



## EDITORIAL

In today's world there is much turmoil and violence. International issues draw peoples into conflict. Over two and a half thousand years ago the world of the Hebrews was in similar turmoil and they too were drawn into the international conflicts of their time. The Prophet Isaiah warned them not to be self-defensive and turn in on themselves. He told them to do the very opposite:

*Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes. (Is 54:2)*

Taking up Isaiah's teaching, the theme of this issue of *Bridges* is hospitality. It is a divine precept in the Bible and in the Holy Quran and is still a very strong ethic in the traditional cultures of the Middle East and Asia.

The centre image on this page is Andrei Rublev's famous icon **The Hospitality of Abraham**. The surface level of the image suggests the three guests whom Abraham and Sarah entertained by the oaks of Mamre (cf Gen 18:1-16).

Hospitality was highlighted in the Abraham Conference (see page 5). It was proposed as one of the virtues that Jews, Christians and Muslims can learn from the ancient Patriarch and practice in our relations with each other. It is very relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To counter individualism and materialism, hospitality helps restore community and the importance of respect for the human person. Besides, as the author to the Hebrews reminds us:

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. (Heb 13:2)*

Gazing at this image, rich in symbolism—the blue-coloured robes signify divinity, the green suggests life, the red salutes royalty, the transparent hints at ineffability, the identical faces show unity, the three staves express equal authority, the postures and gestures show relations, the cup symbolises Eucharist\*—Christian faith penetrates beyond the surface and recognizes in the three figures turned towards each other an **Icon of the Holy Trinity**, revelation of the extravagant hospitality of God, who calls us into being and invites us to share God's inner life (see *A Trinitarian Primer*, page 7).

Believers who acknowledge God's goodness are obliged to show hospitality to each other (see *An Improbable Feast*, page 6). Accordingly, hospitality was the theme of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Conference held in Milgrove in July (see *The Hand of Welcome*, page 4). Hospitality is shown by Muslims inviting Christians, Jews and others to *iftar* meals to break the fast with

them during the month of Ramadan (see page 2). Hospitality is shown by Christians foregoing violence and every form of manipulation in the way they present their faith to others (see *Missionary Code of Conduct*, page 3).

I take this opportunity to assure Muslim readers of our prayerful solidarity with them during Ramadan and to wish them عيد مبارك (*Eid Mubarik*) every blessing on the Feast of *Eid ul-Fitr* (see also PCID *Message for the End of Ramadan*, Insert).

**Patrick J McInerney, Editor**

- \* For detailed explanations of the symbolism of the icon see:
- [http://tars.rollins.edu/Foreign\\_Lang/Russian/trinity.html](http://tars.rollins.edu/Foreign_Lang/Russian/trinity.html)
  - <http://www.soulshpherd.org/articles/spiritual-growth/the-hospitality-of-the-trinity/>
  - <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/mshivana/marriage-icon.htm>
  - <http://www.artway.eu/content.asp?id=730&lang=en&action=show>

### Senior Classes at Singleton

On 31 May 2011 **Fr Patrick McInerney** spoke to several senior classes at St Catherine's Catholic College, Singleton. He covered different topics for each class, including *Islam* for Year 7; *A Christian Response to Islam* for Year 9; *Ten Things Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* for Year 11; and *The Pillars of Islam* for Year 12.

### Coolamon, NSW

On 7 June 2011 **Fr Patrick McInerney** was the guest speaker at an ecumenical dinner for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Coolamon, NSW. His topic was *Christian-Muslim Relations: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. Over one hundred people dined in the *Coolamon Sport and Recreation Club*. It was the best attendance in years, the people enjoying both the meal and Fr Patrick's presentation.

### University of Western Sydney

On 22 June 2011 **Fr Patrick McInerney** was guest lecturer at the Centre for the Study of Contemporary Muslim Societies, University of Western Sydney, Bankstown. Under the title of *An Australian Catholic Priest's Engagement with Islam* he shared his experiences in the ups and downs of Christian-Muslim relations in the twenty years he was assigned to Pakistan, his work of the Centre and his various involvements in teaching, networking and Christian-Muslim dialogue in Sydney and beyond over the past ten years.

### Abraham Conference

The 9<sup>th</sup> Abraham Conference was held on 10 July at Mary McKillop Place. It was arranged and co-hosted by Affinity Intercultural Foundation, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, the Columban Mission Institute, the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and the Uniting Church of Australia. For a detailed report by **Father Brian Vale** see page 5.

### Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri

On 11 July **Father Patrick McInerney** attended a talk at the NSW Parliament by Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri, founder of Minhaj-ul-Quran. Dr Qadri summarized his 475 page book *Fatwa on Terrorism and Suicide Bombings* and gave copies to selected guests.

[This is an example of a Muslim scholar and religious leader of international repute speaking out very strongly against violence and extremism but not being reported in the media. **Editor**].

### Sheikh Haisam Farache

On 27 July 2011 the Centre hosted Sheikh Haisam Farache at the Columban Mission Institute. Over a cup of tea and biscuits we shared our respective activities in church and mosque and discussed possible ways of collaboration in the future. It was

a good opportunity for two Catholic priests and an Imam to share stories and get to know one another and each others' ministries.

### Iftar Dinners during Ramadan

On 3 August 2011 *Affinity Intercultural Foundation* and both major political parties co-hosted an *Iftar* Dinner at the NSW Parliament for the annual Affinity Awards. Christians, Jews, Buddhists, leaders of religious, political, police and other civic organizations participated. The annual Affinity Awards were presented.

In recent years *Affinity Intercultural Foundation* has arranged for its associates to host *iftar* dinners in their homes. In the past weeks **Frs Brian Vale, Reg Howard and Patrick McInerney** have all been guests on such occasions. Sharing a meal together in a family setting is a wonderful way of building friendship.

*Al-Ghazzali Centre* in Lakemba, the *Australian Christian-Muslim Friendship Society* in Greenacre and other Muslim and inter-religious organizations have also held similar *iftar* functions.

### Gladstone, Queensland

On 5 August *Welcoming Intercultural Neighbours* (WIN, formerly the *Womens Intercultural Network*) held a forum on *The Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in the Gladstone Region*. In the morning **Fr Patrick McInerney** presented a seminar, "The Global Village", on models for intercultural living, which he repeated in the afternoon. He also addressed the plenary at the end of the day. At midday he spoke with the Gladstone Regional Council. He congratulated the members and staff of the Gladstone Council and WIN for their proactive stance on embracing the opportunities and facing the challenges that a rapid escalation in migration for expanding industries will pose in the coming decade and assured them that religious believers from the different religions are allies in this cause.

### Rockhampton, Queensland

On 6 August 2011 **Fr Patrick McInerney** presented a talk at Central Queensland University in Rockhampton on *Building Bridges with Other Faiths*. The event was organized by the Catholic Diocese's Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations, Queensland Churches Together and the Imam of the local Islamic Society. In the evening he was guest preacher for the Saturday evening Vigil Mass at the Catholic Cathedral of St Joseph in Rockhampton.

### Director of the Columban Mission Institute

Congratulations to **Fr Patrick McInerney** on his recent appointment as Director of the *Columban Mission Institute*.

## Missionary Code of Conduct

After five years of consultations, on 2 July 2011 the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) issued a document on the conduct of mission entitled **“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World”**. The authoring bodies represent nearly 90% of all Christians in the world. The document is a code of conduct for Christian evangelization. It affirms the missionary mandate of the church and mandates respectful behaviour in attitude and action towards all believers from other religions.

The document offers twelve principles: 1) Acting in God’s love; 2) Imitating Jesus Christ; 3) Christian virtues; 4) Acts of service and justice; 5) Discernment in ministries of healing; 6) Rejection of violence; 7) Freedom of religion and belief; 8) Mutual respect and solidarity; 9) Respect for all people; 10) Renouncing false witness; 11) Ensuring personal discernment; 12) Building interreligious relationships.

It makes six recommendations for concrete action under the following headings: 1) study the issues and implement guidelines; 2) build relationships of respect and trust; 3) encourage strengthening of Christian identity along with knowledge of others, 4) call on governments to ensure freedom of religion, 5) cooperate for the common good, and 6) pray for others.

In the name of religious freedom, the document affirms “the right to publicly profess, practice, propagate and change one’s religion”, but categorically rejects all forms of violence, coercion and exploitation in the propagation of the faith. In so doing it implicitly acknowledges that mistakes have been made in the past and sets a high standard for present and future Christian missionary engagement.

To download the document as a pdf file see: [http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2011pdfs/ChristianWitness\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.oikoumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/2011pdfs/ChristianWitness_recommendations.pdf)

For commentary on this important document see:

- <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1637/christians-reach-broad-co.html>
- <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/161405>
- <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/161417>
- <http://www.zenit.org/rssenglish-32981>
- <http://af.reuters.com/article/sierraLeoneNews/idAFLDE75R1L320110628>
- <http://www.ncronline.org/news/evangelicals-vatican-reach-accord-proselytizing>

## End Violence Against Women

On 24 March 2011 the International Executive Committee of Religions for Peace issued a statement entitled **“Restoring Dignity: A Commitment to End Violence Against Women”**. The statement affirms that the dignity of every woman is given by and rooted in the Sacred. It affirms that eliminating all forms of violence against women is a religious duty and will ensure healthier and more fulfilling lives for all.

To download the document see:

<http://religionsforpeace.org/assets/restoring-dignity-statement.pdf>

## Women in Religious Peacebuilding

What role do women play in peace-building? **“Women in Religious Peacebuilding: Stories Yet to be Told”** is a 34-page report that examines the often unacknowledged ways in which women, inspired by or linked to religious organizations, promote peace across interreligious lines.

For summary and to download the document see:

<http://www.usip.org/publications/women-in-religious-peacebuilding>

## Mosque Dedicated to Jesus

A mosque named after the central figure of Christianity is to become a milestone of interfaith coexistence in Jordan. Both Muslim and Christian leaders expressed their satisfaction when the *Mosque of Jesus Christ* was opened some time ago. The place of worship was inaugurated in the town of Madaba, 30 km south of the capital, Amman.

“This is a message to the world that Muslims consider Jesus Christ as their prophet, because he informed humanity beforehand that the Prophet Muhammad was coming”, said the imam of the mosque, **Belal Hanina**. “And this also proves that Islam is a religion of tolerance and has nothing to do with extremism”.

Extract from:

<http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/blog-san-pietro-e-dintorni-en/detail/articolo/mosque-jesus-christians-muslims-madaba-jordan-6105/>

[This story recalls the recent controversy over billboards in Australia. It reiterates the claim that Muslims acknowledge Jesus as a prophet. However, as the Imam’s statement shows, Jesus’ prophetic role is interpreted differently in Islam. Vatican II’s *Nostra Aetate* states the differences clearly: “Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet.” **Editor**]



It is interesting to compare the difference in emphasis in different religions and different cultures when it comes to hospitality. While some cultures pride themselves on their hospitality there are limits and some signals of those limits. One group said that meat of gradually diminishing quality is presented to the house guest for the first three days and then the guest is offered beans. They are supposed to then get the hint! Is it true that in many parts of Australia the host's offering "another cup of coffee" is a signal for "time to go"?

From Sunday 3 July until Wednesday 6 July 2011 I attended the eighth residential conference of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association in Australia held at Pallotti College, Millgrove, Victoria. It was my first time to attend this conference although many were there to greet old friends as well as new. Hospitality was the theme this year and it was lived out in the day-to-day rhythm of the programme especially in the discussions in small groups as well as over meals. Pallotti College itself is a very welcoming environment and this encouraged participants to give each other the space to meet and welcome the other.

Each of the three faiths took turns to live out the hospitality theme by leading in turn the contemplation, the study of texts, the question time, small group discussions, and the prayer of their faith which was observed by the others. Abraham's example of committed hospitality was a feature of the discussion on texts and in the prayer. I gained new insights into Abraham from listening to the Jewish rabbis discuss the texts about him, for example the point that his hospitality extended into seeing off his guests down the road. I was also impressed about the care and reverence that the Jewish and Muslim speakers had for their sacred texts in inviting us not to leave copied pages lying around. Listening to personal stories of faith and conversion were also very moving experiences. For introverts like myself there was also even time for private reflective space as well as the public sharing.

Rules for hospitality in the Jewish faith were set in place to avoid intermarriage and it is easier for a Jewish host than for a Jewish guest because of kosher food restrictions. Yet in Judaism the closest way to encounter God is in the guest, the "other".

The importance of care for the guest and in the timing of the breaking of the Muslim's fast in Ramadan was lived out in a re-enactment for us.

We also looked at practical matters such as caring for asylum seekers through the eyes of Brigidine Sister Brigid Arthur, at a Muslim woman's story of her revival of the hospitality at a Neighbourhood House in her area and at a young Jewish woman's outreach to rural Aboriginal communities through Keren Tuch Jewish Aid.

The winter weather kept us mostly indoors but the spirit of friendliness in the interactions warmed each day. There are tensions within each of our faith traditions with our many differences in teachings and practice and these were not glossed over. I enjoyed the frank discussions and the depth of honesty in the sharing, the result of which is that feel I have made new friends in other faiths. Hospitality is an ongoing learning process for me and the practical living out of care for each other over those few days has moved me along in a healthy direction.

***Fr Brian Vale***



Fr Daniel Madigan



Rabbi Paul Jacobson



Professor Zeki Saritoprak



Panel of Speakers



Participants

**“Abraham for the Twenty-First Century”** was the theme for the ninth annual Abraham Conference held at Mary Mackillop Place, North Sydney on Sunday 10 July 2011.

About 200 Jews, Christians and Muslims clustered around 15 tables to listen to the keynote speaker, Australian Jesuit [Rev Dr Daniel Madigan](#), address the topic of how the figure of Abraham speaks to us today. His talk began on a cautionary and repentant note of the need to acknowledge how each of the three monotheistic faiths has negative polemical elements in their claims on Abraham which exclude the other two faiths. For example, Christians have used John’s gospel and parts of Paul’s letters to exclude “the Jews” or emphasise that Abraham was justified by his faith and not the Law. The Qur’an maintains that the community of Muhammad are the genuine successors to Abraham rather than the Christians and Jews who seem to have been arguing over which of *them* he belonged to. The Hebrew bible understands the possession of the Land and the dispossession of the peoples that lived there to be the result of God’s promise to Abraham.

Dr. Madigan then pointed out how our Scriptures also present cues for a more fruitful relationship among us. Genesis 12 portrays Abraham as a nomad who became a true pilgrim, one who allows God to lead him daily on a journey of trust with a new way of seeing the land and the world. Abraham was a sojourner who lived lightly on the land without exclusion. Known for his hospitality he offers us a model for relationships among peoples in a land we share. He was detached from idols and totally attached to God, who is greater than our religious systems. With no book to guide him he allows himself to be led by the living God but was determined to negotiate with God because of his deep sense of justice (cf. Sodom and Gomorrah story). He was more attached to God himself than to what he took to be the embodiment of God’s promise. But when God asked for the sacrifice of that son, he was still willing to believe in God’s promise and ready to sacrifice the security he thought he had.

Dr Madigan invited us to be like Abraham in attention to what God might be doing, to where God might be calling. A living God can always take us by surprise. In all three of our scriptural traditions Abraham is called the “Friend of God” (Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23 and Qur’an 4:125). Dr Madigan invited us to choose to see ourselves as fellow pilgrims with Abraham rather than as Abraham’s *real* children and heirs, as friends with God and thus also friends with one another.

This presentation was then responded to by [Rabbi Paul Jacobson](#) of the Emmanuel Synagogue, Woollahra, followed by Professor Zeki Saritoprak, Nursi Chair in Islamic Studies, John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio.

Rabbi Jacobson affirmed the need to critically reflect on Abraham’s role in the texts as he was a very human figure who made mistakes. His wonderful hospitality to strangers and his audacity to speak to God out of his sense of justice were impressive virtues in his life. Rabbi Jacobson also invited us to walk together as friends in the path of God.

[Professor Saritoprak](#) praised Abraham as a small “m” Muslim for he submitted himself to God. For Muslims Abraham was one of 315 prophets who are known for being trustworthy and chaste although some had human weaknesses before they were designated as prophets. Professor Saritoprak invited us to have the spiritual strength of Abraham in order to share that with our neighbours.

The table discussions then commented on the presentations and came up with several questions for the presenters to respond to and thus rounded off a stimulating and thought provoking afternoon.

#### **Fr Brian Vale**

For the full texts of Rev Dr Daniel Madigan’s keynote address and the responses from Rabbi Paul Jacobson and Professor Zeki Saritoprak see:

<http://www.columban.org.au/our-works/christian-muslim-relations/Abraham-Conference-2011/>

Boyce, Geoff. *An Improbable Feast: The Surprising Dynamic of Hospitality at the Heart of Multifaith Chaplaincy*. Lulu.com, 2010 [Available from <http://www.lulu.com/spotlight/geoffboyce>, RRP A\$20.00]

Geoff Boyce is a Uniting Church chaplain at Flinders University, Adelaide, who has skilfully articulated how he and his fellow chaplains have faced the many challenges of chaplaincy in the multifaith environment of a modern university. This book will be a valuable contribution to all involved in chaplaincies as well as interfaith dialogue in Australia and beyond. The three themes of the book are chaplaincy, hospitality and multifaith. Hospitality is the metaphor for the chaplains' undertaking and reflection on the pastoral care of the whole institution. The weekly gathering over a meal of the chaplains of different faiths became the nurturing place for the transition from a Christian to a multifaith enterprise. This practical living out of hospitality toward each other helped to move the chaplains forward in their goal of "nurturing spirit and building community" at the university.

This was a task which required cooperation, commitment and compassion as the menu for this new style of chaplaincy was developed step by step in response to each new challenge such as welcoming and making space for a pagan chaplain as well as the support of chaplains of various other faiths.

One Christian group on campus was not so adventurous and flexible and wanted to retain its "pure" boundaries at all cost. In the face of this group's consistent opposition to the new multifaith model of chaplaincy it became clear to the author that "we need difference to be more fully ourselves" and that "exclusion of the other is an exclusion of God".

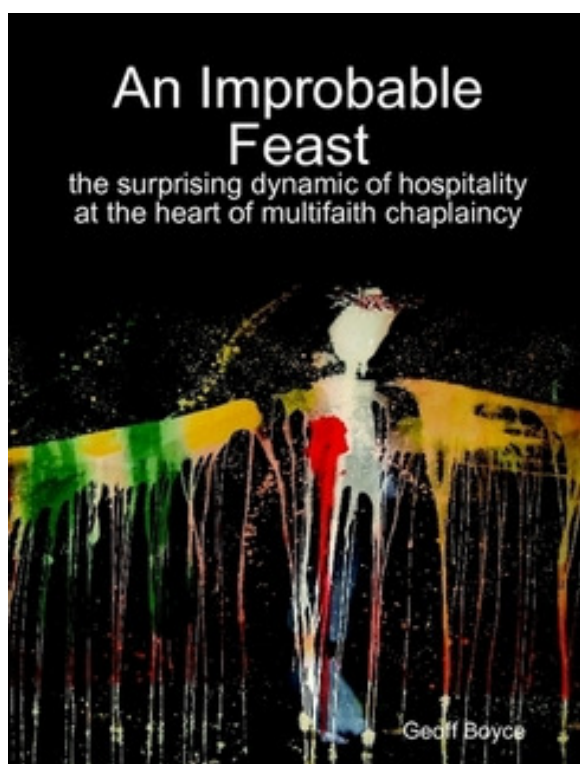
Boyce explores hospitality in religions and cultures and lists the four stages of hospitality in Abrahamic traditions as: initial invitation, screening, provision and protection, and departure. He presents God as a loving Host.

Geoff Boyce drew inspiration from Henri Nouwen's definition of hospitality which is "making space" for the other, especially the stranger. The hospitality metaphor is holistic when it embraces physical, intellectual, and emotional dimensions. It creates space for life and transforms strangers into friends. As "agents of hospitality" chaplains are "hosting a way of being in which fear of 'the other' is overcome and life together is enjoyed like a delightful feast". Boyce lists the core elements of chaplaincy as commitment, compassion, hospitality, prayer, community and advocacy but hospitality is central.

In the context of corporate change at a modern university the chaplain is a proactive networker as well as an agent of spiritual nurture regardless of religion. Other chaplains would find the "Multifaith Ministry Charter"<sup>1</sup> that the chaplains at Flinders University developed very informative. The Flinders University chaplain experiment in collegiality has indeed produced the "improbable feast of cordiality and co-operative ministry". As Geoff Boyce says "chaplaincy is now re-invented as a multifaith word".

**Fr Brian Vale**

<sup>1</sup> To download "*The Faith Friendly Charter*" see: [http://faithfriendlyaustralia.org/FFASite/The\\_Charter\\_files/Faith%20Friendly%20Charter.pdf](http://faithfriendlyaustralia.org/FFASite/The_Charter_files/Faith%20Friendly%20Charter.pdf)



Neil Ormerod, *A Trinitarian Primer*, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield NSW, 2010 (paperback, 95 pp., available from [Pauline Books and Media](#), RRP \$12.95)

[In the past year the *Columban Mission Institute's* Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations has distributed over 4,000 copies of *Ten Things Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*. While I am happy to promote accurate information about Islam, I wanted to restore the balance by providing a reference to some basic information about Christianity. Hence this review. *Editor*]

Belief in the Trinity is at the heart of Christianity, distinguishing it from all other religions. It is also the most misunderstood Christian mystery, with many Christians not able to give a credible account of this core belief.

This book has its origins in such confusion. Raised in an interfaith household—his mother a Catholic, his father a Muslim—a young man was wondering which path to follow. The Trinity was the one thing in Christianity that he could not understand, but no-one, not even a bishop, was able to enlighten him, so he followed his father and became a Muslim.

Dr Neil Ormerod, Professor of Theology at Australian Catholic University, is ideally positioned to have answered this young man's [and our] probing questions. He has lectured on the Trinity in Catholic tertiary institutions and written academic books, book chapters and journal articles on this topic, including *Trinity, Retrieving the Western Tradition*, Marquette University Press, 2005.

This present volume is richly informed by Ormerod's sustained scholarship but is directed to a general audience, to the many Christians in the pews who are puzzled by the Trinity and want a credible account of this central mystery of Christian faith for themselves and for others.

The book has three chapters and three appendices. The first chapter deals with the scriptural basis for belief in the Trinity. It treats of Old Testament concepts such as the "Spirit of God", "Divine Wisdom", the "Divine Word" and the "Divine Name". All are later used by the New Testament authors to articulate their new experience of the one God as mediated through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and his sending of the Holy Spirit, which led them to name God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in worship and ritual, without yet being able to identify precisely how these three could be one.

The second chapter takes up the early church's resolution of that intellectual challenge in the Nicene

Creed—hammered out at Nicea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD). Ormerod explains the two processions in the Trinity (the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from the Father and the Son) and the four relations that follow (paternity and filiation, active spiration and passive spiration). In the process he explains the words "begotten", "consubstantial" and "proceeds", all of which are in the new liturgical translation of the Creed. He also treats the meaning of the word "person" in ancient and contemporary language, along with the "missions" of the Word and the Spirit in the economy of salvation.

In the third chapter Ormerod presents a theological account of the Trinity. It is not a proof of the Trinity for a seeker, but the believer in the Trinity seeking understanding of his or her Trinitarian faith. He explains analogy - moving from the known to get an insight into the unknown, with the caution that since we are dealing with the mystery of God every analogy will fall short.

Ormerod presents the high point of the Christian theology of the Trinity in the psychological analogy proposed by St Augustine and developed by St Thomas Aquinas, based on how we come to know what is true and to love what is good. This image of the Triune God located in all human beings confirms

the dignity of the human person. Thus the revelation of the Trinity is a truth about God that is intended to enable us to grow in relationship with God and with each other.

Appendix 1 treats the issue of gender in the way the three Persons of the Trinity are named in the tradition. Appendix 2 contains homily notes based on the readings of the three-year liturgical cycle. Appendix 3 is a useful glossary of some of the more technical theological terms.

*A Trinitarian Primer* is a very accessible account of this central mystery of Christianity. I recommend it to all teachers, preachers, catechists and Christians who want to understand their own faith and to others who want to understand what Christians believe.

**Fr Patrick McInerney**



**WHAT'S COMING UP**

- 02-04 September – **National Conference of Ecumenical and Interreligious Commissions**, Adelaide, SA.
- 04 September – **Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair (MEFF)**, Fairfield, NSW. See <http://www.meff.com.au/>
- 21 September - **International Day of Prayer for Peace:** Interfaith Prayer Service on Wednesday, 21 September, the International Day of Peace, at the Main Hall of St David's Uniting Church, 454 Pacific Highway (cnr Provincial Road), Lindfield, at 11.00 am.
- 22-25 September – **Australian Association for Mission Studies Conference**, "Mission in a Globalised World", Mary MacKillop Place, 80 William Street, North Sydney NSW. For details see <http://groupsthatclick.com/aams/index.php>.
- 27 October – **Assisi Prayer Day for Peace:** Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Pope John Paul II's initiative, Pope Benedict XVI has called world religious leaders to Assisi to pray for peace. We hope that dioceses and parishes around Australia will host similar gatherings of religious leaders. To this end, the *Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations* is offering some suggestions for preparing and organizing such a prayer event for believers from different religions. For details see [http://www.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=390](http://www.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=390).
- 27-28 October – **Pilgrims of Truth, Pilgrims of Peace: A Gathering of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in the World.** This coincides with the Assisi anniversary mentioned above. It is being held at Mary MacKillop Place, 80 William Street, North Sydney. For details see <http://www.cacw.catholic.org.au/upcoming-events/pilgrims-of-truth-pilgrims-of-peace.html>.
- 07 November – **°Eid al-Adha:** the Muslim feast commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.
- 26 November – **al-Hijrah:** commemorating the migration of the Muslims from Mecca to Medina in 632; marking the beginning of the Muslim New Year.
- 05 December – **°Ashura:** the tenth day of the month of Muharram; Shi'ite Muslims commemorate the death of Hussain.
- 25 December – **Christmas:** celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.

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**PONTIFICAL COUNCIL  
FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**MESSAGE FOR THE END OF RAMADAN  
`Id a1-Fitr 1432 H. / 2011 A.D.**

*Christians and Muslims:  
Working together for mankind's spiritual dimension*

**Vatican City**

Dear Muslim friends,

1. The end of the month of Ramadan offers the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue a welcome occasion for sending you our most cordial wishes, hoping that the efforts you have so generously made during this month will bring all the desired spiritual fruits.

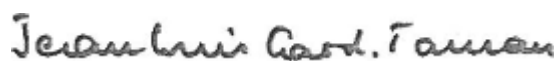
2. This year, we have thought to give priority to the theme of *the spiritual dimension of the human person*. This concerns a reality which Christians and Muslims consider to be of prime importance, faced as we are with the challenges of materialism and secularisation. The relationship that every human person has with the transcendent is not a moment in history, but is part of human nature. We do not believe in fate; we are convinced – moreover it is our experience – that God guides us on our path!

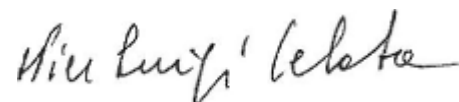
3. Christians and Muslims, beyond their differences, recognise the dignity of the human person endowed with both rights and duties. They think that intelligence and freedom are indeed gifts which must impel believers to recognise these values which are shared because they rest on the same human nature.

4. This is why the transmission of such human and moral values to the younger generations constitutes a common concern. It is our duty to help them discover that there is both good and evil, that conscience is a sanctuary to be respected, and that cultivating the spiritual dimension makes us more responsible, more supportive, more available for the common good.

5. Christians and Muslims are too often witnesses to the violation of the sacred, of the mistrust of which those who call themselves believers are the target. We cannot but denounce all forms of fanaticism and intimidation, the prejudices and the polemics, as well as the discrimination of which, at times, believers are the object both in the social and political life as well as in the mass media.

6. We are spiritually very close to you, dear Friends, asking God to give you renewed spiritual energy and we send you our very best wishes for peace and happiness.

  
Jean-Louis Cardinal Tauran  
President

  
Archbishop Pier Luigi Celata  
Secretary