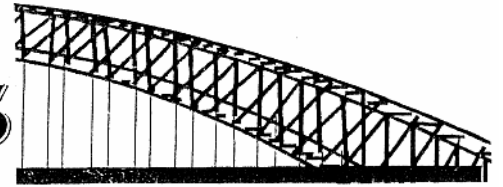


BRIDGES



A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM NETWORK

Sponsored by the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations

Number 32

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EDITORIAL

In the Christian calendar we are just about to enter the Season of Advent for 2005, that time of waiting, hope and expectation in preparation for the Feast of the Birth of Jesus. For many, it is a time of anticipation of holidays and celebrations, a special time for children – all the things that stir hope in us. But, sadly, this is being overshadowed in many places, and not least in our own communities in Australia, by an atmosphere of fear.

Many people tend to equate Muslims with terrorists, and while the threat of terrorism in our society is real, we can let fear begin to rule and influence our relationships. Even though this equation is based on ignorance, it can undermine the friendships and collaboration between Muslims and Christians, and Muslims and others that have been developing over recent years. Fear leads to mistrust and this together with the ever-present temptation to stereotype, the entire Australian Muslim community may find itself isolated, or worse, targeted as the cause of our fears.

How do we deal responsibly and realistically with the potential threats to the safety and stability of our society, and how do we avoid over-reaction? These are the questions that have to be addressed at the levels of government and community, but also by individuals. The majority of Australians as individuals cannot directly influence government policies, nor are we in a position to gauge real or

potential threats to our society, but we can do something about how we personally respond and act in our present situation.

So how do we do this? The key message of Christmas is Peace, “Peace on Earth to all of goodwill.” The key virtue of Christmas is Hope – Jesus is among us. And so it is appropriate that Bridges in this issue carries two articles that deal with Hope. The first, a Muslim perspective on Challenges of Faith in a Post-Modern World and Hopeful Strategies by Mrs Anita Mir, that addresses two challenges to faith which she sees of vital importance, the challenge to continue to abide in hope and the challenge from the radical politicization of religion.

The second is the Christian response by Prof. Donna Orsuto to Mrs Mir’s presentation, where she proposes answers to the questions “Why do people often lack hope in today’s post-modern world?” and “How can we, Muslims and Christians, work together to develop strategies for sustaining hope?” It is the personal challenge to be hope-filled people, which faces us at the present time

The staff of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations and *Bridges* wish you all the Peace and Hope that Christ brings in this Season of Joy

Pauline Rae smsm.

To all our readers

May the Christ-child stir within you the hope of the season...

... and may the peace and joy of Christmas be with you and yours

NEWS FROM THE CENTRE

Jewish Christian Muslim Residential Conferences

The Centre is working with Jewish, Muslim and other Christian bodies to organise a Jewish-Christian-Muslim residential conference in Sydney in 2006.

University Updates

The Centre's work with the universities has started taking shape in UNSW with study a trip to the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church, Randwick and a visit to the Sukkah (hut) set up at Shalom College on the university grounds.

After the church visit Trudi, a Jewish student reported "I went to the interfaith event at the church today. It was AMAZING! I found myself talking to a Maronite Christian lady, a Muslim guy and the congregants of the church for 2.5 hours over some yummy kosher cakes and matza!"

The Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations is on Yahoo!Groups

Logon to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ccmr> and click on the "join this group" button to be part of this e-community. Membership is required to help ensure the site is used only for its intended purpose, so if you have not used Yahoo!Groups before, you will need to register for a userID and password (instructions on the website will tell you how). Its simple and you can share your thoughts on Christian-Muslim dialogue with other friends of the Centre.

Resources Available

The Centre holds relatively limited but quality resources on Islam and Interreligious Dialogue which are available onsite. All are welcome, but to ensure staff availability, please contact the Centre prior to intended visit.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

A Month of Shared Sacred Time

October 2005 saw the fortieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions. This month was, however, all the more special because it was a time when Jews, Christians and Muslims shared sacred time.

4 Oct 2005, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi also marked the beginning of the Jewish year with Rosh Hashanah, and the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. Many of the Jewish holy days fall in the month of Tishrei and October has traditionally been the month of the Rosary.

As an act of solidarity, a number of Christians in Sydney fasted with Muslims and Jews (who observed Yom Kippur, one of the holiest of Jewish High Holy Days) on 13 Oct.

Friendship and Dialogue Dinner in Sydney

250 people of different faiths gathered at the Bosphorous Reception Centre for an *Iftar* dinner hosted by the Affinity Intercultural Foundation. It was chance for old friends and acquaintances of different faiths to meet and chat over a good meal accompanied by Sufi and Bosnian musical presentations for entertainment. Amongst the recipients of awards that night were, Cardinal Pell, (whose award was received by Bishop Julian Porteous on his behalf) and Monica Heary from the Parramatta Sun.

'Interfaith Prayer' at Eucharistic Procession

On 23 Oct, over 10,000 Sydney Catholics celebrated the closing of the "Year of the Eucharist" with a procession from St. Patrick's, Church Hill to St. Mary's Cathedral.

The difference came when problems with the radio transmission resulted in strains of the *azan* coming through along with the *Luminous Mysteries* of the Rosary. Some who realised what was coming through in Arabic

thought it was great that here was one group in prayer and another calling their own to do the same.

Peace and Harmony Conference

Eminent leaders, participants and delegates representing Islamic, Christian and Jewish faiths from Asia Pacific region, attended a two-day regional Conference in Sydney from 30 Sep – 02 Oct.

Organised by the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc. in conjunction with the Regional Islamic Da'wah Council of Southeast Asia and the Pacific, the conference issued a statement of resolution on achieving peace in harmony in the region.

View on Religions: Yes to Unity, No to Uniformity

Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue says that religions can make a very positive contribution to peace, human dignity and human values but added that "unity does not mean uniformity".

He continued that "Among the religions, fundamental differences of belief cannot be eliminated so as to bring about one super-religion". The archbishop made this proposal at the congress commemorating the 40th anniversary of "Nostra Aetate".

The congress was organized by the Institute on Religions and Culture and the Cardinal Bea Center for Judaic Studies of the Gregorian University.

Zenit 30/09/05

Theological Colloquium on 40 years of Nostra Aetate

Local and international leaders in the field interreligious dialogue from Europe, North America and Australia

(represented by Rev Trevor Trotter ssc) gathered in Mödling, Vienna for a six day theological Colloquium on Forty Years of Nostra Aetate. Entitled *Reflection on Religious Pluralism*, the colloquium was organised by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, beginning 8 Sep.

Amongst the topics covered were the Need for Promotion of Peace through Interreligious Harmony, A Renewed Understanding of the Christian Faith in a Pluralist Society, and Interreligious Dialogue and Formation in Seminaries and Religious Houses.

One of the working groups summarised the final purpose of Interreligious Dialogue as being to serve the salvation of peoples and the common good, and suggested that people engaged in dialogue needed to remember the preferential option for the poor and suffering and all marginalised people in the world who live in a special relationship with Christ crucified.

Another group concluded that "Through the hard work of many, much progress has been made over the last forty years. Today, as we face challenges not in the mind of the authors of NA, we need to keep on preparing competent men and women who can lead our communities in our mission of friendship to the people of other religions for the sake of the whole of humanity.

Catholics' Role Key in Mideast Peace, Says Nuncio

The Catholic Church holds the key to resolving conflict in the Middle East, says the new apostolic nuncio to the Persian Gulf, Archbishop Paul-Mounged El-Hachem, whose nunciature lies at the heart of the strife-torn Mideast (Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen and Qatar) called on the Church to take on the mantle of peacemaker in the area.

The 71-year-old nuncio, who served for 10 years as the Maronite bishop of Baalbek-Deir El-Ahmar in Lebanon, said that the Maronite episcopate had been staunch supporters of Pope John Paul II's denouncement of the Iraq war.

Despite the pressures that are driving many Christians out of the Middle East, the archbishop maintained that Christianity must be preserved in the region. "Something would be missing in the Mideast without the religion of love, reconciliation and forgiveness," he said.

The Maronite Church has had a presence in Lebanon since the seventh century, and now represents about a quarter of the country's population.

Zenit 21/09/05

Turkish Government invites pope to visit in 2006 to help strengthen dialogue

The Turkish foreign ministry said on 15 Sep that Ahmet Necdet Sezer was inviting the pope to come to Turkey next year in order to help "strengthen dialogue between civilizations".

A week earlier, Vatican officials had expressed hope that the pope would be able to travel in late November of this

year for a meeting with Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew Constantinople, who had invited the pope several months ago.

Final agreement on the visit is yet to be finalised.

Sunday Examiner 25/09/05

AFIC Leader Admits Misrepresenting Muslim View

The head of the nation's leading Muslim body Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Ameer Ali, was forced to back away from his earlier claim that there was "unanimous" support from key Muslim leaders for the Government's anti-terror laws.

His comments sparked anger within the nation's Muslim community and their leaders who were part of the Muslim Reference Group set up by the Government last month to act as a go-between for the community and Canberra on key Islamic issues.

After the meeting, Dr Ali, the group's chairman stated that "It was all unanimous, not one single disappointed person," when asked whether "every representative at the meeting has accepted these laws".

Those present, however, said that Dr Ali's comments were wrong and that no one present had endorsed the laws or had even been asked to give an opinion on them and that the aim of the meeting was to learn more about the laws, not to pass judgment on them. "His comments were wrong and they upset a lot of people," said one attendee, Aziza Abdel-Halim, president of the Muslim Women's National Network. Another who attended the meeting, Islamic Council of Victoria president Malcolm Thomas said Dr Ali's comments were "unauthorised and totally misrepresented our position".

[It is therefore not surprising that in a poll run by IslamicSydney, a popular Muslim website nearly 89% of respondents did not, as Australian Muslims recognise AFIC as being the legitimate representative of the Muslim community in Australia.]

IslamCity 14/10/05

Link between Evangelization and ID

Dialogue with believers of other religions is part of Christ's missionary mandate to evangelize, said Cardinal Francis Arinze, the prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments at the inauguration of the master's program on "Church, Ecumenism and Religions" at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University.

"The moment comes when we must proclaim Jesus" he said, as "before God we have the obligation to seek religious truth... There is only one God, there is only one mediator between God and humanity... It is not we who begin the adventure, without grace, no one is saved."

The Cardinal went on to say that although the divine plan of salvation embraces the whole of humanity and it is possible to be saved being members of other religions he emphasized that Jesus instituted the Church as the "ordinary way for salvation."

Zenit 28/20/05

CHALLENGES OF FAITH IN A POST-MODERN WORLD AND HOPEFUL STRATEGIES

Excerpts of talks given at a Sedos Seminar, Rome, 2003

A Muslim Perspective by Mrs Anita Mir

There are two challenges to faith I would like to attempt to address in this paper. The first is the challenge of continuing to abide in hope; the other is the challenge from the radical politicization of religion. The first is concerned with the individual - for hope is a state of being and as such is perceived as internal to humans; the second exists exclusively in relation to the *polis*. While demarcations between the private and public domains may be applicable in theory, they rarely have strong grounds in reality, for each person lives concurrently in their own world and in *the* world. Each relates to and is affected by changes in both. Paul Tillich posits that truth lies in living on the borderlines. It is to these borderlines, the interrelationship between the internal and the external, man's beliefs and the worlds.

External factors ignite and cull individual hope, but the hope of people, a nation can create an externally optimistic situation. It was hope that took us to the streets, compelled us to write letters and sign petitions to our political representatives and declare that the recent war on Iraq not be fought 'in our name'. There were some who believed that this would make a difference to the Coalition position vis-a-vis an attack on Iraq. Others were less optimistic, but still clearly felt the need to be counted and to show their solidarity with like-minded people. We see therefore that hope - which is an abstract idea - produces something which is tangible.

In this modern period where the radicalization of religion is both a threat to faith and to life itself, we must try to comprehend this phenomenon. Its relation to hope is twofold. The abrogation of our faiths may lead to a diminishing of our hope. Also, many of those who join such radical groups do so because these organizations fulfill, or portend to fulfil an absence in people's lives. With their sense of association and community these groups give those who join them hope.

While it is now common to hold that there is no objective reality and no objective values, I would like to argue that we need to pay close attention to the hope which such groups foster - for their final goal is destruction - of life and belief in a God who is tolerant and wants to be loved by Man as He loves man. The radical politicization of religion fulfils, I would argue, not a religious end, but a debased political one for it speaks not to service of the whole community, but to the needs of one group. Politics thereby becomes a domain not where ideas are worked out, but where emotions, predominately of fear and hatred are expressed.

The sense of community that such people seek, is not however so distinct from the sense of community, that brought the millions of peace demonstrators worldwide to the streets. As the war proceeded, the number of marchers attending such rallies dwindled. The present reality of politics had enmeshed their hope and in the process transformed it back into an abstract idea. How is the hope of one group and the subsequent activity it generates maintained, while the hope of the other peters out?

As hope is influenced by states which may be interior to and exterior to us, can we understand the manifestation of such an

idea as the politicization of religion only in its public and collective sense? In circumstances where such politicization is the dominant ideology, what space and what language is left to the individual believer? Will we concur with this view of our religion both publicly and privately? Will we turn from our faith? Are there other options open to us?

Beginning then with the premise that people have to interact with the world in order to understand both it and themselves, we see that there are important intersections between hope and the politicization of religion. These concern the theological and political, private and public aspects of faith.

Power allows escape routes, even in the most rigid regime. Such political radicalization, therefore affects more, those in society with less power i.e. the poor and minorities. One such minority group is women and an important dimension is the way in which the radical politicization of religion is established and functions. As a feminist I am interested in seeing not only how the state relates to women, but also how women relate to the state, how they accept or transcend and transform the realities that are imposed upon them.

To analyse the present day situation of women in the Islamic world, we first need to look further back into their history. 1924 is an important year, as in this year, the Muslim Caliphate is firmly suppressed by the new Turkish state. Countries in the Middle East and the Islamic world break free from their former Imperial powers and define their new nation states. The move, foreshadowed by Turkey, is one towards modernity. Women, surprisingly, figure largely in these new definitions.

The position of women in society, their representation, increasingly becomes a marker, first for a state's modernity and later, as a marker for 'cultural authenticity' with the rise of Islamist groups in the 70s. In the first paradigm, a nation's progress is measured by women's public activity (education/employment etc). In the second, a nation's sanctity is measured by women's perceived 'purity'. The latter pushes women back into the private domain and impose upon them stricter rules of behaviour. In both movements (the nationalist and Islamist) the new states in the Middle East, were affected by and were responding to an Orientalist gaze.

Key Orientalist assumptions made regarding women in the Islamic world are: Muslim women are a homogenous group; Islam is a religion which is repressive to women; the private and public domains are largely segregated along gender lines, with women fixed in the private domain and men in the public domain; the women's sphere is domestic and small whereas the sphere of men is political and large.

Such assumptions are challenged on the intellectual front but remain enmeshed in the public imagination in the West. Hence, a significant Western portrayal of Afghanistan's 'liberation' from a repressive Taliban regime was the symbolic act of women's unveiling. When Middle East women themselves examined manifestations of gender related power in their societies they began to significantly challenge these assumptions. Women are not merely tools of the state; they also are actors.

The women who joined the nationalist movements of the 80s were not primarily concerned with women's rights but with nationalist ideas of sovereignty and citizenship. The argument which was presented to them - and which they accepted - was that the state should receive precedence in their concerns; their rights would consequently be tabled. In most of the new nation states that emerged in this period in the Middle East, these rights did not follow. In the 80s we see the rise of Islamist groups. Feminists in the Middle East hereby become distinguished into two visible factions: secular feminists and Islamist feminists. The secular feminists argue that religion has no place in politics; the Islamist feminists argue that either Islam is not oppressive to women or that what is oppressive in their societies, is not truly Islamic. An important distinction is that the first is largely composed of middle to upper class women and the second has mass appeal.

And with this we see a further transformation in the radical politicization of religion. What began largely as a movement appealing to the disenfranchised in society, is garnering support across-class and national divides. I will cite here just one example: There are a growing number of middle class and upper class women in the Islamic World, whose religiosity

is becoming more publicly manifest

How can we best stem this challenge? And why am I suggesting that it is a challenge which not only politicians, but we have to address? As people of faith, we have a duty to evaluate and to counter how our religious credos, are being employed to incite hatred. We can begin a dialogue with fundamentalists, or we can cultivate a culture of true pluralism.

In this paper, I have tried to examine the relationship of hope to the radical politicization of religion. It accepts that we belong, as Tillich says, to 'two spheres, the *changeable* and the *unchangeable*'. Implicit therefore in its very nature is the idea and acceptance of fluidity and hence, difference.

It sees that manifest strength is nothing if not vivified by inward strength which ultimately emanates from and is dependent upon God. The anxiety of our age is endemic of many fragmentations. Ours is then a powerful message, as Augustine says love is derived from hope. The fundamentalists hate the world and all that is in it which is not in their image. We love the world and those in it because we see in both a reflection of His face.

A Christian Response in Dialogue by Prof. Donna Orsuto

(1) Why do people often lack hope in today's post-modern world? And (2) how can we, Muslims and Christians, work together to develop strategies for sustaining hope?

Abiding in hope is difficult today because we live in a culture where fear often pervades our lives. War and terrorism bring instability and uncertainty to many parts of the world. A climate of fear pervades the lives of many people also because they cannot provide basic needs for their families. Fear grips us in many diverse ways: personal, like receiving news of a suspect x-ray in a medical report, or, more global, as in the shattering statistics about hunger in today's world.

What happens around us can cause anxiety and fear, and thus can become a challenge of faith. Through prayer we can be drawn closer to God, even in the midst of these trials. At the same time, we must ask ourselves, "What can we do to remedy this climate of fear in our troubled world?" Dealing with fear is a major challenge to faith today.

One manifestation of fear is fundamentalism, both a Muslim and a Christian problem. Fundamentalism is a complex issue, but I am convinced that one of the reasons why we have a problem with fundamentalism is precisely because the challenges of the post-modern world frighten people and so they want to cling to the security of the past. This nostalgic longing for the past though, is ultimately an illusion.

In order to deal with fear; the first step is to recognize honestly our reaction to it. We can only develop strategies of hope if we first deal with fear: If you think about it, we often respond to fear either by aggression or by becoming paralyzed. The unknown often provokes fear, whether the unknown is a person or a new cultural situation. This fear can stop us from having an authentic encounter with others. Sometimes even before we meet the other, we have created our own fantasy conversation that warps any attempt at an authentic encounter because we approach the other person aggressively.

Aggression is not the only response to fear, sometimes paralysis strikes. Fear can lead to fatalistic withdrawal and flight from activity. Times of crisis and anxiety, of religious and political unrest, and of instability lead not only to fear, but also to depression. Psychologists tell us that in these situations, people often feel paralyzed and apathetic, incapable of doing anything. Fear certainly challenges our faith. It can raise questions in our minds about the existence of God. It can affect how we relate to God and to another.

Our Sacred Scripture encourages us 181 times not to be afraid. The Letter to the Hebrews says of the great people of faith in Israel: "they found strength in their weakness" (Heb 11:34). We may feel uncertain, fragile and worried, but in

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our weakness, we can receive from God a "humble strength" that will fill us with hope. The experience of weakness leads us to turn to God who becomes our strength. As we discover this strength in weakness, we discover peace within ourselves. The circle of peace can then widen to those around us until it finally reaches out to embrace the whole world.

How can we as Muslims and Christians work together to begin to develop some strategies for sustaining hope?

I would like to offer two strategies that might serve as a point of departure. Without a doubt, the great religions of the world encourage us to live in hope despite the challenges that face us. In the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, we, the people of the World Religions are to devote "...[our] lives not to the noise of the now but to the music of eternity, not to the shifting sands of the international arena but to the inner landscapes of the human spirit". If we really do this, we will be able to make a significant contribution to society. **So the first strategy for sustaining hope is for each of us to become instruments of hope in our world through an ever deeper openness to God. This will allow us to be contemplatives in action.**

One notices both in Christianity and Islam some extraordinary women who dedicate their lives to the "music of eternity". I think of Saint Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) as one who was totally involved in the ecclesial and political activities of her time, and yet managed to listen to the music of eternity" and integrate this music into her busy life. She was a woman of hope, and she encouraged others to join her in promoting hope in the troubled fourteenth century:

Speaking from a Christian perspective, we would say that hope is a gift from God. As we begin to accept this gift in our lives, we recognize that God exists and that we are instruments in God's merciful and loving hands. This allows us to live in hope in even the most difficult and "hopeless" situations.

In the Sufi tradition, the Eighth Century woman, Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya, witnesses to the "inner landscape" and the same "music of eternity". She writes:

My Joy, My Hunger, My Shelter, My Friend, My Food for the journey, My journey's End, You are my breath, My hope, My companion, My craving, My abundant wealth.

Without You, my Life, my Love, I would never have wandered across these endless countries. You have poured out so much grace for me, Done me so many favours, given me so many gifts, I look everywhere for Your love, Then suddenly I am filled with it. O Captain of my Heart, Radiant Eye of

Yearning in my breast, I will never be free from You As long as I live. Be satisfied with me, Love, And I am satisfied.

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The mystical tradition of both Christianity and Islam offer insights into what it means to hope in God. They can be sources of inspiration as we face the challenges of faith in the post-modern world.

It is not enough simply to be individual persons of hope, we also need to witness to the hope that is within us through actions of hope. This is the second strategy I would like to suggest. In a world where people say so often that situations are hopeless, we need to be open to the idea that things can change. God's grace can and does break into these situations - sometimes in ways beyond our expectations. Imagination and creativity will unleash new energy in a world so in need of hope.

What actions of hope can Muslims and Christians do for, and with, one another? RESPECT comes to mind, and the idea is that each religious or ethnic community should encourage its members to do an act of service or kindness to someone or some group across faith groups. This grassroots initiative encourages people to move across boundaries and rebuild trust where it has broken down. This may seem a simple thing, but it is a small way of witnessing to hope. It is a way of changing a seemingly hopeless situation.

Another way of sustaining hope consists in the opportunities we give one another to learn about the other's religion. Examples such as the existing scholarships to students of other religions who come to Rome to study Christianity, exchange programmes between Muslim and Christian professors at some universities and the simple experience of sharing daily life housemates from different religions has become for me a sign of hope for the future. I am convinced that both education and a dialogue of life form a major strategy for sustaining hope in future relations between Muslims and Christians. These various modest efforts lead to mutual respect and understanding. They will help to break down some of the boundaries that hinder dialogue.

In conclusion, our response to the fear that threatens our post-modern world is for each of us to take responsibility in developing strategies of hope. A strategy for sustaining hope invites us, above all, to look beyond ourselves, to have the courage to broaden our horizons. God works in surprising ways far beyond our expectations. It is only if we live in hope that we will be able to stretch beyond where are now to that future God has prepared for us

My invitation to you today is to think of your own experiences and ask yourself where you are invited to plant seeds or lay foundations for a future full of hope. This is one way of facing the challenges of faith in the post-modern world.

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BOOK REVIEW

Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005)

Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, the President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) and the Commission of the Holy See for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ), was born on 5 July 1924. Ordained on 23 July 1949 Cardinal Cassidy served as a priest in the diocese of Wagga Wagga, NSW before his installation as a bishop on 15 Nov 1970. He was appointed Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to various countries then as Sostituto, dubbed the third-highest ranked official in the Holy See prior to his appointment at the PCPCU on 12 Dec 1989. He was elevated to Cardinal 28 Jun 1991, retired on 3 Mar 2001 and now lives in Maitland, NSW, Australia.

His latest book, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Nostra Aetate* is the first of an eight-book series *Rediscovering Vatican II*, produced in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. The choice of venue for its launch in Sydney at the Great Synagogue, by his successor, Cardinal Walter Kasper (by video from Rome) was especially appropriate because a significant portion of the section on *Nostra Aetate* looked at Christian-Jewish relations.

As the title suggests, the two documents discussed are *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the *Decree on Ecumenism* and *Nostra Aetate*, the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, and the book is organised as such.

For each of the two documents, Edward Cassidy looks at

1. the document: its background, a historical report on the proceedings of the council and some of the key points in the draft versions of the documents that were deliberated, as well as the effect of the council and document on the observers and their subsequent reactions.
2. the major points: a brief outline of the document, the key points expressed and the principles behind particular statements.
3. the implementation: the various initiatives that have been implemented, i.e. the history and development of
 - the offices set up within the Roman curia
 - the contributions made by key individuals in the implementation
 - various subsequent papal exhortations, directories and guidelines written to help with the implementation of the document's directives.
 - reports the relationship between the various churches and faith traditions in dialogue
 - some of the key steps that have been taken to implement the call of the document

- examples of how it has worked and events held of
 - the theological obstacles and practical difficulties faced in the implementation
4. the state of the question: a brief review of where we are at forty years after Vatican II

One may hardly feel inclined to pick up a copy of the Vatican II documents and read it from cover to cover, but *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Unitatis Redintegratio, Nostra Aetate* is very readable and would appeal especially to those who have heard much about Vatican II but have scant idea of the content of the documents that resulted from the council. For such a reader, the content of the documents are likely to be surprising and Cassidy's coverage of the background sets the context for each document, which means that everyday Christians as well as those from other faith traditions would not be at a loss.

Its references to the various organisations, individuals and texts make this book a good starting point for further research, although the outlines are sufficiently in-depth for the book itself to be a resource for religious educators, those interested (and those not so interested!) in inter-religious dialogue. For example, who would not associate the Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi and the famous photograph of the leaders of the world religions gathered there, with Pope John Paul II? What is interesting and may be less known are what the triggers were, for the Pope deciding that these meetings were necessary, or what actually happened or was said at the gathering.

In his section on *Nostra Aetate*, Cassidy challenges us to be Christian because he does not deny that there are difficulties in inter-religious dialogue. His reminder that we need to accept that fundamentalists are present in all camps, though in itself may not be new, is one that helps keep us from taking the high moral ground. It is also a reminder that dialogue is not a call which compromises one's own belief, but rather a transcendence of the fact that there are some who may not espouse the same values for peace and intentionally or unintentionally misinterpret their own religious texts.

When one reads of the various initiatives that have been taken since the promulgation of the Vatican II documents, one may even be surprised but is likely to be inspired by the fact that there are so many people who have been working behind the scenes to promote ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue.

It is to be hoped that more will be stirred by this call to actively promote peace and understanding amongst peoples of all faiths and goodwill!

Carole Gan

MEETING POINT

Are you interested in meeting people of other faiths? Maybe even hosting a gathering? Contact the Centre on (02) 9352 8010 or cmr.cmi@columban.org.au for assistance or more information



A group of women from different faiths meet in Hurstville on the 4th Monday morning of each month. Contact Lorraine Watson on (02) 9579 2653 for further details.



“Faith Fusion” is a series of workshops for youth in the Fairfield area. Contact the Centre if you would like to find out more about the activities

Some mosques are open to visitors. Try finding out where the local mosque in your area is, and see if they run guided tours. Contact the Centre if you are not sure where to look, and we'll try to help you find one.



The Interfaith Forum of ACT meets monthly at 38 Wisdom Street, Hughes 4 - 6pm on the 2nd Sunday of each month. The forum is open to all ages. Contact Alma Armstrong on (02) 62873829 for further information

WHAT'S COMING UP

NOVEMBER

- 7-18** Liverpool Council Refugee Week
Enquires: Anita Hanna (02) 9821 7779 or a.hanna@liverpool.nsw.gov.au
- 13** Holroyd Inter-faith Carnivale
Holroyd Gardens
Enquiries: Lucy Maquire: (02) 9840 9948
- 13** In our times: Vatican II and Other Faiths
2 pm - Thomas Carr Centre
278 Victoria Pde, East Melb.
Enquires : (03) 99265708
- 16** *Christians and Muslims growing peace in Kogarah*
St George Bank Auditorium
6 – 8 pm; 4-16 Montgomery St, Kogarah
Enquiries: Anne Lanyon (02) 9352 8021
- 16** Youth Encounters 2005
Enquiries: Kincoppal – Rose Bay (02) 9388 6000
- 17** “*I am Woman, I am Muslim, I am Australian*”
featuring Nada Roude with Anne Henderson
7.15pm - Gallante's Restaurant
138 Norton St, Leichhardt
- 19-20** Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)
Interfaith Workshop, Brisbane
www.fair.org.au/interfaith/works/index.htm
- 20** Faith Fusion Performance
11 am - Fairfield Showground
Enquiries: 9823 8208

- 25** “Tomorrow's Islam”
7 pm - Carlton Hotel, 350 Church St., Parramatta
Enquiries & registration : (02) 9702 9789

DECEMBER

- 17** Sufi Night
Melbourne Town Hall
Enquiries & Registration :
<http://www.intercultural.org.au>

2006

JANUARY

- 6-9** Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)
Interfaith Workshop, Sydney

FEBRUARY

- 19** “Chasing God”
3.45 – 4.30 pm - National Museum of Australia
Enquiries: Alma Armstrong: (02) 6287 3829

MARCH

- 8-12** “The Rhythm of Unity : A Sacred Gathering for Women of All Ages, Interests and Faiths”
Further information : www.gatherthewomen.org
- 21** Harmony Day
Check with your local council for events

If you have a group or know of upcoming events in your local area, let us know about it and we will include in our future issues of *Bridges*

If you would like to be notified by email of events as we find out about them, sent your request to cmr.cmi@columban.org.au

Postal address: Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations
Columban Mission Institute
C/- Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 2002
Strathfield NSW 2135



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