. Stranger things have happened!

## Free speech is safe from Conroy's feather duster

MEDIA

*Ray Cassin*

Never has a minister bearing new legislation seemed so unenthusiastic about the task. Last week, when Communications Minister Stephen Conroy announced that the Gillard Government was proposing to overhaul the regulation of Australia's news media, his demeanour suggested he did not expect it to happen, and perhaps that he did not really want it to happen.

The necessary bills must be passed by the end of this week, Conroy said, or the Government would let the matter drop. He insisted that the package was not negotiable: there would be none of the by now familiar haggling with crossbench MPs to secure their support.

Since most of these quickly declared doubts about aspects of the bills, the project appeared to be doomed. It still does, despite some wavering by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who has hinted that an amendment or two might be accepted after all.

It is as if the Government wants to be able to wallow in the politics of the too-hard basket: 'Hey, we did our best. We tried to stand up for decency but the fiendish, bullying media proprietors and their stooges in the coalition just wouldn't see reason. So let's move on.'

For their part, the bullying proprietors have obliged by playing well and truly to type. The day after Conroy's announcement, News Ltd's Sydney tabloid, the *Daily Telegraph*, produced a collectors-item front page that luridly and absurdly compared the minister with a swag of most brutal dictators of the past century: Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Robert Mugabe, Kim Jong-un and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The message was that, just like all of these beasts, Conroy was an enemy of free speech, democracy and civilisation as we know it, and the proof lay in his plans to muzzle the media.

This line, only slightly muted, has been repeated in the *Telegraph's* News Ltd stablemates ever since. 'Fight for Freedom' Melbourne's *Herald Sun* screamed, a splash head glossed with the overline 'Media giants warn Conroy power grab threatens us all'.

Among the 'giants' was, of course, News Ltd chief Kim Williams, who, not to be outdone by his tabloid underlings, told a Senate committee hearing that the proposed new regulatory regime would be a star chamber. In assailing the legislation Williams received rare support from other media CEOs, including Fairfax's Greg Hywood and Seven West Media's Kerry Stokes. 'What have we done to deserve this?' bleated Stokes.

So just what is it that Conroy is proposing that will supposedly end free speech and impose government censorship on the media?

The six bills, if they become law, will introduce various changes, some of which, such as amending the charters of the ABC and SBS to acknowledge them as internet publishers, merely authorise something which has already happened. But two reforms are contentious: the creation of a new statutory official, the Public Interest Media Advocate, and the introduction of a public interest test for future mergers and acquisitions by media companies.

The Advocate would administer the public interest test and accredit voluntary media regulators, such as the existing Australian Press Council and any similar bodies the industry may choose to create. That's it. There would be no direct government intervention in the operation of the media, still less anything resembling censorship.

The Advocate's oversight of the voluntary regulators would consist in ensuring that they adhere to the codes of practice they have set for themselves. The existing codes in the industry, such as that prescribed by the journalists' union, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, would still apply.

And, although the Advocate would be a government appointee, they would operate at arm's length from the government, like the Australian Communications and Media Authority, which regulates broadcasting. As Gillard and Conroy pointed out, no one ever suggests that ACMA takes its orders from the government of the day.

This is to be compared with the murderous deprivations of Stalin, Mao and Mugabe? Or, only slightly less incongruously, with the 17th century Court of Star Chamber, which dispensed summary and often secret justice to political opponents of Britain's Stuart monarchs?

The changes Conroy is proposing do not even credibly compare with the super regulators recommended by the Finkelstein inquiry in Australia and the Leveson inquiry in Britain.

Free speech is not at risk, and the media companies know that it is not. Their real fears surely concern the Advocate's other task: to determine whether future mergers and acquisitions are in the public interest. It is self-interest, not concern for the rights and freedoms of citizens, that is motivating the outcry.

Australia's print media are already concentrated in too few hands, with one company owning more than two thirds of metropolitan mastheads. This lack of diversity is in itself a danger to democracy, but you'll never hear Williams or his counterparts in other companies admit it.

The feather-duster regulatory regime envisaged by Conroy would scarcely even challenge the power of existing media companies, but even the possibility of such a challenge is something they will not countenance.

And if the Government's diffident approach to reform is anything to go by, Gillard, Conroy and their colleagues might also feel relieved, in this election year, if the reforms are stillborn.

## Post-Saddam Iraq defined by division

### POLITICS

*Kerry Murphy*

Ten years ago, on 20 March 2003, a US led coalition invaded Iraq. On 9 April Baghdad fell to the US led forces. On 1 May the then US president George W. Bush landed on the aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln* and appeared under a banner proclaiming 'Mission Accomplished'. He effectively declared victory.

A decade later, peace has not been accomplished. Nobody knows how many Iraqis were killed in the ten years. Some estimates start at 100,000 (WikiLeaks) to 172,000 (Iraq Body Count). Some go as high as 500,000 or more (Lancet). In March 2013 alone an [estimated](#) 196 civilians have been killed.

Baghdad is now more divided according to sect than was the case during Saddam Hussein's reign. In some cases, militias and gangs force out one group, such as Sunni, who take over the houses of Shias forced out of other suburbs. Iraqis tell me religious differences were not so important in the past. Now they define you.

Many Christians have fled Iraq altogether. One Christian engineer told me he remembers celebrating religious festivals with his neighbours, such as Eid after Ramadan. They in turn would celebrate Christmas with him. Such interfaith experiences are almost unknown now. Even Sunni and Shia find it unsafe to mix.

How did it come to this? Saddam maintained an oppressive dictatorship, but Iraqis tell me that at least under Saddam you knew where the boundaries were. Now there is uncertainty and indiscriminate violence. Only last week a bomb blast in Baghdad killed 18 people and wounded 67. Such attacks are [not uncommon](#).

In the 1970s and even 1980s Iraq had one of the highest standards of education in the Middle East, comparable in many respects to western countries. Now the educated classes are fleeing. About 40 per cent of the middle class of Iraq — doctors, engineers, academics and teachers — have fled Iraq. Many others without the money and skills have been forced to relocate internally.

Although Saddam is dead, the evolving violence since March 2003 has not been brought under control. There are elements of Sunni and Shia extremists, some former Bathists, al-Qaeda-linked groups, Iranian contingents and criminal gangs all involved at varying levels to create the violence lived on a daily basis by Iraqis.

Was it worth it? It depends who you ask and whether they experienced oppression under Saddam. There is freedom of political expression, and elections, though militias and gangs are used against political opponents.

Some of the latest fears for Iraqis are that the increasing violence in Syria will flow into Iraq. Already an al-Qaeda-linked group [killed](#) Syrian soldiers who had sought temporary safety in Iraq. Many Iraqi Christians fled to Syria to escape persecution in Iraq. Now they have to flee again, along with hundreds of thousands of Syrians.

Tragically no solution appears likely to help Iraqis or Syrians in the near future. The violence is likely to continue in both countries for some time. Meanwhile thousands are killed, wounded, made homeless or displaced. It makes you wonder what was accomplished in Iraq.

## Why we didn't stop the war

### POLITICS

*Justin Whelan*

On the weekend of 14–16 February 2003 more than half a million Australians participated in protest marches around the country against Australia's involvement in the looming Iraq War. This, the largest coordinated protest action in the nation's history, was the result of months of organisation and campaigning by coalitions of anti-war organisations and a reawakening of the once-influential peace movement.

One poll at the time found that 90 per cent of Australians opposed the war without UN authorisation.

For a brief moment, it appeared as if the peace movement might in fact keep Australia out of the war. However, Prime Minister John Howard resisted the pressure and on 20 March Australia formally invaded Iraq as part of the 'Coalition of the Willing' with the United States of America and the United Kingdom. What went wrong?

The movement benefitted from and contributed to a massive global uprising, the lack of UN authorisation, and hesitant but real opposition from the Opposition. But the timing of the campaign, during the middle of the electoral cycle when governments are least vulnerable to public pressure, reduced its chances of success.

The movement also suffered from a lack of social infrastructure: for all intents and purposes there were no 'peace movement staff' in the country before 2003, and even at the height of the campaign the union movement allocated only one person to work on it full-time. Researchers have demonstrated that coalitions need to mobilise and apply significant human resources in order to build enough power to win.

And while the wide and loose nature of the coalition helped mobilise large numbers of Australians, it constrained discussion and implementation of more disruptive tactics. Despite the unpopularity of the war, there were no concerted attempts at large scale noncooperation or intervention, such as strikes or acts of civil disobedience.

Before the war began, there were only two cases of nonviolent intervention across the whole country — the famous scrawling of 'No War' on the Opera House by two individuals, and a Greenpeace action to place the Prime Minister under symbolic 'house arrest' in the Lodge.

Some union leaders in WA did call for strikes to block the shipment of supplies, but were quickly silenced. All other tactics could be categorised as 'public persuasion' attempts, such as street marches and lobbying of MPs.

It could be argued that movement leaders were constrained in their choice of tactics by anti-terrorism laws and the culture of hostility to radical politics in the wake of the September 11 and Bali attacks. But nonviolent conflict researchers have identified that the more 'disruptive' tactics such as widespread actions of non-cooperation or intervention are crucial to success, even in democratic contexts.

Crucially, there were no large scale tactics anywhere in the country between the February uprising and the start of the war. The movement failed to build on its success by continuing to apply pressure on the Government.

It appears that the unspoken strategy of the movement relied on mobilising large



numbers to express their opposition to the war, with a consequent effect on opinion polls concerning the war, which the 'democratic' government could not ignore and would therefore back down. The assumption was that if enough people opposed the war, the government would not risk going to war. This assumption proved false.

I say 'appears' because the most obvious problem for the anti-war movement is that neither of the two main coalitions actually developed a clear and coherent strategy for stopping the war. As such, tactics seem to have been chosen on the basis of familiarity and individual group preference rather than as part of a coordinated plan. That, ultimately, was the movement's greatest mistake.

The movement did succeed in many ways: it created an environment in which 90 per cent of people polled opposed the war, pressured the Labor Party to oppose the war, almost certainly restricted the scale of Australia's involvement, and indirectly but significantly contributed to all but three countries refusing to participate in the invasion and thus to the lack of authorisation for war at the United Nations.

Perhaps most importantly it led to widespread agreement that the war was unjust. Iraq was the first war in history to be declared unjust by the people and by almost all Christian leaders in the West before it had started.

We will never know if mass disruption in the form of strikes and civil disobedience would have forced the government to bow to public pressure. But we do know from decades of research into protest movements that two marches in each capital city in a four month period was bound to fail.

The failure to build on the success of the huge marches across the country on the weekend of February 14–16, due to internal friction in the very large coalitions, by lack of human and financial resources, and by a lack of effective strategic planning, meant an incredible opportunity was lost. As one anti-war organiser in the USA said, 'How can we think we are actually going to overtake a mindset of war by just waving some signs around?'

*With thanks to Brian Martin and Ben Spies-Butcher.*

## Watching as Iraq crumbled

### POLITICS

*Donna Mulhearn*

Ten years ago in Baghdad, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, I sat with my Iraqi friend in his photo store. I was his last customer, he said; the bombs would begin tomorrow. And then he began to quietly weep.

We sat in silence for several minutes before he spoke again: 'We don't know our future now, we have no idea what will happen.' It was this uncertainty that raised his anxiety, having no idea how it would all turn out. Indeed nobody knew. 'I'm so sorry,' I whispered, and wept quietly with him.

Then he held out his shaking hand and gave me the prayer beads he was holding. 'Thanks for being here,' he whispered. I remember thinking that his life, and the lives of others like him, would not be given a second's thought in the coming days as the missiles rained down on Baghdad.

The bombs started the next day, early on 20 March 2003. I carried his prayer beads every day.

Ten years on I doubt that in his worst imaginings, he would have predicted what we see in Iraq today: a divided, violent, failed state, its social fabric torn, a new sectarian religious dictatorship in place receiving orders from outside powers such as Iran, political death squads, Al Qaeda cells wreaking havoc, flagrant human rights violations, minorities persecuted almost to the point of extinction. I could go on.

I went back to the photo store of my friend the next time I was in Baghdad, a few months after the initial invasion. It was still boarded up. I continued to return each month, but there was no sign of him. I have just returned from my fifth visit to Iraq and again I made the regular pilgrimage to the place on busy Saddoon Street where his shop used to be. I don't think I expected him to suddenly be there.

The trip is more about marking that solemn occasion, the day before everything changed, like visiting a memorial, or a gravesite — to commemorate.

As the world marks the ten year anniversary of the invasion of Iraq the mainstream media hosts many 'experts', 'analysts', former generals and politicians, most of whom have never been to Iraq or, if they have, resided in the 'Green Zone', Saddam's former palace, a virtual foreign city-state surrounded by concrete and razor wire.

This retelling of history from the view of official sources excludes the experience and opinions of my friend in the photo store, whose life was obviously affected in ways we still don't know.

This week the media will also smugly pose the question they have always posed by way of justification. In my opinion a lazy, dishonest question: 'But isn't Iraq better now that Saddam Hussein is not in power?' Iraqis respond with a look of bewilderment when they hear this question. That's because it's a question that assumes that although Saddam has gone, nothing else has changed. But everything has changed.

The challenges Iraq faces today are immense. Iraq is crumbling. Infrastructure, worn from enduring years of western sanctions, is still waiting for refurbishment. Major cities still only receive four to five hours of electricity a day. Tap water is undrinkable.

Environmental pollution caused by toxic remnants of war and industrial pollution has resulted in an environmental catastrophe and health problems such as cancers and birth defects. Iraq, struggling with so many other issues, does not have the capacity to deal with the long-term program of clean up and decontamination that's required.

Poverty is at disturbing levels. Slums I would normally equate with third-world countries have emerged on vacant land overflowing with families that have been internally displaced from war and violence. This is all despite a massive injection of foreign aid, of which \$60 billion has been identified as being completely squandered.

Exhausted by a constant sense of chaos and unpredictable violence, it's the issue of security and instability that concerns Iraqis most. And they blame the US invasion and Iraqi Government for creating the chaos. So every week for the last three months around half a million people across Iraq come out in anti-Government demonstrations with a list of demands covering issues of discrimination, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment without trial, torture etc.

When pro-war commentators speak about how much better off Iraq is today, I think of the Iraqis who have voted with their feet. About three million of them choose to live in squalor as refugees in neighbouring countries rather than stay another day in the 'new Iraq'. It's their view I value when considering the legacy of the 2003 invasion.

I often wonder what the photo store man would think, when looking at the ledger with a ten-year perspective. On one side is the positive point that Saddam has gone from Iraq, but how long would be the list of negatives on the other? Ten years on, this is a more honest question, I think, and one we can learn from.

## Gillard playing chicken with skilled migrants

### POLITICS

*Fatima Measham*

When Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced a crackdown on the 457 visa scheme, not a few people were left aghast.

Stakeholder organisations such as the Migration Institute, Business Council of Australia, Australian Industry Group, and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry called for the language to be toned down.

Analysts including [Michael Pascoe](#) and [Bernard Keane](#) excoriated the politicisation of the scheme. On cue, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott described the move as an 'assault on foreigners'.

There is dismay within the Labor [caucus](#) itself over the rhetoric, if not the policy. Two of the Government's own [advisers](#) on skilled immigration point out that the numbers of skilled migrants, the nature and location of their work, and the areas of skills shortage do not match the heightened rhetoric around 'queues'.

On the other hand, former One Nation MP Pauline Hanson says she 'totally agrees' with the Prime Minister.

At a glance, the Federal Government seems to have shot itself in the foot. Again.

To understand why Gillard is prosecuting the tightening of 457 visa rules so aggressively and exposing herself to claims of xenophobia, we only need look to her speech last month at the AWU national conference. She is not, she said, leader of a party called the 'Progressive', 'Moderate', or even 'Social Democratic Party', but of 'the party called the Labor Party deliberately'; 'that is where we come from, that is what we believe in, that is who we are'.

In other words, the Prime Minister is on a campaign to impress her party's blue-collar base. This campaign wasn't launched last month in Western Sydney; it was kick-started as far back as 2011 when she stated that the 'Australian Greens do not share Australian values'.

Under Gillard, Labor is shedding its angst over 'narrative' and identity by appealing to — or rather, appeasing — its 'traditional' members, many of whom have never been comfortable with the idea of foreign workers, whether outsourced or inbound. Whether it is going back to the future or merely going backwards, time will tell. It is certainly ceding whatever remains of its white-collar, progressive supporters to other parties and independents.

This much can be confirmed by Gillard's extraordinary [attack](#) on the IT industry as culprits in the overuse of the 457 visa. This attack doesn't bear scrutiny. Against the [backdrop](#) of inadequate software development training in high schools, underfunded universities, and an immature environment for venture capitalism, the number of domestic IT students in fact halved during the years from 2003—2010.

If this were a 'which came first' question, the PM has chosen the chicken. It seems like the wrong answer. It is certainly naïve to assume that Australian IT undergrads are naturally competitive in an industry that is plugged into the rest of the world. The international labour market ultimately arbitrates IT qualifications, not protectionist governments. This may well apply to most industries this century, as workplaces become

more complex.

In any case, the miasma around the 457 visa can hardly dissipate while it is being actively pumped out. Labor supporters claiming that the language is not xenophobic must not have heard the trigger words, or may have fallen deaf from long-term overuse of 'queue' and 'foreign'. These seemingly innocuous words pack quite a message in combination. Throw in the word 'rort' — who cares if only two or three per cent exploit the system? — and we have a Pavlovian trifecta.

The reality is that the 457 visa has significant [restrictions](#), including being applicable only to [highly skilled](#) workers. Nearly two thirds of visa holders have a university degree or a post-graduate qualification, belying fear-mongering in the trades sector. Moreover, migration has been shown to [improve](#) wages, according to Professor Peter McDonald, who is on the Ministerial Advisory Council on Skilled Immigration.

The scheme is not 'out of control' as Gillard claims. There are significant disincentives to employing foreign workers including cost, which suggests it is not a decision taken lightly. Employers are in fact monitored, with infringement notices rising from nine in the period 2010—2011 to 49 in 2011—2012 (out of 22,450 businesses).

Finally, according to the latest seasonally adjusted [estimates](#) by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there have been increases in full-time and part-time employment as well as workforce participation. The unemployment rate is remarkably low and steady, in contrast to other countries. It is hard to make a case that jobs are somehow being ripped from local workers when the economy is this healthy.

But all these facts do not matter. Confirmation bias against foreigners has been locked and loaded. How sadder would it be for Labor if it loses this year's election holding this smoking gun.

## Pope for the Twitter age

MEDIA

*Beth Doherty*

At 3:30am on 14 March I was sitting up at the General Secretariat of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, with one eye on Twitter and the other on Facebook, and the TV remote flipping between BBC World and SkyNews.

Although thousands were gathering in St Peter's square in Rome, not much seemed to be happening. I amused myself following the Twitter feed of @SistineSeagull — an account which attracted 3000 followers in 30 minutes after an unsuspecting bird perched on the chimney of the Sistine Chapel, and which waxed lyrical for the entertainment of the bleary-eyed in the Southern Hemisphere.

By 4:50am, the feeling had changed. A strange mix of anxiety and excitement took the place of the novelty of the bird. 'It's taking too long. I think they have someone,' [Fr Brian Lucas](#), general secretary of the Bishops Conference, said to me. Quickly, I browsed for channels broadcasting live feeds, and finally settled on ABC24 and the Vatican's own CTV, which had a live feed of the chimney itself.

My main concern was ensuring that the [aussiepopalarm](#) was ready to go off. Sadly, although the trigger was pressed, the SMS carrier pigeon that bore the 'habemus papam' message never reached the phones of some papal enthusiasts. Others were ceremoniously woken between 5:08 and 6:10 as the smoke began and the bells pealed out across Rome — a more traditional incarnation of 'social media'?

At 5:06am Australian time, white smoke billowed out of the chimney, and my various devices went crazy with texts, phone calls, tweets and Facebook statuses. The next hour was nerve-racking. I was on the phone checking the status of the popealarm and preparing statements.

Meanwhile, a humble man was getting dressed in white and greeting the Cardinals.

Some say electing a pope is more a political process than a spiritual one. But when Bergoglio was announced, my faith increased a little. In a pectoral cross he has worn as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, and without the embroidered stole and traditional *mozzetta*, a gentle man emerged onto the balcony to elated screams.

A Jesuit pope from Latin America who has chosen the name Francis; a Pope who explicitly enunciates a preferential option for the poor and lives his life in their service is a dream come true for many people. Francis of Assisi challenged the Church back to its radical, humble roots; it seems Pope Francis might do the same.

The power of social media was manifest during the coming days. With #habemus papam trending on Twitter and images of Pope Francis sitting on a bus doing the rounds of Facebook, there was a sense of the power of such media for the promotion of justice.

Images of the Pope washing and kissing the feet of women, cancer and AIDS patients, and the poor in the slums, went viral across Facebook; as did stories of a man who preferred the bus to a chauffeur-driven limo; and who exhorted Argentinians to save their money to give to the poor rather than attending his installation in Rome.

There were jokes too; perhaps inspired by Pope Francis' own cheeky sense of humour, people have been brave enough to celebrate faith with humour on social media. My

favourite joke about the new Pope comes from a young Filipino Jesuit: *Why didn't Pope Francis lift both hands when he emerged on the balcony? Because the crowd might have launched into a rousing rendition of 'Don't Cry For Me Argentina'.*

In a historic address to journalists, Francis recognised that their often maligned and misunderstood work can play a part in spreading a message of justice founded in Christian faith. He spoke encouragingly to those who had worked around the clock to bring the news to the world, and encouraged the more than 5000 assembled journalists to view the Church not as a political animal but as a 'spiritual institution with its virtues and its sins'.

'The church exists to communicate this: truth, goodness and beauty personified,' he said. 'We are all called not to communicate ourselves, but this essential trio.'

And how did we know within hours, even minutes, that he said all of this? Through the media. He proclaimed his vision for a Church of the poor, and it is up to all Catholics now to implement it. We can proclaim this good news to the poor to the far ends of the earth — even to Argentina, the Pope might jokingly say — and no longer will it take a carrier pigeon, but perhaps just a tweet (maybe by @SistineSeagull) to change hearts and minds.

## **Sorry I was high**

POETRY

*Peta Edmonds*

### **The tram**

A man with praying hands,  
a rosary of heart beats,  
sees the sun rise,  
like a lion's eyes.  
There's confetti kisses  
on the floor of the tram.  
The falling stars of a child's tears.  
The people hang on  
like coats on a hanger.  
Along Elizabeth Street  
the tram stops to eat.

### **Poem**

'I was sitting across from the doctor,  
like a possum on a fence,  
Hesitant,  
He fed me apples,  
Medication in a blister pack,  
An apple a day.  
I grabbed it and ran away.'  
'I'm sorry for my indecision,  
as I gave the guitar back to her,  
and went out and scored  
Down by the river was all I heard.  
The thunder and lightning  
of a storm in the sky  
of an angry old man  
and I was sorry I was high.'

### **Dusk peppermint skies**

The young ones next door play fiddle and guitar



The apple stars fall.  
And by the music of the dark  
Cider voices call out.  
Spider man on the couch  
Dreams of oil by the gallon,  
Gold by the ounce.  
This is the house that will turn to rust  
With rusty neighbours  
Who smile like sugar.  
Night falls,  
A rich jar of pasta sauce.  
Then moon appears,  
A tossed coin.  
Spun into dust

**Poem**

A man carries a newborn,  
A lady carries flowers.  
Each carries responsibilities.  
The world is round,  
but I talked about thinking outside the square —  
of St Vincent's square,  
where God points his finger,  
where you step on the ants,  
and stare at the stars.

**Dope stars**

They'll help you out if they can,  
with a bud or a star,  
they'll even pawn their guitar.  
On the corner,  
like an unloved spider.  
If you've got a cigarette,  
they've got the lighter.  
They're in love with all the Gods.  
They get along with their bong.

For them the smoke is the Holy Ghost.  
But the Father and Son are like two fish in a pond.  
They're not scared of cancer,  
because cancer is an old piano in the corner that never gets played.  
They've wasted their lives being wasted.  
They're shifty when they score a three for fifty.  
It helps them sleep,  
it helps them relax,  
just don't get on their backs.

## **Australia's ten wasted years of war**

### POLITICS

*Tony Smith*

Ten years after the first bombs fell on Iraq, three facts seem indisputable. First, the reasons given by the leaders of the USA, Britain and Australia to justify the war were inadequate. Second, thousands died in the conflict, many of them civilians, including children. Third, the perpetrators have largely escaped any form of accounting.

The leaders of the countries that headed the 'coalition of the willing' pleaded that they did not have the wisdom of hindsight. This is either self-delusion or more of the propaganda that suggests their way was the only way.

Supporters of the war misleadingly argued that the situation in Iraq demanded that the West do something. The West was already acting by contributing to United Nations sanctions and weapons inspections. Military action is always an imperfect solution and must be envisaged as a last resort, not as the most convenient one.

During the Cold War years governments predicated foreign policy on the existence of external threats. The fear generated by the image of an aggressive alien power helped to control domestic populations and justify large defence expenditures. A new interpretation of this external threat was cast following the 9-11 terrorist bombing.

Genuine leadership by those determined to act might have won popular support — more direct approaches could have been tried by high level delegations. Even had the three countries provided incentives of the type lauded in free market capitalist rhetoric, change might have been effected peacefully.

Although public support for the invasion was initially low, many Australians changed their attitudes once troops were committed. Patriotism follows military commitment, perhaps because the Anzac myth is so deeply ingrained in our national identity. No one wants our defence personnel to feel unappreciated.

Unfortunately, support for the long term commitment to Afghanistan has segued into acceptance of foreign weapons of war in our north. Our supposed role as 'deputy sheriff' of the region smacks of little more than a meek acquiescence in vigilantism.

We in the West speak about promoting democracy abroad but have a poor record in our ability to distinguish between dictatorships and popular governments. The pejorative term has changed from 'communist puppet regime' to 'rogue states', but the arrogance remains the same.

Unless 'democracy' is to degenerate into an empty term of approval, we must think hard about issues of responsibility, accountability, openness and civil rights. Shooting first and asking questions later offends these ideals in the international sphere, just as it does at home.

Domestically, we pay a high price for our readiness to follow great powers. The lives of defence personnel are endangered, overseas deployments are costly, and active participation in the arms race damages our ability to contribute to multilateral peace processes.

These costs place strains on the overseas aid projects so necessary to promoting future security. How different it would be if the planes using the northern airfields were not part of

the world's greatest arsenal of 'weapons of mass destruction', but carriers on their way to humanitarian relief programs in Africa, for example.

The contradictions of the Iraq invasion continue. As Donna Mulhearn notes in her memoir *Ordinary Courage*, Australia may have imprisoned without trial more Iraqis than were deprived of their liberty during the dictatorship overthrown by the war.

For her conscientious decision to become a human shield to protect civilian facilities during the bombing, Mulhearn was vilified at home. Patriotism reduces complex questions to simple slogans, and any challenge to the cycle of military response requires a degree of imagination that frightens the unthinking, and a degree of risk that terrifies people whose fears governments have augmented for their own cynical purposes.

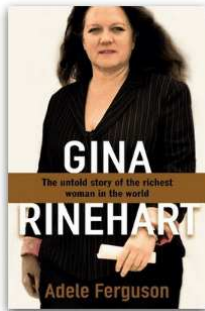
We still hear arguments that on balance the war improved the lives of the people of Iraq. Such attempts to reduce the lives lost in Iraq to figures on a balance sheet are immoral.

The principle that 'might is right' is now embedded in the national consciousness. As disparity in wealth increases and an underclass mentality takes hold, the ideals of equity and justice seem like distant echoes of a time when Australians believed everyone deserved a fair go. It is not surprising that despite engaging in costly military actions over a decade Australians are more fearful now than we were in 2003.

## Gina's subpoena threatens press freedom

### THE AGENDA

Michael Mullins



During the past week we've seen media power brokers assert their view that the Federal Government's proposed media reforms represent a massive attack on freedom of the press. Arguably these assertions are spurious and reflect fears that the changes would threaten the *power* of the press and other media.

Freedom of the press is about freedom to report, not to dominate. It is a value that is cherished by serious advocates of democracy and denied by totalitarian regimes. It is a complex principle that contains a range of imperatives, some of which are contained in the [Media Alliance Code of Ethics](#). These include upholding the confidentiality of journalistic sources where confidence is requested. During the week, in which the press freedom debate has raged, this core principle of reporting has been challenged by one of Australia's up and coming media barons.

Mining magnate Gina Rinehart is pursuing legal action that has led to the issue of a subpoena to Fairfax journalist Adele Ferguson, author of the unauthorised biography, *Gina Rinehart — The Untold Story of the Richest Woman in the World*.

It demands she hand over emails, text messages, notebooks and any recordings of interviews made between Rinehart's eldest son John Hancock and the journalist since September 2011. Ferguson has until the end of this month to comply or be charged with contempt of court. A conviction could carry a jail term. She [told](#) the ABC she'd go to jail rather than violate the confidentiality principle.

There are appeals pending over [other](#) attempts to force journalists to reveal sources in various cases, including one involving Rinehart from a year ago. But the coincidence of last week's subpoena with the debate on press freedom highlights the hollow nature of the rhetoric of the media power brokers and indeed most politicians.

There has been scant coverage of Ferguson's plight in some of the major media outlets. Free speech defender Andrew Bolt, who is Rinehart's media commentator protege, was slow off the mark with a token reference. Meanwhile politicians from both the Government and Opposition have been silent with the notable [exception](#) of Malcolm Turnbull, who tweeted in Ferguson's defence. It appears other MPs are driven not by principle but fear of the media power brokers including Rinehart.

It's left to concerned citizens to fight for this important principle, which they are doing through a petition at [change.org](#).

## **A funny thing happened on the way to the Vatican**

### RELIGION

*Richard Leonard*

I'd just finished teaching for the day, at the Gregorian University where I'm a visiting professor, when I heard the news. The first clue was the bells: as the white smoke goes up, the bells at St Peter's start ringing and, through a centuries-old tradition, the tolling cascades from one belfry to the next. It took a full two minutes for the bells of the churches near the Gregorian to ring. A tweet would have been quicker, but not as poetic.

At that moment a Polish nun in full habit ran past me shouting *fermata bianca, fermata bianca*. Sister was excited. And suddenly so was I. These last days have seen this extraordinary Catholic theatre: where 115 men talk to the world via a chimney. It was time for the 'big reveal'. I now know where reality TV gets this stuff.

There are moments in your life when the effort is worth it. St Peter's is a good 25 minutes walk from where I am living. It was cold and drizzling. I could have watched it all on TV. But sometimes you just have to be there.

Every road led to the Vatican. Even what passes for Roman road rules were in suspension. I'm not sure I've ever felt such a group buzz before. At the Square, 100,000 gathered to see history. Being a single traveller has its advantages: I got a great spot in front of the left-hand Bernini fountain. It's a prime spot for the huge screen.

You might think that up-close in the Square would be best. But wherever you are, when the human beings emerge on that balcony you realise how far away it is. It should be no surprise that as a cinema scholar I thanked God for the big screen! But, the Oscar goes to ... the Square's sound designer. Modern acoustics meets a Renaissance masterpiece. Every word perfectly surrounded Bernini's columns.

At 8.06pm the lights went on in the balcony loggia and the crowd went wild. It took another nine minutes for a Cardinal to appear and tell us that Jorge Mario Bergoglio had been elected Pope Francis I.

Jorge who? I was the only one nearby who knew his name and that he was a Jesuit. In fact I'd been on a panel on Ireland's RTE radio last Monday where he was talked about and where their Vatican correspondent, Gerald O'Connell, said he could be the compromise candidate. I told Geraldine Doogue the same thing in an interview for *Compass* the next day. I hope she was impressed with my skills as a prophet, as I am by O'Connell's.

Because I knew more than anyone else about our new Holy Father, I became our area's papal expert. All I knew was that he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, 76, a Jesuit, and was runner-up to Benedict last time. The rest I made up and sounded authoritative. My new disciples lapped it up. I was translated into several languages. If only more of my books would be!

Francis stood there for what seemed like the cruellest time. I realised why members of royal families never appear on balconies alone. You can only wave so often. That's why they come in twos and chat and wave and chat and wave. The new Pope had 73 minutes to stand and wave, and no one to chat with. He looked stunned.

There was conjecture about who and why 'Francis'. I started giving out my well-known class on 'boy saints whose names begin with F', and confidently asserted that it was a complex mix of Assisi, Xavier and Borgia.

A Latvian woman nearby interjected, 'No Borgia could have become a saint'. She [failed my class](#), but later my own mark went down as well because I learned that the truth is not as convoluted as my theory was. It is all about Frank Assisi's mission to rebuild Christ's Church. That will do me, and there is a lot of work to do.

Then we got the *Buena sera* and the Latin Americans went nuts. Understandably. This guy is now the most famous Argentine ever, jumping to first place over Che, Evita and Maradona. Like 'Francis', they specialise in one-name handles too, but with friends like that ...

He went on to speak as one 'who presides over all the churches in charity ... a journey of fraternity, of love, of trust between us'. Not lost on me. He is no mere ruler. He is a pastor, a leader who knows that the best way to get others to follow is to empower them and lead by example. I felt a bit empowered just listening to him.

Before he gave us his blessing, he asked us to be silent and pray for him, then bent in a reverential bow, before God, before us in the Square, and the world. And 100,000 people were immediately obedient. Still. Silent. We recognised he was a humble man who understood something about holiness. We all bow in awe before mystery.

In the end he laughed and said, 'Good night and have a good rest,' and turned and walked inside. It felt like your grandpa saying 'It's been a big day, and it is way past all our bed times.'

He later refused the papal limousine back to the Cardinal's house. He rode the bus with the rest of the boys. I rode the bus home too: my trip was packed, uncomfortable and rocky. The journey ahead for the Church might be, too. But at least our driver might know the way, because at heart he is, it seems, a fellow traveller.

## Optional voting dims democracy

### POLITICS

*Patrick McCabe*

'The strong argument against compulsory voting is simply one of liberty,' proclaims Australian columnist Christopher Pearson. 'In a free country, the right to decide not to vote ought to be enshrined and as much taken for granted as the right to vote.'

'In principle, the case for voluntary voting is overwhelming,' declares *The Spectator Australia's* Peter Coleman.

'You should have the right to vote for the [candidates] you support, and not vote for the [ones you don't support],' pronounces politics professor Dean Jaensch in *The Adelaide Advertiser*.

In the wake of Campbell Newman's recent suggestion of voluntary voting in Queensland, and Bronwyn Bishop's subsequent proposal for voluntary preferential voting federally, the pundits have been of one mind. While they might see practical arguments one way or the other, all are agreed that in theory, 'voluntary voting', premised on an alleged 'right not to vote', holds the high ground.

But where did this 'right not to vote' emerge from? And do we really have it? Liberty is important, but we don't have absolute liberty. There are some things we don't have the right not to do.

Few, for instance, stand up for our right not to pay taxes. Why not? Because paying taxes is a civic duty. One of the minimum requirements of existing in a community is making a contribution (if you can) to the public goods that you and your fellow citizens benefit from.

By contrast, the right to freedom of speech and freedom of expression is a bona fide right, and it comes duly packaged with its seldom-exercised inverse, the right not to speak or express oneself.

So is voting more like paying taxes, or is it more like speaking or expressing oneself? *The Australian's* Malcolm Mackerras provides a useful case study.

Arguing for voluntary *preferential* voting, Mackerras asks us to imagine a 'hypothetical Greens supporter' who can't stand the major parties and doesn't want her preference to ultimately flow to either. 'Should not they be given the right to vote one for the Green and leave the rest of the ballot unmarked?' Mackerras asks.

If you think voting is about 'making a statement', 'expressing yourself' or 'making your voice heard', then you probably agree. The Greens supporter who despises the major parties should be able to demonstrate her disgust by not giving either the benefit of her preference.

But is voting really all about giving the finger to politicians you can't stand? That's one view. Another, possibly quaint view is that voting is about determining which candidate is the one most suited to being given legislative power over us. In a democracy, we maintain that the best candidate is the one who is most preferable to the most people. If some of us refuse to tell us who they prefer, then we can't work out who is the best candidate.

Does the hypothetical Greens supporter actually hate each major party equally? If so, she hasn't followed the news very closely. For as much as some like to moan about the narrowing ideological divide between the two major parties, it doesn't take a political scientist to discern some fairly sizeable differences in their policies.



So does this hypothetical voter really have the 'right' to refuse to tell us which party she really prefers, just so she can 'express herself'?

Without this voter's preferences, the election result is less reflective of 'the people's will'. That's bad, because elections and voting are all about finding out what is the people's will.

If a portion of the people refuses to tell us their will, we're left with representatives who are less representative of that will, and everyone loses. Citizens have less confidence in, and feel greater ill will towards, their representatives. All the divergent views and interests and perspectives and opinions that constitute our nation are not accounted for, and our governance is the poorer for it.

Being able to vote is not just a privilege we may or may not choose to take advantage of. It's a minimum duty we owe by dint of our existence within a society of human beings.

Pearson alluded to and dismissed this unfashionable argument: '[An argument for compulsory voting] is that it ensures the maximum enfranchisement of the electorate in making people take ownership of their government. But I think we could all do with a little less nanny-state-inspired taking ownership.'

If you believe that any argument a conservative commentator characterises as 'nanny-state-inspired' must be wrong, you might find such reasoning convincing. Otherwise, you might agree that sometimes our nation's pundits could do well to remember that banal but oft-forgotten adage — that with rights come responsibilities.

## Dawn of the Assange cult

### FILMS

*Tim Kroenert*

***Underground: The Julian Assange Story (M)*. Director: Robert Connolly. Starring: Anthony LaPaglia, Rachel Griffiths, Alex Williams, Laura Wheelwright. 90 minutes**

The subtitle could easily be 'a' as opposed to 'the Julian Assange story'. It focuses on a very specific period of the life of the Wikileaks founder (lately turned [would-be Australian politician](#)), that being his fledgling law-flouting shenanigans in 1989 as a prodigious young hacker from the Dandenong Ranges east of Melbourne.

It's also fair to say it is a yarn spun specially for those who see Assange not as a cyber crook but as larrikin hero — Ned Kelly armed with a dial-up modem — sticking it to the stodgy local police force (represented here by a neatly mulleted LaPaglia) and inspired by his activist mum Christine (the ever wonderful Griffiths) to disrupt the dodgy deeds of no lesser international supervillain than the US military at the dawn of the first Gulf War.

Writer-director [Robert Connolly](#)'s film — which originally aired last year on Channel Ten and is about to embark on a national theatrical tour and series of events\* — makes a deeply sympathetic character of Assange as it explores these early experiences as a softly spoken maverick and computer genius.

The roots of his civil disobedience are linked to his derision of Christine's penchant for seemingly ineffective peaceful protest. While his family's run-ins with the mountain cult of which they were one-time members adds a sinister spin to the film and serves to test the character's faith in traditional forms of law enforcement, while also hinting at lasting psychological trauma in Assange that may contribute to his later persona as a lone avenger.

The character is given further vulnerability and basic human fallibility by the portrayal of his youthful affair with the young mother of his first son (Wheelwright), who is initially enamoured to his passion and genius but becomes frustrated and alienated by his single mindedness. In the casting of newcomer Williams as Assange Connolly has found the perfect combination of boyish charm with a sense of fierce genius and introverted charisma.

One of the film's great charms is its abundance of period detail, in particular of 1989 computer technology, which is at once laughably nostalgic but also revelatory of the ends to which Assange and his fellow pioneer hackers were able to bend this seemingly archaic technology, three years before the launch of the World Wide Web.

During one somewhat heavy handed scene Christine insists that her most

important role as a parent was to instill Julian with values, so that 'wherever he lands' he will have a keen sense of right and wrong. She makes this statement of faith to an investigating police officer who is closing in on the teenage virtual-vigilante.

The scene cuts through to the core ethical question raised by Wikileaks and all activities of civil disobedience: can what is 'right' transcend what is 'legal'? Judging by this unerringly sympathetic portrayal it seems safe to say that Connolly, for one, firmly believes that yes, it can, and should.

The dialogue is clunky at times, but the sharp pace, gripping performances and immersive naturalistic production design mean *Underground* will sit as comfortably on art house screens as it did on lounge room TV sets.

*\*The film will enjoy a limited theatrical run under a new distribution model pioneered by Connolly called Cinema Plus, which combines public screenings with in-cinema events such as panel discussions and workshops. It kicks off in Melbourne this weekend with events to follow in other cities in March and April ([full details online](#)).*

## Caucusing cardinals trump greedy media

MEDIA

*Ray Cassin*

'Wish I knew who to credit with this: 'What the cardinals are looking for is Jesus with an MBA'.' So tweeted the ABC's Lisa Millar, waiting in the 5000-strong media pack outside the conclave that has just ended.

Whether Jorge Mario Bergoglio quite fits that description may be doubted. A newly elected pope who chooses Francis as his reign name doesn't exactly evoke images of slick corporate CEOs and Harvard Business School-inspired modern managerialism. And who would want a pope who conformed to those images anyway?

But for all its glibness, 'Jesus with an MBA' was a clever line and whoever coined it deserves a credit. It pithily summed up the perhaps contradictory qualities the cardinal electors were seeking among the papabile: genuine humility and pastoral sensitivity, combined with the courage and intellectual acuity needed to clean up the muddle and corruption that have mired the Roman Curia. The Vatican Bank, at least, really needs a dose of managerialism.

So the world's news outlets gleefully seized on the phrase 'Jesus with an MBA' and ran with it. It was far from the silliest line churned out of Rome during the past fortnight, as the media cranked up reporting of what the cardinals were doing and saying, while the Vatican tried to muzzle anyone resembling a reliable news source.

The result of the Vatican's efforts, predictably, was that unreliable news sources, peddling lurid, bizarre and uncheckable stories, often got a run they did not deserve. The media abhor a vacuum, and thus we got to hear about, among other things, the cabal of anonymous gay clerics who are allegedly at the heart of the Vatileaks and banking scandals. UFOs and monsters from space didn't appear in these stories, but if the Church had endured another week of *sede vacante* they probably would have.

There was plenty of serious coverage, too, of course, much of it drawn from the reportage of veteran Vatican watchers like *The Guardian's* John Hooper and John Allen of the US *National Catholic Reporter*. They were obviously talking to cardinals and curial officials who weren't supposed to be talking to them, and from those forbidden chats a more or less consistent narrative emerged, which was picked up by rest of the world's media.

This shared narrative rested on several assumptions: that there was no single frontrunner among the papabile, so the conclave would be a long one by modern standards, perhaps up to five days; and that the cardinals had divided into two camps — those demanding drastic reform of the curia, who favoured Angelo Scola, the Archbishop of Milan, and obdurate curial defenders, who preferred the

Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Odilo Scherer.

This narrative had plenty to commend it to those who had to do pieces to camera or file regular updates for the 24/7 news cycle. It allowed them to portray the conclave as a two-horse race, just like the election campaigns more familiar to many of their audiences. It had an element of surprise about it: counter-intuitively, the structural reformers were backing an Italian, whereas the champion of the old guard hailed from the New World.

The narrative could be tweaked in various ways for the next story or bulletin: What would happen if neither man could get the necessary two-thirds majority? Who might the cardinals turn to as a compromise? And, leavening the mix, were plenty of lighter stories about the quaintness and drama of it all: how the black or white smoke would be made, what the new pope would wear, etc.

The narrative was speculation. And it turned out to be wrong. It did not take five days to elect Francis I, which strongly suggests many of the electors entered the conclave with the name Bergoglio on their minds.

This should not have surprised seasoned political reporters among the unprecedentedly large media pack. What did they think the cardinals were doing in those preliminary meetings before the conclave? Caucusing, of course, though that is supposed to be forbidden, too. But the media had a narrative, and they stuck to it.

The coverage of the conclave was a microcosm of the gulf that, all round the Catholic world, divides Church authorities from journalists wanting to report on the Church. The former still routinely perceive the latter as hostile, just because they ask questions. And the walls of silence that are too often erected in response to those questions are taken by journalists, fairly or not, as an indication that the Church has something to hide.

After Benedict announced his resignation, high among the qualities touted as desirable in his successor was the gift of being a good communicator. We'll know that Francis has that gift if the walls of silence start coming down.

## Nothing romantic about living in squalor

### THE SAVAGE MIND

*Ellena Savage*

When I add up my freelance income relative to the hours of labour spent, it amounts to a pitiable rate, especially compared with what I receive for any unskilled casual work I do. After a mind-numbing day at a paid job, I sense the cosmic injustice that the hardest work I do has so little monetary value.

Yet when something I have written — some excrement of months of research and creative labour — gets published and well-received, I feel vindicated. On days like that, I can look at my bank balance without weeping. Money buys practical things like socks, but socks are not the reason that people create.

Simon Crean's new [Creative Partnerships](#) initiative will pump \$75.3 million over four years into the arts. It has awarded great funding packages to certain large arts organisations such as the Malthouse Theatre and Circus Oz, and proposes funding models to make it easier for philanthropists to reach the arts sector.

It has been well-received, even if it is a more-of-the-same, funding-career-administrators-and-educators-and-leaving-artistes-to-their-hellish-squalor kind of model.

Creative writers have always encountered poverty as a workplace hazard. As Wallace Stegner wrote in his 1959 essay '[To a Young Writer](#)', 'you will always be pinched for money ... it is not a new problem'. Now that most newspapers have failed to find workable financial models, lifestyle writers and journalists are joining these same lowly financial ranks.

Professional writers are being asked to work for free, even for profitable private enterprises like *The Atlantic*, who no doubt paid Stegner well for that essay. Last week, an email exchange [exposed](#) by journalist Nate Thayer circulated in which *The Atlantic* had commissioned a piece to be repurposed by Thayer, and then implied that the privilege of the wide circulation they could offer should be payment enough for the established journalist's work.

Artists have been cultured to believe that their profession is both a choice and a privilege simply because the value of their labour exists outside of the free market.

I question the extent to which people really choose their talents, interests and commitments. I was raised by an artist whose whole family are artists, and they are not daft enough to have simply chosen to do what they do and accept the harsh financial realities. To suggest art is a 'privileged choice' is to shame and marginalise artists.

Art can be a satisfying occupation. But artists cannot live on self-satisfaction alone. Who will support them? All state-led cultural funds, including Crean's, are

bound to be problematic, simply because they need to determine and ascribe value to art, and their agendas can inhibit movement within the arts.

The conversation about what writers are worth goes far beyond the idea that the internet 'broke' a profit model. This is a historically unresolved social problem.

Last year Jeff Sparrow ignited the case for better unionisation of creative labourers, [criticising](#) writers for their neoliberal working lives. Although I support the idea of a stronger union for freelance creatives (the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance 'national freelance rates' are an unimaginable 93c per word!), I do see the necessity of individualism in one's creative life.

There is a difference between most unionised professions and artistic ones, because artists will make art regardless of whether or not they're getting paid. Very few plumbers would unclog my toilet for the love of it. So a neoliberal market can't account for the value of art, but nor can a highly regulated industrial environment.

The benefits of a thriving arts culture are difficult to quantify, but it is instructive to look to societies which don't have them. Under fascist, theocratic, or otherwise autocratic political systems, the arts stagnate, and artists are persecuted unless their work breathes life to propaganda. The state is generally bad at determining the value of art, because the state will always have a specific mandate which a lot of art needs to be free from.

There might, then, be some value to *Creative Partnerships'* private-public model in reducing the state's cultural mandate within the arts. However, the report which informed it states that philanthropists 'are interested in how the arts can be utilised to support positive whole of community outcomes'. Philanthropists, too, have agendas.

Even within the unionised-creative-labour model, there is room for free work. I think of working for free like making the decision to have children: you commit to a great deal of labour, time and money, it feels thankless at times, but is ultimately rewarding. The crux of this analogy is that free labour should only be entered into if there are rewards in the transaction, and never if you are contributing to someone else's financial gain.

Many grassroots arts communities I'm involved with will be left out of Crean's package, unless AusCo deigns to bestow them with cash (unlikely), or their local MPs see their work being as valid as a shopping-mall Australian Idol. These organisations are young, critical, and wildly creative; they organise and publish and perform without funding (unless you recognise Centrelink as an arts funding body). One day they will need to start getting paid.

## **A Jesuit learns to live with a Jesuit Pope**

### RELIGION

*Andrew Hamilton*

'What's it like to get a Jesuit pope?' A hard question to wake up to, but I have got used to it during the day.

I must say that I hadn't thought of the new Pope in Jesuit terms. I was glad we had a new Pope, felt the sense of hope and possibility that seems to accompany any such changes, and felt sympathy and benevolence for Cardinal Bergoglio in the demanding responsibilities he had assumed.

But of course then I began to recognise in myself the quirky responses that had quickly to be censored. The partisan reaction, for example. A Jesuit pope, great. Just like a Demons player winning the Brownlow. Eat your hearts out, Magpies ... Franciscans and Dominicans! Look who won the big one.

Censored, too, was the self-congratulatory thought that the new Pope is one of us and will understand our Jesuit ways. And that the Church, of course, will benefit immeasurably from his Jesuit training.

That satisfying reflection was immediately followed by a touch of anxiety that I was also reluctant to share. 'Perhaps he will understand our Jesuit ways all too well,' I thought. 'He will recognise some of the slovenly habits we Jesuits have picked up and send us to reform school.'

By this time people had begun congratulating me on the first Jesuit pope, and sharing our satisfaction that now we had our man in the Vatican. I was mildly irritated. 'Don't they know that when Jesuits become bishops, still less the Bishop of Rome, they do not live under the Jesuit rule? The Pope owes the Jesuits nothing, but the Jesuits owe the Pope respect and obedience in accepting jobs he gives us. He is not our man in Rome.

'And don't they know that Ignatius, the Jesuits' founder, was strongly opposed to Jesuits accepting ecclesiastical dignities, especially becoming bishops and cardinals? He saw it as incompatible with the kind of service to which Jesuits were called. Of course, the good of the universal church sometimes trumps the good of the Jesuit order, so there have been many Jesuit bishops and cardinals. But this is more a cause for grief than for congratulation.'

So I thought to myself with increasing passion. But there was no reason why people should know any of these things, so I accepted the congratulations cheerfully. Congratulations are a way of sharing the hope and cheer that comes with a new pope and of finding connections, even through raggle taggle Jesuits.

Then I stopped to think more deeply. And began to recognise in Jorge Bergoglio things that are characteristically Jesuit. I felt some pride that we as a religious congregation had been able to nurture these gifts.



Above all there was his simplicity of life. For a cardinal to live in the burbs, cook for himself and to catch a bus to work is more than an affectation. It is a statement of intent, a definition of ministry, especially when it is combined with his consistent defence of the rights of the poor and his criticism of clericalism.

He was making a statement of what matters, and what matters to him is clearly the proclamation of the Gospel in its simplicity and strength, and particularly its proclamation to the poor. He lives what we Jesuits aspire to.

Inherent in this way of living and in his calling himself Francis is a habit of discernment, another Jesuit ideal. He is clearly in the habit of reflecting on his actions, on the world in which he is called to act, and on the Gospel, and of being ready to act decisively and surprisingly. He is a man after St Ignatius' heart.

This suggests he will be his own man in the Vatican, not bound by conventions of titles, of ceremonial or of administrative practice. The habit of asking what matters is a necessary starting point for developing forms of governance appropriate to the contemporary church and to meet the challenges posed by sexual abuse.

Finally I got back to thinking of myself, not as a Jesuit but simply as a human being, and felt sympathy for another man from whom so much will be expected and demanded, more than any man can deliver. And so I said a prayer for him that he will find consolation as well as attrition in his service as Pope.

## How Pope Francis will mend a broken church

### THE AGENDA

*Michael Mullins*

The election of a new pope is always an exciting moment for the Church and the world. After weeks of uncertainty, it seems there is good reason to celebrate the election of Pope Francis I, and to congratulate and offer support to him in the immense task ahead.

The excitement of the election of a new pope always brings with it the expectation that he is a new Messiah and has the ability to fix what is broken with the Church. But a more realistic, and indeed preferable, aspiration is for him to acknowledge before all else the ways in which the Church is broken.

With Benedict's resignation acting as a circuit breaker, the world will be looking to Francis to fix the Church. But in reality his role will be to set the Church on the path to recovery, along the lines of the [12 steps](#) of Alcoholics Anonymous. This will begin with the admission that the life of the Church is out of control in the face of clergy sexual abuse and other systemic challenges.

It would seem that such a disposition of humility and honesty is a more effective and inclusive path than attempting to turn the Church upside down. Such a radical approach would further polarise an already divided Church, and we know from his past actions that Francis is more of a bridge builder than a revolutionary.

He was far from liberation theology, which was seen to be the way to decisively switch the allegiance of the Catholic Church in Latin American from the ruling elites to the poor. He preferred to live with the dictatorships, to plead the cause of the poor, but make his statement by making radical changes to his own lifestyle.

After his appointment as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Francis broke with tradition by choosing to live in a small apartment rather than the palatial bishop's residence. This shows his commitment to acting as a bridge between the Church of the poor and the Church of the Latin American elites in a way will hopefully be translated into a determination to walk in the shoes of sexual abuse victims, who have been humiliated by those bound up with the power and privilege of a Church that values the patronage of elites.

Early commentaries on the new pope are emphasising his distaste for the clericalism that many believe has been a key factor in the Church's sexual abuse of minors. While he failed openly to challenge Argentina's dictatorship of the late 1970s, he was unequivocal in his [condemnation](#) of clerical privilege: 'These are today's hypocrites. Those who clericalise the Church. Those who separate the people of God from salvation.'

This is enough to give hope to the Catholic Church and its victims.

## **Pope for a new Reformation**

### RELIGION

*Andrew Hamilton*

In the media hugger-mugger before the papal conclave began, most cardinals spoke of the need for reform.

But they had in mind different kinds of reform: an evangelical reform that would focus on renewing the faith of all Catholics; a disciplinary reform that would tightly define Catholic identity, act against dissent and unify the Church against the 'secularist threat'; a structural reform that would address those aspects of governance and culture that contributed to the sexual abuse crisis and to alienation among Catholics.

Pope Francis will address these proposals not simply as sociological challenges, but within a Catholic framework that developed in the face of the late medieval pressure for reform of the Church in its head and its members, culminating in the Reformation.

In this understanding the Church has divine and human aspects. In its faith and essential structures the Church is simply a gift that is held in trust. It is unchangeable and holy, so that Catholics' access to God through its sacraments and teaching is guaranteed.

But the Church is also a sociological reality composed of human beings and their structured and unstructured ways of relating. Human beings are sinful, and so the church needs constant reform.

In weighing how Pope Francis may set reform within this understanding of the Church as both holy and sinful, Augustine's complex treatment of the holiness of the Church may be helpful. He argued that the Church would be holy in an unqualified sense only at the end of time.

He said the Church is holy in the sense that Christ, who is the active power in its teaching, sacraments, governance and mission to the poor, is holy. But as a human reality, the Church is mixed: it comprises those who choose God above all things and those who choose other things before God. In that sense it is not holy. And finally he described the Church as a school for holiness. Through it Christ forms us to choose God above all things.

From this perspective the priority in any reform will be to strengthen the hope of Catholics in the future transformation of the Church at the end of time, and their awareness of Christ's presence and activity of Christ within the teaching, sacraments and outreach of the Church. That is the context within which Pope Francis will situate structural and disciplinary reform.

In the Catholic Churches of the Western world, at least, this hope and faith run counter to a prevailing culture, in which only what can be detected empirically is

real, and our hope is confined to what takes place in our universe. So faith and hope need encouragement.

Popes and bishops have instituted programs to encourage this kind of faith and hope. They have had varying degrees of success. The most effective seem to have focused on the depth of faith rather than on its content, have been led by lay people, and have touched relatively small groups. This argues for local reform initiatives that build diversity in the sense of being Catholic. There is no magic bullet. But there is a great need for encouragement.

The mixture of good and evil in the Church invites realism. Catholics should expect that the relationships embodied in even given structures like the papacy, episcopal governance and in the life of congregations will be infected by the desire for power and control, resentment, pride, a sense of entitlement, and other signs of sinfulness.

Reform will mean attending to these signs, changing the culture that breeds infection, and recognising that changes in structures are not ends in themselves.

If the Catholic Church is to be a school for holiness it must reassure Catholics above all that it is a safe school — that its pupils will not be abused. In schools, this normally demands a change of culture to shift focus from reputation and power to the dignity, growth and empowerment of students. In the Catholic Church it will mean dealing decisively with the abuse of power by clergy in sexual and other areas at both Roman and local levels.

Of the three proposals for reform — evangelical, disciplinary and structural — Pope Francis will certainly give priority to evangelical reform both of head and members because it is fundamental to other kinds of reform. He will preach the Gospel with its high understanding of human life and freedom. His simplicity of life will be a gift in this respect.

But evangelical reform will rely on structural and disciplinary reform to encourage the initiative of local churches and to offer reassurance that the Catholic Church is a safe place of schooling for head and members.

But a disciplinary reform that focuses on silencing debate and on making common cause against contemporary secularism would only discourage evangelical reform. If successful, it would turn Catholics' attention away from the hunk of four by two in their own eye to the splinter in the enemy's eye.

## Child soldier learns murder and motherhood

### FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Rebelle* (MA). Director: Kim Nguyen. Starring: Rachel Mwanza, Serge Kanyinda. 90 minutes**

Recent films exploring the plight of child soldiers have chewed over the existential consequences (*Incendies*) or geopolitical realities (*Blood Diamond*) of those experiences in a rousing didactic way. *Rebelle* (nominated for an Oscar under its evocative English-language title *War Witch*) takes a more lyrical though no less harrowing approach to its portrayal of a young girl made to exchange her innocence for a weapon in sub-Saharan Africa.

Komona (Mwanza) is 12 when rebel soldiers arrive in her village and brutally conscript her and her fellow youths. Her initiation is to be forced to murder her own parents, a gruesomely symbolic act that has the dual effect of erasing both her former identity and her childhood purity in a single hail of bullets. The cinematography employed throughout the film is raw and unembellished, which only heightens the horror of the events it depicts.

Komona's preternatural instincts in the field of combat see her earn the moniker 'witch' — a reverent title implying mystical power. She claims that the dead speak to her — indeed the grey-caked ghosts of fallen comrades seem to appear to her to warn her of danger. These apparitions do imply a keen intuition, but also suggest a psychological coping device that replaces gruesome realities with an eerie but more palatable fantasy.

She becomes close to a young rebel and healer known as Magicien (Kanyinda), who takes her under his wing and, later, encourages her to flee with him from their ruthless overseers. At this point *Rebelle* turns into an unlikely love story; Magicien's idiosyncratic attempts to woo her lead to a surprisingly sweet and comical plot diversion. This respite from the violence that has gone before only heightens the dread of what is to come.

They take refuge with Magicien's uncle, a butcher so traumatised by his own experiences as a former soldier that he must keep a vomit bucket beside him as he works his cleaver. This image of the lasting psychological effects of having been a killer stands as an unspoken prophecy for the film's young heroes. It is also a reminder for these two fugitives that the past cannot be shaken off easily. When it does return, it brings bloodshed.

The film opens with Komona, at 14, telling her story to her unborn child. That she has fallen pregnant after being kidnapped by violent men foreshadows a particular brand of horror in her tale. Her affair with Magicien relieves the foreboding, but only for a while. The best that can be said about the circumstances of the conception and birth is that they offer fragile hope that life

may be made to flourish even in a landscape of violence and death.

## **Agnostic prayers for an infirm infant**

NON-FICTION

*Gillian Bouras*

It takes us a long time to realise the world is not made for us, and that despite the apparent invincibility of youth we do not remain proof against misfortune forever. Even when things seem to be going well, we are often reminded we are suspended by a thread over a pit of chaos. Sometimes the thread snaps; sometimes it doesn't.

My third grandson was born in Athens last week. A trouble-free pregnancy and a fairly easy and shortish labour resulted in Orestes, weighing in at a hefty 4kg.

But a bolt from the blue: within minutes of his birth, Orestes was discovered to have a malformed oesophagus. His mother was able to hold him for only a few minutes before he was whisked away for tests.

Within a short time he was transferred to St Sophia's Children's hospital where, at the age of only 19 hours, he underwent a two and a half hour operation.

I managed to arrive in time to sweat out the seemingly interminable vigil with my son; my daughter-in-law had to remain in the maternity hospital. I never want to endure such waiting again, all the while wondering what was going on behind the steel doors of the operating theatre that had swallowed up the precious little bundle.

At the same time I was conscious of people who are worse off. I suddenly remembered the sight of a young father playing with his toddler son in the front garden of Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital. They were both enjoying the game, despite the little boy's burden of a chemotherapy backpack and tube in his nose. And the father was bearing his own burden because he had to. Children's hospitals are very sobering places.

You have to hand it to the Greek family: at any one time there were at least six people waiting with us: Orestes' maternal grandfather, over from Crete, and assorted uncles and aunts. And they did a marvellous job of keeping spirits up: ours and their own.

Mobile phones rang from time to time; texts were sent. An English friend said she would light a candle for Orestes in Hexham Abbey, Northumberland. A devout Catholic friend living near me in the Peloponnese exhorted me, via text, to *Say a prayer*. Yes, I replied.

And, the ageing brain being such an odd thing, one for making wayward connections, I immediately remembered novelist Patrick White floundering on his back in farmyard mud, and calling, as he wrote much later, through 'watery lips to a God in whom I did not believe'. White was much concerned with the relationship between the blundering human being and God.

Well, if ever there was a blundering human being, I am it. As for God, I'm not sure. White described himself as a *lapsed Anglican egotist agnostic pantheist occultist existentialist would-be though failed Christian Australian*. This description resonates with me, although I have to eliminate the *Anglican*.

But if I have ever prayed, I prayed that night. Blunderingly.

And after what seemed like an eternity a door opened, and the amiable bear of a surgeon appeared. *Ola kala*, he said, and his smile was sweet to see: *All's well*. The thread had not snapped. And then I thanked God for modern medical science, for as recently as the 1940s nothing could have been done for Orestes.

He was trundled past us, bandaged and sprouting tubes, on his way to the ICU: we watched while expert hands transferred him from the portable humidicrib to the stationary one. As I write, he is still in the ICU, where only his parents can visit him: his condition is stable, and his medication is being reduced. No longer an inert little body, he is opening his eyes, yawning, and stretching his limbs, doing all those human baby things.

I cannot claim to pray in a formal manner, but last thing at night I do the thinking rounds, so to speak, and name family and friends. And these last few nights I have put the surgeon stranger on my list. I think he will be there for many a night to come.



## Nice guys of Victorian politics finish last

### POLITICS

*Moira Rayner*

Geoff Shaw is currently the most powerful man in Victorian politics. When he triggered Victoria's political crisis last week by resigning from the Liberal party because he 'no longer had confidence in Ted Baillieu', the Coalition Government lost its majority — if Labor wins its Lyndhurst by-election next month, each will have 43 seats. Shaw will hold the balance of power.

And who is this man? A maverick who gave his Premier two days to 'explain himself', after Baillieu referred his chief of staff's apparent role in a plot to oust the then police commissioner for investigation by Victoria's peculiarly stunted, brand-new, already compromised and quasi-anti-corruption body, the IBAC.

Shaw himself is under investigation for misuse of his parliamentary Ford Territory for deliveries from Albury to South Australia for his private business. The first inquiry by the Ombudsman found that he had done so, and recommended a parliamentary inquiry. There is now both an OPI investigation and a Parliamentary Privileges Committee investigating the matter.

Shaw is one of those big men in a small town who flourish at community cocktail events with a 'what you see is what you get' manner; a man who joined the Liberal Party only in 2009 and, after 22 years as a local accountant, charmed his way into pre-selection for Frankston (a working-class, low-cost housing former coastal resort to the South-East of the CBD) and whose win helped the Baillieu Government, unready, into power.

He is the new MP who deliberately tipped a bucket over the expectation that he would give the now-traditional 'welcome to country', prefacing his maiden speech by 'acknowledging the original owner of the land on which we stand', as 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of the Bible'.

He is also a man who put up a billboard on the main road begging his estranged wife to forgive him (for what?) in the terms of Psalm 42 ('As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you'); who publicly equated homosexuals with dangerous drivers and other 'murderers': and who, when invited into the Premier's sanctum for a quiet talk about his propensity for causing instability, apparently lectured his leader about the morality of his voting in favour of the 2008 Brumby government's reform of Victoria's abortion laws.

These laws, and his discontent with the reduced superannuation entitlements of relatively new MPs in the Victorian government, are issues he has publicly laid about as critical to his support, in the newly installed realm of government under Denis Naphine. Naphine, incidentally, voted thrice against abortion law reform.

Ted Baillieu was a modern Liberal whose close friendship with former premier

Jeff Kennett sat uneasily with his presentation as a Hamer-style Liberal of the 1970s: a patrician, sensitive, humane and rather likeable personality with all the media skills of a teddy bear.

Under his leadership, in just two years, Victoria saw an enormous chasm between his pre-election promises ('the best paid teachers in Australia'; 'open and accountable government') and reality.

His regime destroyed the hopes of Victorian students for options for training other than academic studies by slashing billions from TAFE funding; removed the autonomy of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission; and saw to the removal of the ALP-installed police commissioner in a murky series of manoeuvres that came back to haunt him on 7 March (not quite the Ides) as the assassins' knives went in.

Baillieu has been criticised for leading a 'do-nothing' government, but with a record such as this, it clearly wasn't so. It is true that 'senior business leaders' said they were confounded by his failure to work closely with them, but that was a matter of perception — as is the torrent of claims that he 'couldn't deal with the media'; as if persuading a journalist was his business.

Perhaps the avalanches of opinion rather than exploratory reporting of reliable, tested facts were a factor in his downfall. The people didn't know him. The ones who did, liked him. The ones he led, didn't follow him.

Baillieu presents as a renaissance man, interested in all things and resistant to spin, even if it damaged his political fortunes: a man with a touch of 'born to rule' about him, with some reluctance to be seen to enjoy what power he has. It was this vulnerability that brought Denis Napthine down, himself, as a former leader of the opposition. Nice men, in politics, don't last.

All parties have factions. Baillieu didn't control his nor did they control him. The ALP's factions have a life of their own, but began to skewer themselves as well as their leaders, since Rudd was bowled out and Gillard in. Unless that nice Dr Napthine has, after being tapped on the shoulder by equally nice Mr Baillieu, got a mind and a bat of his own, he will be run out in his turn, in the months to come.

I'm not sure that fixed term elections are a good thing, in the circumstances, for democracy. There will be crises, and rumours of crises, ahead. The times are a-changing. I wonder what Victorian children will think of them.

## Roman Polanski and the chain of abuse

### FILMS

*Lyn Bender*

Even in the virtual sphere, a lynch mob can be relentlessly cruel and unforgiving. I discovered this when I wrote an article in 2009 [examining](#) the suffering of Roman Polanski.

At the time he was under house arrest in Switzerland awaiting the response of the Swiss authorities to a request for extradition to the US. He was wanted on a rape charge to which he had pled guilty 30 years ago.

Despite declaring that I in no way excused the act of sex of a 40-year-old man with a 13-year-old girl, I received what to me was shockingly vicious commentary from the defenders of justice. Their hatred of a rapist was so immense, that they wished rape upon me, so that I might know how bad it was.

Putting aside the moral inconsistency of such a curse, the truth is that I was already 'in the club'. My first sexual experience had been at the age of 16 and is what I would now recognise to be rape.

At that point in my emotional development I was confused. The man was 36 and a friend of my older sister's then boyfriend, who happened to be a psychiatrist.

When in my confusion I explained to them what had happened, I was admonished for my folly and given an impromptu session with 'the psychiatrist'. I was in my youth and an extraverted joker, and he pronounced me unharmed and well adjusted. It has remained with me as a vile memory that tainted my sexual identity.

Despite this I was deeply moved at the powerful words and images in the documentary, [Roman Polanski : A Memoir](#). Perhaps it touched me because many of my Polish Jewish relatives suffered the fate portrayed in this living testimony of the life of a young boy in Nazi occupied Poland. Now almost 80, Polanski choked back tears as he recalled his father telling him at age eight or nine, 'They took Mother'.

I tweeted a brief emotional comment about the movie and received angry tweets about making excuses for a rapist. I felt violated, but it put me in mind of a paradox: that defence of justice and rage against injustice does not necessarily equate with empathy and compassion, even for the victim. Perhaps, especially not for the victim.

My life was never in danger from 'my rapist' but my heart was. It tore at an already vulnerable sense of self-worth and may have been part of later depression.

Again I must emphasise I do not excuse the act of rape, especially of a child. But I am grateful that I was not part of a court process or media frenzy. The victim in the Polanski case states in the memoir that she suffered more from the court and media focus than she had from the actions of Polanski. When the case was again in the spotlight 30 years later, in 2009, the media hounded her and her family, as they did Polanski's family.

The outpourings of rage and refusal to recognise that Polanski was himself, massively, a child victim — of the juggernaut of the Nazi war machine — reflect the inability of many to grasp morality in any but an all or nothing way. This conceptualises a person as either right or wrong, all bad or all good.

But cannot the perpetrator also be the one who has been violated? Are some instances of a pernicious act more heinous than others? Is there no possibility of remorse and redemption? If this is denied then only revenge and punishment remain: an eye for an eye, and no one can be offered forgiveness.

Polanski makes a plea to be seen as more than the committer of this one criminal act. We could instead be astonished at his courage. Having at last achieved happiness at 30, he suffered further massive trauma when his wife Sharon Tate and their unborn son Paul Richard Polanski were [murdered](#) by Charles Manson followers. It is extraordinary that he found the courage to go on.

The world is richer for Polanski's brilliant art. The film for which he wishes to be remembered, [The Pianist](#), conveys both the horror of the Holocaust, and a way to go on in the face of unspeakable destruction. The protagonist's emergence from amid the ruins of bombed-out Warsaw is a picture of optimism in survival.

This extraordinary resilience is the essence of Polanski's life and work. We could find inspiration in this.

## A wild new pope

POETRY

*Barry Gittins, Brian Doyle and B. A. Breen*

### Wool gathering

#### *dignitas*

*Extra omnes!* Good morning, fresh Princes, good morning indeed ... *Salvo!*

(O God, come to my aid. *O Lord, make haste to help me.*)

Papabillies! Do come in gents, please do. *Veloce!*

Sit down. No, no need for the *sella stercoraria* these days, hah?

(Flogged it off to Louis XVIII? in the Louvre? that 'old insane fable'.)

Take the banana lounge, there, George. Yes. In the corner.

Now, as *cardinal camerlengo* I insist: *Incommunicado*. No more tweets.

No more nuisance priests barbecuing snapshots of the Holy Father (Retired).

No more leaks, smears, off-record quips. Apropos ...

No more hide and seek with *La Repubblica* and *Panorama*.

We'll need a straight-shooting heavy-hitting *verticale degno*.

With a mop and broom, no less. And Cakeworthy qualities:

'Shoes that cut and eyes that burn like cigarettes ... the right allocations, who's fast and thorough and sharp as a tack.'

Who among us is diamond-minded, long-jacketed,

will tour the facility 'and pick up slack'?

We're chasing a two-thirds supermajority vote, so please look lively.

#### *mos maiorum*

Now, confreres, confer: How's your *Italiano*? Your *Latin*?

I know you *sprechen sie Deutsche*. The flocks are sprawling

in Latin America — 42 per cent of 1.2 billion and growing, and

one-sixth of your good Cardinalities, of course — so, reveal,

how's your *Espanol*? *Benepiacito!* *Voce fala Portugues?*

So, boys, do we understand each other? What's needed?

You know how this must go down, *ad hoc descendere*.

Pontifs are for heeding and leading, not  
creeding or breeding. Shall we hold the line?  
Bottom lines remain base, unless you wanna  
open the doors and let some Light in.  
*Presto!* Pass out those ballots. Only one ...  
*Amo il mio fratello* ... one per customer ...  
There! Now focus, please. What's that?  
It's getting hot in here? Yes George.  
The temperature's rising; accept it.  
Attend me; assess our unspoken need and strictures.

***restitantes poenitens***

We can't screw this up, *frater cardinales*; let us duly  
control this process as we control ourselves. Our members. Please!  
(Where's a vow of *paupertatis et oboedientiae, castitatis, silentium*  
when you need one?) Don't make me come down there, George ...  
Between me, you and the Sistine herself, *confessionem tempus!*  
It's good for what ails yer. *Exhibes!* Who's *culpa* stains Benedict's  
doomsday *duo volumina*? Don't cross me; one station forward, now.  
No-one's looking, 's'all *bene* ... 'fess up, *placere*. I'll get the *biretta* rolling:  
*Deus meus, ex toto corde poenitet me omnium meorum peccatorum,*  
*eaque detestor, quia peccando, non solum poenas a Te iuste statutas*  
*promeritus sum, sed praesertim quia offendi Te, summum bonum,*  
*ac dignum qui super omnia diligaris* ... Arggh, step up, step lively!  
*Venite spirant profunde* ... Nobody? Anybody? This can't fall back on us.  
We cannot proffer one with *pedes argilla*. Are our loafers light?  
*Pelusia magna!* I ask, you'd **better** tell ... *Brega*, hmm? *Da' un cristo!*  
*Velim caput tuum devellere deinde in confinium gulae cacare!*  
Judas himself couldn't look guiltier. *Profunda desperatio!*

***pasci i miei agnelli***

'Watch, O Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight,

and give Your Angels and Saints charge over those who sleep.'  
Time to call it a night, then? Yes, we'll sleep on it ... please;  
my grumpiness, temerity; this late hour ... I've listened; *non intelligitur*.  
How can we not change? Plan? Our celibacy dances hippo-nimble on glass.  
Our income pauperises nations. Our teaching on sexuality? *Madonna!*  
We must grow in grace, no? Share love maturely, evenly,  
not demean others as we were demeaned ourselves.  
We deride loud complaints and media impertinence? *Si!*  
We hear the swish of cassocks of shame and cruelty? *Anche, Si!*  
*Scusa, no! La scusa*. Lust weighs us down, no?  
Where's a spare *sella stercoraria*? I'll fetch it. And  
a quantity of rope. And where's my silver hammer?  
We have fallen sore. 'Feed my lambs ... Choose from among you  
to dole out bread and look after the widows.'  
*Ah, Kyrie Eleison!* This is too hard; leave it to *Dio*.  
We need hard heads and soft hearts. Let us not prey.  
*Barry Gittins*

**Habemus Ferus Novi Praesulis**  
**(We have a wild new pope)**

Would you be pope if you got elected, dad? asks son two  
At the tumultuous dinner table, and while once again old  
Boring dad launches into a boring disquisition about how  
Those men in dresses actually can elect anyone, we don't  
Have to have a cardinal or a bishop or even a priest if you  
Read the application form carefully, another part of me is  
Thinking o no man those little red slippers are not going to  
Work for me, and another deeper part is thinking o no way  
I really and truly love the woman who married me and I'd  
Miss curling up in bed and laughing and those icy feet you

Just have to accept if you are the lucky guy she said yes to,  
But then a surprisingly deep door inside opens, and I think,  
Man, yeah, I would be pope, if the phone rang, late at night,  
Collect from the Vatican. Yes, I would, if I could do it right.  
I'd call a meeting of the Curia and say boys, we are letting  
Women run everything for the next five years. Each of you  
Gets a new boss in high heels. Also we are selling all castle  
Properties in toto. From now on we all live in aged convents.  
We'll keep the museum properties. No more cars and planes.  
We walk and ride bikes. We are going to do what we say we  
Want to do — feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the  
Naked. That's about it. Also people get to elect their bishops,  
Like in the old days. Also you can only be pope for ten years.  
Mandatory term limits is not such a bad idea. Also rapists get  
Sent to jail, like in the real world. Also we will have a trustee  
Board made up of nuns and mothers of kindergarten children.  
Also we will be joining up again with our Protestant brothers,  
Like in the old days before Martin Luther was right. Anyone  
Have questions? I need you to help me do what we said we're  
All about but a lot of the time we weren't. We can either be an  
Insurance company hoarding its cash and power, or we can be  
A verb of an idea that changes the world. We can try like crazy  
Or we can slowly go out of business. You guys with me or not?  
*Brian Doyle*

### **The Pope app**

There's a new app for your iPad  
We call it Pick-a-Pope  
So many possibilities  
You'll find it hard to cope



Black or white or brindle  
Tall or short or fat  
Crazy, racist, saintly,  
Male or (no! not that!).  
Put your own face to it  
Above the gorgeous robes  
Or someone else, Pinocchio's,  
Pell's, any homophobe's.  
This really is a bargain  
\$4.99, no joke,  
But hurry buy it now before  
It goes up in a puff of smoke.  
*B. A. Breen*

## **Cardinal's legacy transcends gay scandal**

### RELIGION

*Duncan MacLaren*

For Scottish Catholics, the recent [revelations](#) surrounding the resignation of Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, Archbishop of Edinburgh, have caused a patriotic hurt far beyond the Church in this ancient nation, to my knowledge, the only non-state in the world to have its own Catholic bishops' conference.

When the English hierarchy had been restored in 1850 and, always up for a bit of imperialism, suggested the Scots be included, Rome refused to countenance the idea, and re-established the Scottish hierarchy in 1878.

The presence of Scottish priests in the Vatican reminded the Curia that Catholicism had been outlawed in Scotland 1560—1793, that 'heather priests' tended their flocks in secret and hid on our heather-clad mountains at night, and that the faith of St Andrew had clung on during all those dark centuries in the North-east and parts of the Highlands and Islands, earning the Scottish Church the title of 'Special Daughter of the Holy See'.

This is the second episcopal scandal to hit this 'special daughter' in less than two decades.

In 1996, Bishop Roddy Wright of the diocese of Argyll and the Isles ran off with a divorcée, leaving behind a son he had fathered by another woman. He ended up in New Zealand where he was reconciled to the Church by two priests from his diocese as he was dying from liver cancer at the age of 64 — forgiven by his successor, Bishop Ian Murray, and his flock, many of them, like him, Gaelic-speaking descendents of pre-Reformation Catholics.

In contrast to the reaction of Professor Tom Devine, a historian who described the O'Brien affair as 'possibly' one of the greatest crises to hit the Scottish Church since the Reformation, the late Cardinal Tom Winning of Glasgow, no shrinking violet when it came to orthodoxy, said of the Wright affair, 'Scandals are part and parcel of the Church's history and ... life. But if we don't set high standards we are not much of a Church.'

The Cardinal was hurt that Wright had lied to him when he brought up rumours of inappropriateness between the charming priest and women, but ultimately he put it in the context of the errant bishop's fallen humanity.

In O'Brien's case, the opprobrium visited on his head has been unrelenting, especially from the media, the Vatican and the rather supercilious English Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor.

That is not excusing what he did — abuse of power is always abhorrent — nor his hypocrisy about being gay, though it pales to insignificance compared to the hypocrisy within the curia on the same issue, as will be revealed once a new pope

is installed. However, it is not in any way in the same category as child abuse by paedophile priests, nor will it damage a faith that rests on belief in a living God, not just a very human construct.

We have, and not just in Scotland, entered what Rahner termed 'a wintry season'.

Many of us Scottish Catholics who know the Cardinal well are concerned that his legacy will solely be one of drunken fumbles with adult men.

We need to remember the other Cardinal O'Brien: his passion for the poor, evidenced by his frequent visits to El Salvador and Mexico's Chiapas; his courage in having week-long workshops in Catholic schools in his Archdiocese on HIV/AIDS, and, at the final Mass, allowing pupils to question him rather than giving a homily; his support for married clergy, which he recently reiterated; his angry insistence to the former head of the IMF, then President of Germany, Horst Köhler, before the G8 Summit in 2007, that the promises of this rich nations' club to the poor should be implemented; and his deep empathy and solidarity with 'ordinary' parishioners, sisters and priests.

Had he been allowed to continue in the public life of the Church into his retirement, I think we would have seen more of this prophetic side emerge. That will now not happen.

But the lynching must stop, and compassion for both victim and victimised begin. We must all, as St Paul says, become a new creation, moving to that place where forgiveness and reconciliation bloom and hurt fades away.

## **The Vatican's tragic farce**

### RELIGION

*Desmond O'Grady*

Governance has emerged as a key issue in the pre-conclave debate largely because of press reports about shenanigans in the Catholic Church's central administration, the Roman Curia. It is said that the only one who could solve the problem would be JC with an MBA.

Whether the cardinals choose a charismatic leader like John Paul II or someone keen to turn attention away from himself like Benedict XVI, if the new pope is non-Italian he will probably choose an Italian secretary of state. Both John Paul and Benedict did this, as seems wise when the bishop of Rome is Pope, and also when Italians should be best able to handle the largely Italian-influenced Curia.

The secretary of state, the Vatican No. 2, controls not only the Curia but also the Vatican diplomatic corps. Vatican diplomats are sometimes regarded as central office spies but the best bring a valuable experience of the Church in many countries to the top.

The secretary of state is such an important role that one wonders whether there is a ticket in the papal election: a pope is chosen who agrees on who will be his No. 2. There are suspicions that this has happened in the past. It is excluded by canon law in the conclave itself but could occur in the pre-conclave meetings if the needed two-thirds majority reached an agreement there on who should be pope.

If the recent precedent is followed, this would mean that a non-Italian pope would have an Italian secretary of state.

What has not been noticed is that the internationalisation of the papacy over the past 35 years has been accompanied by an Italianisation of the Vatican media coverage, particularly in Benedict's reign.

Vatican coverage reads like Italian political stories with smear campaigns, back-biting, wild accusations and turf wars. Across the darkling plain there are reports of bitter contests in which it is difficult to distinguish the contestants and who comprise the factions because many switch sides.

They are like the Guelph and Ghibelline battles in which Dante participated and later described: probably he decried Celestine V stepping down as a betrayal because it opened the way for Boniface VIII who was a personal enemy. He called his great poem a Comedy and someone added the word Divine but a replay in the 21st century is more like a tragic farce.

Doubtless some media give the worst twist possible to events and from isolated cases can build up alleged networks: Masonic rings have been replaced by homosexual ones. But the Vatican Bank (IOR) has caused headaches for a long time and the stealing of 58 boxes of documents from the papal study is only the

most prominent of the cases which raise serious concern about the Curia.

Moreover there is a suspicion that although curialists may be involved in prolonged battles they are willing to coalesce against those who are not curialists: Cardinal Christoph Schonborn, Archbishop of Vienna, criticised both Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone and his predecessor Cardinal Angelo Sodano, but Benedict called Schonborn to Rome to apologise to them together.

Isn't this a proof that non-Italian popes should not feel obliged to have an Italian No. 2?

Maybe, but Bertone and Sodano, both giant Piedmontese, are rather different. Sodano, a representative of the Vatican diplomatic corps and the traditional Curia, kept a tight control over documents — but not over his mouth when describing the reports of priestly sexual abuse as 'petty gossip'.

Bertone, with no diplomatic experience, was 'parachuted' into the Curia causing many resentments and, as No. 2, is held responsible for the amazing gaffes of Benedict's pontificate such reinstating the Lefebvrian bishop Richard Williamson without knowing he was a Holocaust denier. As a result Benedict, who has always recognised the links between Christians and Jews, was seen as an anti-Semite.

One of the main tasks of the secretariat of state is to prevent such croppers.

The Curia has had a bad reputation for centuries. Andrew Greeley used to say that curialists who don't engage in pastoral work were in danger of soul withering. But for decades after the Vatican Council curial members had a high morale, convinced they were doing an important job well. Because the last two popes ignored them there has been a drop in that self-esteem and this plays a part in the current disarray.

There were gaffes and scandals when there were Italian popes but there was not the spate of them as under Benedict. He did push for changes, as in the IOR or Vatican Bank, but that has been partly botched because the man Bertone appointed to guide it, Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, was removed for inadequacy.

Many cardinal-electors have said reports on curia disarray indicate the need for change, but for some this means more efficiency and tighter controls, whereas others want the pope to bring his fellow bishops into decision making. Somehow the institutional-administrative has to be linked to the charismatic.

Is there a curial party convinced the widespread criticism is exaggerated and that the change should be a return to its older status? Probably, but this is a chance also for those who envision more far-reaching structural changes.

## **We need a pope who can handle the truth**

### RELIGION

*Brian Lucas*

Much of the pre-conclave discussion by media commentators, commenting on the comments allegedly made by various cardinals and other commentators, focuses on the qualities of the prospective pontiff and expectations about his agenda, especially a reform agenda for the Vatican bureaucracy.

Everyone has a point of view and the more a particular perspective is recycled and repeated by various media outlets the more 'authority' it has. There is an almost insatiable thirst to find something to satisfy media demands. Cardinal Pell's comment about a governance agenda for the new pontificate was quickly, and unfairly, exaggerated into a purported criticism of Benedict's qualities as a governor.

There seems to be an assumption that the next pope needs to be a first rate pastor, theologian, teacher, media personality, administrator and diplomat while being humble and holy.

No single human can be expected to be good at everything. This is why, learning a lesson from the world of corporate governance, the effective chief executive is the one who has the skills to work with collaborators who are better at most things that he or she is.

The next pope does not have to be the best theologian. He needs to be able to identify and collaborate with the best theologians, communicators, diplomats, and administrators. He needs to have the strength of character and confidence to surround himself with those who will not merely defer to his status but tell him the truth.

Awareness of the need to tell the truth, and less inclination to say what might please a superior, is at the heart of good bureaucracy. My suspicion is that some of the clerical culture that can pervade church life stumbles when confronted with this choice.

Without the checks and balances of civil bureaucratic processes, where one can appeal against a failed application for promotion and where there are set criteria and defined position descriptions, church bureaucrats feel they are at the mercy of a superior's whim. Promises of obedience inhibit giving frank and fearless advice.

Some have suggested that recent pontificates have not been good in identifying the right collaborators. From this distance it is impossible to assess such a claim. There is a well established axiom that justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done, which means that process can be as important as the outcome.

In the video made in connection with the launch of the new missal, Archbishop Mark Coleridge frankly admitted that the process was not perfect and then went

on to the state the obvious, that there is no perfect process.

Catholics waiting in expectation for a 'reform of the curia' would do well to keep their expectations realistic. Bureaucrats are human and prone to the usual human temptations to ambition, hubris and self-interest.

Before we run to make broad generalisations about the state of the roman curia we need to reflect on the personal perspective we bring to that exercise. A decision will not be seen in the same way by those on the 'left' or the 'right' (to use somewhat unhelpful but illustrative categories) of the Catholic theological spectrum.

The Roman curia, like local diocesan and Catholic education bureaucracies, is not an end in itself but serves the universal ministry of the Pope. The Pope's closest collaborators need to work collegially. They need to meet and talk and work towards breaking down silos. They have to trust each other.

It is said that 'knowledge is power' and this can cause different curial officials to keep things to themselves and vie for 'access' to the papal apartment. This is the paradox of hierarchical governance. Those below want to use the one above to get their way and they can manipulate that by managing the flow of information. Telling 'the boss' only the good news may make for a comfortable career, but only until the truth eventually emerges.

While I know nothing about 'Vatileaks', and do not trust the media reports, my intuition causes me to wonder if it was prompted by a frustration that communication up, down, and sideways, in the bureaucracy was being manipulated at the expense of acknowledging the true state of affairs. My prayer is that the next pope can give his collaborators permission to be honest with him and with each other.

## **Vatican secrecy ensures trivial media coverage**

### THE AGENDA

*Michael Mullins*

Channel 7's *Weekend Sunrise* [mocked](#) the Catholic Church during its papal conclave preview a week ago. Giggling presenters Samantha Armytage and Andrew O'Keefe mused on a theological text that had caught the attention of reporter Chris Reason in St Peter's Square. It was *Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics: A Model for Post-critical Biblical Interpretation*, an exposition of the ideas of one of the greatest theological minds of the 20th century.

'The papal version of *Fifty Shades of Grey*?' asked Armytage. 'More like 3000 shades of grey,' replied O'Keefe. It got sillier, with O'Keefe wondering if Pringles could be included in the cardinals' strict diet of bread and water during the conclave.

Some Catholics take a dim view of trivialisation in reporting about the Church at such a critical time. However they need to accept that this is a consequence of the Vatican's culture of secrecy and its reluctance to engage with the media except on its own terms. Journalists become idle and resentful and they behave like children. On the other hand, if you treat them like adults, they are more likely to take the church seriously.

During the week, a number of US Cardinals broke with tradition and held special afternoon press briefings. The increasingly media savvy cardinals turned a blind eye to the secrecy rules in an attempt to ensure the media told a good story about the Church. It worked, but still they got '[slapped down](#)' and had to cancel further briefings.

The *National Catholic Reporter's* John Allen [commented](#) on last Monday's briefing, which allowed Chicago's Cardinal Francis George to get on the front foot in answer to a question about child sex abuse scandals. His point that 'zero tolerance' is now Church law to which the next pope will be bound, became the day's sound bite. It put an end to endless recycling of reactions to Scottish Cardinal Keith O'Brien's admission of sexual misconduct.

'From a strictly PR point of view, George turned a bad news day for the church into a fairly good one. Now, that sort of 'save' is no longer an option.'

After the US cardinals' press briefings were terminated, the next day's coverage was predictably bad, dominated by news of the crackdown on the briefings.

To an extent it seems the Church can ensure positive media coverage if its leaders are perceived as honest and open, and prepared to engage with the media on a level playing field. This in turn enhances the authority of its moral and spiritual leadership.



It's a simple lesson that the Vatican is yet to learn, and indeed one that applies to many other organisations that attempt to control the flow of information.

Even the Victorian Liberals were consumed last week by the desire to keep their inner workings secret, refusing to tell the public why they dumped the elected premier. This will cost the party, just as secrecy does the Church.

## Lay Catholics can be cardinals too

### RELIGION

#### *Constant Mews*

The decision of Benedict XVI to follow the precedent of Celestine V, who was pope for less than 18 months (13 Dec 1292–19 May 1294), raises the fascinating possibility that the papacy could revisit other ancient traditions that have since fallen into neglect.

One of these is the major constitutional reform introduced into the Church in 1059 by another pope, Nicholas II, who established the principle that to be canonically elected, a pope needed to be chosen with the assent not just of the cardinal bishops and other cardinal clergy, but of the whole of the Church: 'and then the rest of the clergy and the people shall approach to give their assent to the new election' (Gratian, Decretum 1.23.1).

As no mechanism was implemented to enforce this part of the constitutional reform, the papacy has failed for centuries to live up to its own canon law. Any new pope constitutionally needs the assent of the entire Church.

Nicholas II was challenging a system that had then prevailed for several centuries, whereby the Pope was effectively appointed by the Holy Roman Emperor. His establishment of a College of Cardinals was explicitly intended to challenge a system of ecclesiastical appointment that had become notoriously corrupt.

The notion of a cardinal (literally a hinge) has nothing to do with the hierarchy of holy orders. There were originally cardinal deacons and priests as well as cardinal bishops, each representing their particular grade within the Church. The text of the 1059 constitutional reform, which became part of canon law, makes clear that the papal election needed the support not just of the cardinals but of the clergy and people as a whole.

If the Church is serious about the need for reform of its governance it would do well to revisit the major constitutional reforms established in the 11th century. There is no reason why the category of cardinal could not be restored to those in the Church below the rank of bishop, or indeed be given to lay men and lay women.

The College of Cardinals is meant to be a representative assembly. In the 11th century, literacy outside the clerical and monastic orders was not widespread. The appointment of cardinals was intended to be a circuit breaker, to identify talented individuals outside the aristocratic elite that traditionally governed the Roman Church. A new pope needs to consider ways of returning to the reforms initiated by Pope Nicholas II.

Needless to say, those reforms were manipulated by subsequent popes (and

perhaps even more by cardinals who desired papal office) to ensure that such dangerous principles as representation should be quietly forgotten. That is another reason for revisiting the core principles that lie behind the present structures of the Church.

The notion that the election of a pope should involve 'clergy and people' was not a new-fangled notion in the 11th century. The earliest law codes of the Church emphasise that any bishop had to be chosen by clergy and people. Pope Nicolas II believed he was recovering ancient traditions of the Church that had been lost as a consequence of political interference by secular authorities, keen to use bishops to legitimate their own power.

The genius of Pope Nicolas II was to create an electoral college entrusted with making the initial choice of a candidate, who then had to win support from representatives of other ranks of clergy, namely priests, deacons and subdeacons, and from clergy and people as a whole. External political influence was forbidden. He wanted the same procedure to apply to choosing bishops.

We need a pope not just to transform the electoral system for choosing his successor, but to provide inspiration for a journey that has not finished. My vote would be for a new Pope Nicholas.

## **Benedict's legacy of faith and reason**

### RELIGION

*Joel Hodge*

Pope Benedict argued that the alliance of faith and reason must be at the heart of the healthy public life of any society. He emphasised that faith does not necessarily conflict with reason, but that faith and reason can work together to overcome separations caused by misunderstandings or prejudice.

For Benedict, reason is not enslaved to faith, but is set free by it. But how is this so?

Reason and the intellect form an integral part of the human person. The human person is not just a brain like a computer, but is a rational being with deep desires and yearnings. The deepest desire that the human has is for *being*; for the sense of self found in happiness and fulfilment.

Thus, reason, as the faculty that allows us to be aware of ourselves and understand the meaning of things, is directed not just toward knowledge but toward a deep understanding of what it means to be fully human.

Our everyday lives are an effort to try to answer what it means to be human. We seek to give some satisfaction to our lives through our activities and relationships. We find reasons and motivations for getting up in the morning that are aimed to make us happier and more fulfilled.

The accumulation of our everyday decisions to seek happiness gives us a direction. We draw on and deepen this over the course of our lives. We believe it will lead to our happiness. We have no scientific proof that it will do so, yet there is little alternative but to commit ourselves to a certain way of being. The only alternative is to give up.

Benedict said belief belongs 'to the realm of basic questions which [persons] cannot avoid answering'. In making this commitment to belief, we are not making an irrational choice, but a choice based on a judgement of our experience. We live in certain ways which we reflect on and analyse in order to live better and happier.

Thus, reason rests on faith: on a way of being that 'I' believe in and that motivates 'me' to keep seeking happiness. Reason assists in this task by developing understanding. Our understanding can be distorted by negative ways of being (by prejudice, envy, hate or resentment) or promoted by positive ways of being (by learning or loving).

Benedict emphasised that human life is inherently relational. This means human nature and purpose find their deepest meaning in relationship with others, and ultimately, with God. For Benedict, faith in the Christian sense simply consists of a particular form of trust and commitment: to the absolute love that is embodied by God.

The modern person is encouraged to believe that the height of human living is to 'know' the world and then manipulate and create, using that knowledge. Benedict argues this view does not do justice to human beings. The deepest level of living is to make a commitment to a way of living with others that is for the good of all, and to rationally accept this commitment as truthful and fulfilling.

Love should be understood in its relational nature. Benedict taught that love is something we receive and learn from others — parents, siblings, friends, strangers. Yet the love given by humans is never absolute. For Benedict, that love can only be offered by Christ, from whom we can receive it and integrate it into our lives.

One of Benedict's legacies is the way he has not just only spoken of the Church,, but also exemplified a loving wisdom, humility and desire to cleanse the Church. For Benedict, God's Love involves promoting justice, especially for victims, as well as reform inside and outside the Church, something for which he has admitted he no longer has the energy.

In resigning, Benedict is showing that the papal office is dependent on God's Love, not on any one human being. The renewal of the Church requires more than institutional reform. It requires the proper reception of and fidelity to God's love that Benedict believes will enable the Church and the world to be changed for the benefit of all.

## Pope for a polarised Church

### RELIGION

*James McEvoy*

Backing candidates in a papal conclave is a notoriously unrewarding enterprise and in my case, with limited inside knowledge of the field, reasons for abstaining abound. I do, however, have a broad 'person specification' in mind. Both the Church and the modern world need a pope with a deep spiritual life and uncommon wisdom.

The challenges facing the Church extend far beyond the Vatican into local communities in which countless saints live simple lives of self-giving love, foster the faith of their children, provide hospitality to refugees, and face suffering and death in the hope of resurrection. Their faith moves hearts and transforms the world around them.

Papal leadership can also awaken faith. I remember as a child finding my father sitting, early morning, in our semi-darkened lounge room, crying over the news of Pope John XXIII's death. And my father was not one to cry easily. John Paul II's pilgrimages for world peace and economic justice also moved many.

In my view, the major challenge facing Benedict's successor is that of leading the Church to live with the advances as well as the flaws of this age so that our common life communicates the good news in a vibrant manner to the broader culture. But that's where uncommon wisdom is necessary.

At least in the West today, the Catholic Church is bedevilled by polarisation, a pattern found in social and political life fairly broadly. Traditionalists, judging that this age is in steep decline, turn to the Church's leadership for tighter control over doctrine, liturgy, and Church practice. Progressives, strongly valuing modern expressions of freedom, look to the Church's leadership to remove constraints in the very same areas.

Much debate is defined by the contrast between these extreme positions, which may be held by few individuals yet nevertheless set the terms of public interaction. Middle positions abound. However, since interlocutors define themselves by the extremes they reject, those who hold middle positions end up talking past each other.

Neither of the polarised stances adequately accounts for the great advances and the terrible flaws of the present. We can only move beyond polarisation by developing a discriminating, multi-layered approach to our age.

The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor's ground-breaking work, *A Secular Age*, is widely recognised as the best phenomenological and analytical account of the place of religion in our time. One central line of his thought is encapsulated in an earlier essay:

In modern, secularist culture there are mingled together both authentic developments of the gospel, of an incarnational mode of life, and of a closing off to God that negates the gospel. The notion is that modern culture, in breaking with the structures and beliefs of Christendom, also carried certain facets of Christian life further than they ever were taken or could have been taken within Christendom.

In relation to the earlier forms of Christian culture, we have to face the humbling realisation that the breakout was a necessary condition of the development.

Leading the Church in such a culture requires a capacity to discern between those elements of modern life that are of God and can lead to a fuller faith, and those that negate transcendence, shutting people into acquisitive, aggressive, or egotistic worlds. Such discernment can only be accomplished by entering into the culture.

Essential here is an engaged, open stance, sensitive to the struggles of contemporary seekers, rather than pushing pat answers to over-rehearsed questions. And having entered the world of contemporary seekers, such leadership then requires the imagination to present the gospel and the Church's theological tradition in a way that garners their attention — in fact, that opens up the mystery of God already present.

Could we have a pope who patiently attends to the action of God in the broader culture while being utterly faithful to the gospel way of life?