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## EDITORIAL

MINISTRY is the theme that rides through this issue. There is the ministry of Br Rexford John Pye msc who has served the Aboriginal apostolate in Northern Territory since 1941 and was recently honoured with the Order of Australia Medal as civic recognition of his service.

Then there is the cross-cultural challenge that is very much in our minds and is illustrated by Fr Brian McCoy sj who has just returned from theoretical and field study of 'native ministries' in North America. On this issue the situations there and here are basically very similar, with the difference that the North Americans are a lot further down the track than we are. In the Catholic Church they have five ministry training centres, one native bishop, 20 priests, 60-70 religious, 60 deacons and a growing number of lay ministers. Of course, they have been at it longer than we have been, but most of the real moves have been since Vatican II. Brian McCoy is about to take up service at the new spirituality centre at Turkey Creek in the East Kimberley — which is a good happening.

David Thompson describes what is happening on the North Australian scene. There are two inter-related ministerial training centres, one Aboriginal bishop, three priests, two deacons, two deaconesses, and eight ordained ministers: that is in the Anglican and Uniting Churches. There is nothing explicitly on the Australian Roman Catholic scene, but we know we have two deacons.

For myself, provided my visa comes through, I should be off to the Lumko Missiological Institute on 6 September for a couple of months. The Lumko Institute (near Johannesburg) specialises in developing indigenous ministries. It would be nice if the Catholic Church here in Australia could find a way through the barrier that has seemed to be preventing the development of Aboriginal ministries amongst us.

Martin Wilson msc  
Editor, Nelen Yubu

# MINISTRY: THE CROSS-CULTURAL CHALLENGE

Brian McCoy SJ

## INTRODUCTION

WE WERE CELEBRATING A EUCHARIST in a small village called Nyac in south-western Alaska. It was August 1986, the time for the annual deacons and wives' retreat, and we were waiting for the seventy or so Yup'ik people to arrive. One deacon and his wife had already come. He was invited to share a homily with us, a few priests and others assisting with the retreat, and he began with these words: 'You know we Eskimos feel inferior to you priests.'

He then went on to describe the difficulties which he and his fellow deacons had experienced in their ministry. In particular he talked of the deep feelings of inadequacy which made their initial response to ministry full of self-doubt and uncertainty. It was a homily which spoke of suffering, for himself and his fellow deacons, as they came to live their ministry in the Church. But it was also a homily of hope. It found in the Good News the promise of a new life centred in the presence and person of Jesus.

The stories of various Indigenous peoples coming to ministry within the Catholic Church are as different as they are powerful. They often contain many sad aspects, many tragic moments of lost opportunities, wasted years and hurtful memories. At the same time they are heart-moving stories of great humour, courage and hope. In

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Fr Brian McCoy was chaplain to the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council in Townsville between 1979 and 1984, and was on Palm Island in 1985. In 1986 he spent a sabbatical studying Missiology in Toronto, and also visited indigenous Catholic and christian communities in Canada, USA and India. He is now (1987) attached to the Mirilingki Spirituality Centre at Turkey Creek (WA), and is also assisting with the spiritual needs of the Warmun community at Turkey Creek.

the context of human struggle and religious searching they offer to both their own, and the larger Church, rich possibilities for the revitalisation of the Gospel and the Christian faith.

In 1986 I was privileged to be able to visit and live in a number of Indian and Eskimo communities in North America. At the same time I experienced some of the various centres and programs which are specifically developing ministry with and for these communities. These 'Native North Americans', as they prefer to call themselves, include many quite different tribes or peoples, with diverse historical, cultural and religious traditions. As I travelled across the North American continent I visited Canadian Ojibway and Cree communities, American Plains' Sioux, Arapahoe and Shoshone, the Plateau Flathead and Blackfeet, and finally the Yup'ik people of Alaska.

The following is a brief description of, and reflection upon, some of the central factors which appeared to be at the heart of the growth of Native North American ministry in the Church today. And while my comments are fairly general, and primarily focused on ministry within the Roman Catholic Church, I hope they bear also some relevance to ministry development within other Christian Churches.

### Brief History of Church Contact

The Native North American peoples have had contact with Catholic Christianity from anything up to 350 years. In each place there is a distinctive memory of the relationship forged between early missionaries and their own people. Many of these missionaries are held with deep affection, especially for the life they shared with the people, the schools they set up and the religious practices they taught. There were, for example, the French in Canada who came with the enterprising fur traders, the Spaniards who accompanied the conquering military in the American south, and the Belgians and other Europeans who explored the west and then into Alaska in the wake of the gold discoveries. Stories are still told of that early contact with missionaries, some of whom were invited by the tribes to come and teach the people of 'the white man's way and religion.'

One story still popularly remembered and re-enacted, is that of the Flathead people and their efforts to gain the presence of the 'Blackrobes', of whom they had heard much from the Iroquois of Eastern Canada. The Flathead people, from the northwest of the present United States, sent out four successive parties of messengers

to find and bring back some of these men. Eventually, after many unsuccessful attempts, including the deaths of a number of their envoys, they managed to reach the Jesuits in St Louis. The Belgian De Smet was the first of a number of missionaries to take up their invitation to share the ways of the white man with the people.

The missionaries brought many things with them as they shared with these tribal peoples their belief in the Christian God. They brought schools and hospitals, farming and agriculture, factories, western styles of dress, custom and language. They brought what they considered was 'civilisation', and with it the Roman Catholic faith and all their cultural expressions of that faith. Throughout North America they are also remembered for administering 'mission' or residential schools, which were boarding schools for Native students to the end of secondary school. In these schools, which comprised Native students only, English was the medium for all learning. In most cases the languages of the peoples were forbidden, their cultural ways suppressed. This created a generation, and more, of people who lost touch with much of their traditions.

Many things have caused change within these tribal communities, especially in the past twenty years. Apart from the influences of the missionaries themselves, much has been due to the influences felt in western society as a whole. Media, technology, mineral exploration, the rapid transport of peoples across countries and access to information across the world, the changing roles of people within families especially women, anti-discrimination legislation and a new awareness of the rights of indigenous peoples, have all had a wide-reaching effect to change the identity of traditional communities.

For Catholic Christians the Vatican Council has exerted a most significant influence. The desire to implement the spirit of that Council, together with the later Papal exhortation on Evangelisation, have set the foundations for a completely new approach to 'mission work'. This has been summed up in North America by bishops, theologians and the people as: 'allowing the Holy Spirit to raise up a strong Native Church'.

This attempt to build up strong Native Churches in North America, with their own ordained ministers, emerged from the realisation that previous missionary efforts had not allowed the people their own manner of being 'Christian' and 'Catholic'. In the years prior to the Council tribal religion had been generally

considered to be pagan, inferior to Christianity, and hence totally wrong. It was to be removed. Many cultural practices had been forbidden by the Church, such as the speaking of traditional languages and observing of culturally important ceremonies. Significantly, the people were prevented from praying, singing and in general worshipping according to their own traditional ways.

The spirit and documents of Vatican II emphasised a better appreciation of tribal culture, a more radical respect for tribal religion, and the need for people to seek out, treasure and discern the gifts of their cultures. It became more important to listen and dialogue with traditional religion, allow people to bring their customs of singing, dancing and art to worship, and above all respect the ways in which God had already been working within these people for many thousands of years. Within this new approach to 'mission' there was the searching for ways in which lay leadership especially could emerge in the Church. The hope was for a church that would be Christian, Catholic and Ojibway (and Cree, and Sioux, and Arapahoe, and Yup'ik....as the people may be.)

One irony in this new direction for greater lay participation in church and ministry was that it returned to some of the practices of the last century. At that time the priests were often itinerant. They moved from village to village as often as time and the weather permitted. For much of the winter months they could not move at all. Catechists were appointed in the villages to instruct the people in the faith, lead the community in prayer, bury the dead, prepare the community for the time when a priest would come, and act as an interpreter when he did come. These people became the religious leaders of their communities. With the advent of the automobile and modern methods of communication, priests could get around the communities more often. The role of the catechists became less important, and ten years ago in South Dakota the last of these catechists died. Today there are few religious leaders in the communities who are not outsiders. The people have become dependent for their religious, and in many cases their temporal, survival on outsider missionaries.

### Influences On Ministry

Apart from the significant changes within the thinking of the Church since Vatican II, there are also other factors which have affected the religious experience of many Native people. This

religious experience, in the context of the Church, has led a growing number of people to seek ministry.

One of the more obvious factors is that of spiritual renewal or revival. People seem to have come with a desire for ministry after they have had some religious conversion or experience. There appear to be many people presently in ministry or ministry training who have been influenced by one of the more recent Church renewal movements. Some of the Ojibway people, for example, have been involved in the Charismatic movement. A number of them formed the Kateri Music Ministry Group (named after Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, who was born of an Algonquin mother and Mohawk father, and died in 1680). For some years this group used to visit communities and lead prayer weekends. On these weekends there was time for singing, praying, and the sharing of scripture. There was also a special time for healing and reconciliation. Many of these people have now become the recognised ministers to their communities.

Other renewal movements, such as Cursillo, Engagement and Marriage Encounter, have also been influential. For example, the Flathead people of Montana have their own active and highly organised Cursillo groups. They invite other Native people to their weekends, and also conduct special weekends in the local prison.

In the group of adults attending the ministry weekends at the Canadian Anishinabe Spiritual Centre, more than half could talk about an experience which had radically changed their adult lives and led them to ministry. Often this was a time of personal crisis when they experienced God. For men the release from alcoholism was common.

Music, healing, the personal testimony of Jesus in a person's life, dreams and visions, the power of the Word, the use of traditional symbols, praying over people and the laying of hands, all seem to be involved in allowing a person to have a new religious experience. Native North Americans seem to possess a spirituality which is more emotional than cerebral. People come to worship because they want to experience God in their lives. They want to leave worship feeling touched and better for the experience. This in fact is a holistic spirituality seeking to harmonise all aspects of daily human life. And it is the emotional responses which then release the mind for action and reflection. In one seminar I witnessed a religious Sister asking a panel of Native people about the question of weekly Sunday observance. People in her community did not come to Mass every Sunday, but they came for special

celebrations. What could she do to encourage regular Sunday attendance? One response was that she allow herself and the people to get back in touch with their traditional spirituality. There was no sense of weekly divine worship in that spirituality, but there was a deep sense of daily and even continuous openness to the Creator. People who worshipped according to that spirituality would find weekly observance at Mass a trifle too lenient and limiting!

People who experienced a personal renewal in their lives, such as a personal experience of the power of their faith or the experience of a personal relationship with Jesus, generally then sought to deepen that experience. The desire for ministry often came from such people. And for those who enter ministry in this way often they then moved into the whole area of theological reflection. The personal experience of faith, the desire for ministry, the theological reflection, all can develop as a progression and continue in a person's own circle of life. I was able to witness in North America not only the people becoming renewed in their faith and coming to ministry, but also the signs of their emerging as Native theologians.

Another significant influence in bringing people to seek ministry seems to be that of the reconciling of their own tribal religion with the Christian and Catholic faith. The experience of most adult tribal people was similar. They had been taught to reject their traditional religious ways when they became Catholic. In some cases the people simultaneously rejected all their cultural ways, in other cases the people lived within two separate worlds. There appears to be a growing number of people who are finding that they can reconcile their religious heritage with being Christian and Catholic. Not that the task of reconciliation has been easy. However, in the deeper acceptance of their traditions people are claiming to find a peace and interior harmony which previously was missing. John Hascall, Ojibway and Capuchin priest, summed this up in the opening talk of the 1986 Tekakwitha Conference: 'Before we used to wonder if we could be Indian and Christian. Now we know that we can only be Christian if we are Indian.'

A third factor which is bringing people to become ministers for their own communities is simply the lack of available priests and Sisters. In one Church area the average age of missionaries is over fifty years, in another it is over sixty. Many religious congregations cannot provide the personnel they could in the 1960's



or even the 1970's. And most tribal communities have young populations and are steadily growing. This crisis within the largely white Church has been a blessing for many communities. Some bishops have been prompt in urging the people to put forward leaders who could be prepared and then commissioned for various ministries within their communities.

One group of missionaries, aware of their increasing age and the near certainty of having reduced numbers in the years ahead, decided in 1986 that one way to stress the urgency and encourage the growth of local ministry was to make themselves absent from their communities one weekend in every four. This policy, covering a number of church communities in the one diocese, was to be gradually implemented as people were preparing to take over. A further advantage of this was that it enabled the missionaries to visit other communities which until then had been neglected.

A fourth factor would have to be the emergence of Native models of ministry, that is people whose lives offer tangible evidence that it is possible to be faithfully a Native person and a Catholic Christian. There is the widespread devotion to Kateri, who has already been mentioned; there is Joseph Chiwaterha, a Huron Indian, who catechised his people and later died for his faith, and there is a growing number of others. Then there are present-day models.

In the Native Catholic Church of North America there are today about twenty priests, sixty to seventy religious, and about sixty deacons, not counting the increasing numbers of lay men and women ministers. In May of 1986 Donald Pelotte was consecrated as the first Native Bishop of North America. He is a member of the Blessed Sacrament Order and now the auxiliary bishop for the diocese of Gallup in New Mexico. (While these numbers sound large, especially compared with Australia, it is helpful to remember that the total population of the US and Canada is about 275million, whereas the Native population is 1-2%, similar to that in Australia).

A further asset for the Native Catholic people has been the way that they have been able to gather as a people and explore the symbols necessary for their being fully within the Church. There is, for example, the Tekakwitha Conference. This annual gathering initially began as a forum for missionaries. About ten years ago the numbers of interested missionaries had declined and it was then that the Native people took control and developed it into an annual conference for all Catholic Native people across North America. In

August 1986 more than 2000 people gathered in Bozeman, Montana, for this three and a half day conference. The theme: 'Eagle Wings and Mountain Peaks: Sharing and Living our Sacred Ways'. The President of the conference, John Hascall, priest, Capuchin and Medicine Man for his Ojibway people, leads the traditional ceremony of the Sweat Lodge, supervises people in the fasting and prayer of Vision Quests, and conducts healing ministry. John Hascall offers a significant model of an integrated Native and Catholic christian life.

There is also the Institute on Amerindian christian leadership, which is a biannual conference for discussing and exploring the role of Native people in the church. Bishops, theologians, missionaries and a predominant group of Native people have been meeting in Canada for at least five conferences to reflect on the growth of the Native Church.

The harmonising of tribal and christian symbols is at the heart of Native ministry. The matter was highlighted when John Paul II visited Canada in 1984. He presided at a service which began with the traditional Purification ceremony. Many people experienced this as the first formal recognition and acceptance by the Catholic Church of the values of their traditions, culture and religion. Since then there has been more dialogue, some further experimentation, and a deeper understanding of the meaning of religious symbols, traditional and christian. For example, it is not unusual for the Purification ceremony, using traditional sage, sweetgrass and tobacco, to replace the Catholic Penitential service. There has also been much discussion and some liturgical use of the Sacred Pipe, the Sacred Drum, the Sweat Lodge and the Vision Quest. The Yup'ik people have replaced the Roman alb with the Qaspek, the traditional garment used by the shaman, or religious leader, and now used by the deacons. And in some places priests assist local medicine men in preparing for the Sun Dance ceremony, a role traditionally reserved for medicine men only.

#### Development Of New Ministries — The Diaconate

The Spirit of Vatican II touched not only the people but also many missionaries and bishops. Some of them recognised the possibility of establishing a strong Native church, with its own forms of ordained ministry. There were various initiatives in different communities to allow this to happen. Not surprisingly, one movement was towards the ordination of married men as deacons.

There are a number of reasons why the Vatican Council proposed the re-introduction of the 'permanent diaconate'. One reason was that it might meet some of the needs of the Third World Church. Ironically it was in North America where this particular form of ministry was most seriously implemented, and there are almost 7,500 deacons in the North American Catholic Church at the moment. The first group was ordained in 1972, and in 1986 96% of these deacons were married. There are deacon-training programs in 144 dioceses, with length of training varying from three to six years (part-time). The first Native deacons were from Alaska, when three Yup'ik were ordained in 1975; later in that year the first Sioux were ordained in South Dakota. Today there are about sixty Native deacons, more than half of them in the Yup'ik villages of southwestern Alaska. There appear to be a number of advantages and disadvantages to the deacon model of ministry. Its main strength is that it allows local communities to recognise and foster their own gifts of spiritual leadership within their own community members. In cases where the local parish council or community nominate a particular person or number of persons, there exists the possibility of a discerning of the Spirit's call to ministry of people from and within that community. A few years ago a priest in Alaska mentioned to a community that it would be possible for someone to be nominated and trained to be a deacon. He said that he would later call a meeting of the whole parish to discuss this person's election. When the meeting finally occurred and the priest explained the criteria for selecting such a person, the people replied that they had already made their choice. Significantly, their choice was not what the priest had predicted.

However not all Native Catholic communities have nominated people to become deacons. Many of them have not been able to retain traditional structures of authority or do not have parish councils or similar decision-making bodies. The deacon model does not seem to fit in well in all communities. In some cases, such as in the villages of Alaska, there are a number of parish councils which have selected men to be deacons, the people are apparently happy with this form of ministry. The structure of the parish councils is quite foreign to their traditional life, and the role of elders in village decision making, yet here in far North America the people seem content in choosing deacons to serve their communities. Since their first ordinations in 1975, thirtyfive deacons have been ordained in

Alaska, with a further ten presently in training. In other communities of North America, despite encouragement from the local bishop and missionaries, men have not offered themselves or been put forward as deacon candidates. Then there are some situations, such as in two Ojibway communities, where there are deacons as the local Parish Administrators. Here the desire to have these deacons ordained as married priests is not disguised, either by the deacons themselves or by the people.

There are considerable advantages to this deacon model of ministry, as has already been mentioned, but there are some serious difficulties as well. Its most serious disadvantage is that it is a particularly dependent model of ministry. Not only does the deacon belong to a hierarchy of ministry, but sits at the lowest rung of that three-tier structure: bishop, priest and deacon. To many people, especially those brought up on the traditional role of the priest, the deacon possesses a far lower, inferior status. There are many ways in which a deacon can perform what a priest does, but necessarily the deacon is dependent on a priest for important sacramental functions, namely anointing of the sick, reconciliation and the Eucharist. This dependency is particularly acute in the matter of the Eucharist. The Catholic emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist and weekly Sunday Mass is in obvious tension with the increasing unavailability of priests. Not only are the deacons dependent on priests for these Eucharists, and hence unable to exercise full spiritual leadership for their people, but communities are also becoming dependent on priests in ways that they were not before.

After fourteen years of ordaining many deacons in North America there is now a felt need within the national Catholic Church to examine the consequences of this ministry. Some dioceses have suspended their programs of training. Others have started to look at the implications of having in effect 'married clergy' in the Church. One area of concern, for example, is the children of these deacons. There is now a generation in the Church of people who have been brought up as children of ordained Catholic ministers. What is the effect upon these children and their families? Another question is that of academic and other requirements for ordination. There has been great divergence between some dioceses on what they expected from candidates. But the most important question is the relationship of deacons with the clergy and the ever increasing numbers of laity in ministry. The most central concern of the Native Catholic people,

on the question of the diaconate, is whether it helps or hinders the growth of a strong church among their own people.

Another difficulty with the diaconate model is that, like a pre-Vatican II model of priestly ministry, all ministry can become identified in the one person. Not only can a form of creeping clericalism occur, and deacons end up being the only people who minister among or to their people, but to allow so much religious power to be focused in one person can be anathema to the traditions of many tribal peoples. One attempt to avoid this has been among the Sioux of South Dakota. There the diaconate is seen as a ministry which can encompass many forms of ministry, and individuals are encouraged to concentrate on the one in which they are particularly gifted. Sacramental ministry is only one ministry among many others. Hence there are deacons ministering in the prisons, hospitals, with engaged or married couples and so on, who may never preach or lead communion services. The advantage to this approach is that ministry is shared among various people in the community.

However there are a number of ways in which a community can initiate ministry without necessarily having deacons. Every traditional community has its own forms of 'ministry', often covering basic needs such as leadership, teaching, healing, hunting and protecting. There seems to be no reason why communities cannot continue to develop these 'gifts' in the church, where the naming of them is not as important as the living out of them. It would seem that communities will perform these ministries in their own way, but in ways which could be recognised by the local church. One advantage of the deacon model is that ministry is then formally recognised by the universal church. This however is probably not an issue for traditional communities seeking their own spiritual leaders.

What becomes the issue is not one of deacons or other ministers, married or celibate, but the availability of the Eucharist and other sacraments to local communities. Until such communities possess their own spiritual leaders, together with the availability of all the sacraments, the cycle of dependency will continue. And it is these very ties of dependency which the Church, in the name of the Gospel, is professing to undo under the vision it has for the lives of the people.

### Centres for Ministry Development

The Church of North America seems to have come to realise that while previous missionary efforts brought good to many people, they were also the cause of creating a two-way dependency of missionaries with local communities. In some places there is still a reluctance for the local people to offer some from themselves for spiritual leadership; in other cases there is the desire, but uncertainty as to how this can be achieved. Missionaries themselves have found it difficult to ease themselves out of leadership roles and to have confidence in local leaders. Hence the importance of those Centres in North America which have developed in recent years to specifically train and prepare local people for ministry. Two are in Canada, the Anishinabe Spiritual Centre in South Dakota, and the other in Alaska, operating out of Anchorage and St Mary's.

These centres have developed over the past fifteen years, although the first was not built until 1978, and the other two within the last eight years. The fourth Centre, in Alaska, operates with no institutional base and is located in local communities and in two residences where the resource people live. The need for all these centres was only apparent after ministry initiatives had been implemented and tested for some years in local village communities. They were built to be accessible to as many communities as possible, and preferably not situated within one particular community. The Anishinabe Centre is particularly noteworthy as many local Ojibway people assisted in its design and building.

Each centre has its own method for the training of local ministers. The Anishinabe Spiritual Centre works on the model of a full weekend at the centre every month. The program consists of a number of parts: bible study (using the themes of the three-year lectionary as a theological text), practical ministry training in various chosen ministries, the leading of prayer services, the use of 'Builders of the Earth' (a three-volume text, composed in the 1970's for ministry training among the Sioux), plus times for prayer, socialising and discussion. At the end of 1986 this centre introduced a formal degree course in theology for those who had completed the initial three programs, a course to be completed over several years part-time.

The Sioux Spiritual Centre organises weekly meetings of three hours duration in the local communities. It depends primarily on the 'Builders' text, which is intended for group rather than individual

study. This text covers key theological topics, uses the bible extensively, and finishes each section with a number of practical questions. Where possible the local community appoints a local person to lead the discussion of the weekly text. If this is not possible one of the persons living at the centre visits the community. Last year one of the people at the centre was travelling several hundred kilometres every week supporting and encouraging these weekly meetings in the communities.

The Kisemanito Centre has opted for people living in at the centre for up to a year at a time, or less if they prefer. They offer a two-year full-time program which a person might choose to complete over several years.

The Alaskan program is different again. For deacon training there are about six three-day workshops a year. This goes on for two years, the deacon is ordained, and then the deacon moves into a local diocesan program, which also meets several times a year. Four areas are covered in the deacon preparation workshops: scripture, history, sacramental theology and liturgy. Alaska has also been offering a variety of workshops for people in the villages. These might last for a weekend or even a week. They are based in the village and are according to what the people ask for, e.g. a youth retreat, catechist training, parish council preparation, etc. Alaska, unlike the other centres, offers in effect two separate programs, one for male deacons and the other for people in the communities.

Each centre has approached the development of local ministries in different ways. In most cases the early emphasis on ordaining deacons has now broadened to include adults either interested in or nominated for ministry. Most centres request that people be appointed by their local church communities. They have also stipulated that if a person is accepted for diaconate training then not only must he have the support of his wife, but she is encouraged to do the program with him.

The centres also offer a number of other resources apart from formal preparation for ministry. Because they are situated away from peoples' home communities, they are especially appreciated for offering people an opportunity to rest and be renewed, away from the constant pressures people find within their communities. These new religious leaders can receive support of a communal and spiritual nature, a chance to reflect, pray, and seek advice from others. Many church ministers have large families, hold down full-time jobs, and

today?' In other words are there ministries being called forth in one community which may be different from those in another community, but which need to be named and for which people need to be prepared and confirmed?

Ministry centres offer much hope and valuable resources to the local church communities, as at the same time offering a challenge to the wider church. In attempting to meet the ministry needs of a local christian community they also raise the wider question of the nature of church ministry in general.

### Issues Affecting New Ministries

It would be ideal if all the initiatives previously mentioned meant that the Native christian communities were suddenly emerging into a vital and renewed way of life. However there are still a number of issues limiting the growth of this new and Native Church.

Not all Catholic Native people have found the changes of the last twenty years to their liking. Much like traditional Catholics in most countries, the absence of the Latin Mass, Benediction, and Corpus Christi processions are especially felt by the older people. There is a sensitivity and even resistance to change. Often the question is posed: 'For years the Church has told us that our customs are wrong. Now it is saying that they are good. Was the Church wrong before?' Not only is it difficult for some people to accept that the Church can be wrong, but equally difficult to try and rebuild a tribal heritage which the Church had said was to be left behind and actively assisted people to leave it behind. Now to be invited, even encouraged, to reconcile these two ways of life can bring much confusion and surface much hurt in peoples' lives.

The Church has had to face and help heal the deep anger and often suppressed resentments which lie within many Native people. For example, the topic of the residential school system is often mentioned. The last of these schools closed in the early 1970's, but the memories are still strong. The Church hurt Native people in this educational system and in a number of other ways. It now has a responsibility to try and heal some of these hurts. Another area of deep hurt presently being experienced in a large number of Native communities is the high rate of suicide, especially affecting young males between 14 and 25 years of age. The suicide rate among Native North Americans is the highest of any ethnic group in North America. In one community in Wyoming there were nine suicides in nine weeks



during the summer of 1985 and this pattern is repeated in many other communities. While a number of these suicides are alcohol related, the suffering and confusion in the hearts of the people are intense. The Church is being challenged to offer a much needed healing, but also offer a life-giving and life-sustaining identity for those being Native and christian.

The attitudes of present missionaries are critical for any growth in Native ministry. Some church leaders do not support these new ministry attempts. They live and work out of quite different, if not opposing and conflicting, models of the Church. This is reflected more obviously in the lack of enthusiasm and support for ministry initiatives and programs. It is reflected more subtly in the ways in which local people are frustrated in their efforts to minister. One universal complaint and hurt expressed by Native people was the difficulty they were experiencing with local priests and religious in assuming ministry in their own communities.

Many missionaries have not had much training in cross-cultural dialogue or the missiology of Vatican II. Even fewer have had much experience of the growth of lay ministry since the Council. It is not so much that they do not want the local community to grow into a self-sufficient church community, but it is more a case of the missionary having become subtly dependent on the community and not knowing how, or if, to change that situation.

The problem for the 'white Church' (which is a term which the Native people use to describe the wider church) seems to be related to an historically held belief, or myth, that the people do not fully understand the Gospel, that 'they are not ready to take over'. This 'myth' has been passed on from one 'white' religious community to the succeeding one, and is very hard to dislodge because it is essentially a way of thinking (and is then appropriated by the local people also). Hence it is often only when new church personnel come in, such as a new religious order or newly trained personnel of the same order, is there a change in this mentality. Hence the most creative initiatives in North America seemed to be where the church had deliberately trained people by sending them off to develop some expertise, or it had brought in new religious personnel with a completely new way of thinking, or it handed over to the community responsibility for the church personnel it would receive. In these new situations the number of priests and religious were always significantly smaller than before.

A growing conviction of the church of North America appears to be that its commitment towards Native peoples is a responsibility belonging to the whole church. Hence there is a movement away from seeing a particular tribe or group of tribes as belonging to one religious order, although this seems to be more easily accepted by female religious than male. Similarly, some bishops and religious orders are no longer proposing that their 'missionary' personnel retire in the communities in which they have worked. Again, these decisions, often difficult and even painful, are only taken that the local church might take more responsibility for the living out of its christian faith.

Two final issues remain and deserve some comment, that of Native women in ministry, and that of the ordination of Native married men. Most ministry programs have found it important that both husbands and wives complete programs together, even if only the husband is to exercise church ministry. This has led to a growing number of women who are performing ministry in their own right. One Canadian bishop, wishing to enable women to participate more fully in ministry in his diocese, instituted what he called The Diocesan Order of Women. This was one way that he could officially recognise the ministry of women in his diocese, a ministry which in most ways paralleled that of male deacons in the same diocese. Hence there is an increase in women seeking ministry in their communities, alongside their husbands and other church ministers.

There are some tribal peoples who are matriarchical, such as the Mohawk in Canada, and for them female leadership in the family and community is normative. There has been some experimentation in allowing these women to lead worship and Eucharistic services, and at the same time have a male priest lead the prayers for the Eucharist. At the moment there does not seem to be any widespread movement for Native women to seek priestly ordination, but there does seem to be a common desire to be recognised for the ministries they are already performing, and are capable of performing, according to a proper respect for their cultural traditions.

The issue of ordaining married men has already been mentioned. It is a topic discussed often and at length by many Native people. Some bishops, dioceses, and ministry centres have made representation to Rome on this matter and it is foreseeable that pressure will continue for some time. The two Ojibway deacons already mentioned, working as Parish Administrators in Ontario, perform almost all that

a priest did before them. They and their people would hope that one day they could be ordained as priests. There are other deacons who are quite happy to remain as deacons. At the same time there is a movement to encourage the celibate priesthood. There is one candidate preparing for ordination who is studying at the Anishinabe Spirituality Centre and there is the possibility of several others this year through the Kisemanito and Sioux Centres. In this latter centre a proposal has been made to the American bishops that a five-year plan be implemented for the training of candidates to the celibate priesthood. However in this new proposal the candidates will live and prepare for their ministry within their home communities.

### Conclusion

The North American experience can offer some helpful ideas for our Australian situation, especially as the church there has been facing the implications of a 'Native Church' much longer than we have been considering an 'Aboriginal Church' in Australia. For example, the dialogue with traditional religion and symbolism, experimentation with liturgy and traditional religious practices, the formation of the Tekakwitha Conference and the Institute on Amerindian Christian Leadership, the use of the Diaconate and other adult ministries, Ministry centres and their various programs and so on, can offer us some ideas for reflection in our Australian context. Yet despite the many initiatives that have been taking place in North America, the church is still learning from its experiences, and we in Australia can learn as much from their mistakes as from their creative efforts. It is also possible that, while we have much to learn in Australia about the style and manner of Aboriginal ministry, we can in this period of new hope and new possibilities offer in turn some important insights to our fellow christians in North America.

# RECORD OF MISSIONARY WORK: BROTHER JOHN PYE MSC

## Frank Bryce

The following was presented by Frank Bryce, Town Clerk at Nguju, Bathurst Island, on 12 June at the gathering for Br Pye's investiture with the Order of Australia Medal by the NT Administrator, Commodore Johnson.

BROTHER PYE WAS BORN IN NSW just north of the Murray River. He lived in the Riverina towns of Tarcutta on the Hume Highway, Coolamon, Tumut, and he went to the Christian Brothers School at Wagga Wagga. After school he went to a workshop to learn about machinery and engines in Coolamon. This workshop was owned by a man called Tom Murphy. Actually Brother Pye's father was a sergeant of police in that town so he was reared in a police station environment with his parents.

After he had learned all about machinery and engines he then got the urge to become a missionary. He applied to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Society, a missionary order whose formation place was at Douglas Park. After he was accepted he did his training and was sent to Toowoomba in Queensland and this is where he got involved with the first MSC college for boys in Australia. He spent ten years there and in 1940 the Provincial told him that he was going to be transferred to Darwin and to the Northern Territory mission staff.

He left for Darwin in February 1941, and when he arrived he was met by Bishop Gsell, Father Henschke, Father Cosgrove and Brother Andrew Smith. He only had a few days in Darwin, which was then a military-occupied town because of the war. Brother Andrew Smith, the skipper of the boat 'St Francis', took him to

Bathurst Island. On the boat was a young, handsome crewman named Barney, and Barney is here today. The trip on the 'St Francis' from Darwin to Bathurst Island took eight hours — there were no aeroplanes then.

When Brother Pye arrived on Bathurst Island he was met and welcomed by about 500 Tiwi. Also there were Father McGrath, Brother Commerford, Peter de Hayer the builder, Sister Dionysius, Sister Eucharía, Sister Gabriella, Sister Laurencia and Sister Magdalen. These religious people and all the Tiwi people made him very welcome and happy to be here.

All the Tiwi people lived on the beach then. They had only small humpies and the mission buildings themselves consisted of a very primitive presbytery and church, a very tiny convent, and a visitors' house. That is all they had. Brother Pye was very impressed to see what was around the mission settlement in 1941 when he arrived. There were acres of crops including peanuts, sweet potato, water melons, pumpkins and rock melons. There was a plantation of bananas, paw paws, custard apples, coconuts and mangos. There was an animal kingdom too. There were horses — no cars or trucks then of course, and there was cattle for killing; goats, pigs, chickens and even sheep. On top of this there was a saw mill. From the saw mill timber was sold in Darwin.

Apart from the humpies on the beach and all this livestock and the few little mission buildings, the only other building that was here was the small house near the church where Father McGrath put over the radio the message that Japanese war planes were heading for Darwin (which was not listened to). The framework for the present church was just then under construction and the present Christian Brothers storage area was empty but was built as barracks for the RAAF.

After a time at Bathurst Island, Brother Pye went on to Garden Point which was being prepared for orphan children of Aboriginal descent. He learned that the children at Garden Point were being looked after by Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Sisters: Annunciata, Eucharía and Antoninus. Mother Concepta, who was Father Henschke's sister, came with the children to help them get started and she became the Provincial for the nuns. The boys were looked after by Father Bill Connors and Brother Ed Bennett.

In 1941 at Garden Point, two buildings were being built: one for the girls and one for the boys. Several hundreds of Tiwi men and women were the main workers who built these buildings. They also cleared and started gardens and planted fruit-bearing trees including cashew, mango and custard apples for the children to eat.

Brother Pye went back to Darwin where he was told he was to go to Port Keats. It was a very wild place then. Nemaarluk and his followers had just been captured for killing Japanese; and on the day Darwin was bombed, Judge Wells set them free and told them to go home and kill some more Japanese. The first Sisters Dionysius, Magdalen and Xavier were also appointed to Port Keats. It was a 25-hour trip on the 'St Francis' from Darwin and it was a long and hard journey. But when Brother Pye arrived at Port Keats he was met by Father Docherty and Brother Denis McCarthy who was then very old and sick. Brother Pye got a shock when he arrived. The boat-landing there was at the end of a saltwater arm and he was confronted by fierce looking warriors who were resting on their spears! For some of these warriors it was the first time they had ever seen white women.

Port Keats Mission had only started a few years previously. The year 1941 was a delightful and progressive one. The Sisters established their school. The garden was extended over a swamp area. The aerodrome was extended and a two-storey cyprus pine building was completed: upstairs for classes and downstairs for meals. 1942 was a different story. A cyclone on 16 and 17 February hit and all the Sisters were evacuated to Darwin. The 'St Francis' sailed all the nuns away from Port Keats.

At this stage a little boy called Boniface started school and he became the first Northern Territory Deacon, who is still working in this capacity today.

At the end of 1943 word came that Brother Pye's father in Sydney was dying, so he went south to see him. When he returned to the Northern Territory he was transferred back to Bathurst Island early in 1944. He remained on Bathurst Island for ten years until 1954. The main event occurring on Bathurst Island then was the rebuilding of everything. The mission and the people had been set back for the war years. Almost all of the men had been working in the army, airforce or navy in Darwin. The present church had been completed before 1942 when it was



The next important event he can remember in his life was in 1964 when the right to drink came in for all Aborigines. With an hotel only two kilometres from the Daly River Mission there was regrettable revelry by day and by night. The police had a hard job and the missions had a hard job. Father Alan Corry, the priest-in-charge at the time, had a heart attack and was hospitalised. Brother Pye was transferred to Port Keats again, in 1970, to take over the newly started store. The drink problem there was even more violent than at Daly River. Even the guns came out, Brother Pye says. It was at this time back at Port Keats that Brother Pye began writing the history of the missions where he had been stationed. He was hearing so many different stories about the place that he decided it was time that the facts were written down. After writing up the Port Keats and Daly River history, the late Bishop John O'Loughlin asked Brother Pye to return to Bathurst Island and write the history of this place.

As you know, Brother Pye came back here to the Tiwi Islands quite a few years ago and he wrote the history of the Islands. He also wrote up the history of the Santa Teresa Mission. Among the highlights of Brother Pye's life since he came back here was the trip to Europe he had with many Tiwi people. He went to the Holy Land, Rome, Ireland and Lourdes. And he survived with the Aboriginal people from here, that never-to-be-forgotten night at Bombay when the Jumbo jet caught fire and started to blow-up as it raced down the runway for take off.

Since returning to Bathurst Island from that trip Brother Pye again became involved as the co-ordinator and organiser of the local football league, which is now coming under the name of the Tiwi Islands League. Actually, Aussie Rules football has been with Brother Pye in all the places he has been. He started playing when he was a boy in Coolamon in the 1920's when both he and his brother were picked in a representative side. They represented the Western Districts to play against the Sydney schoolboys in Sydney. Of course he has always liked other sports too. He loved swimming, cricket, tennis, boxing and athletics. And he was also brilliant at Rugby League football! Coming from NSW, he represented the sport of Rugby League as a very fast schoolboy winger.



This just about completes the story of Brother Pye's time from 1941 until today working with Aboriginal people, to this eventful and very memorable day in his life. Brother Pye feels a little bit humiliated and embarrassed that he is to be honoured today with the presentation of the Order of Australia Medal. The Tiwi people and all Aboriginal people in the Top End of the Northern Territory honestly believe that Brother Pye should not be embarrassed at all because the Aboriginal people from this part of Australia think he deserves all the praise and thanks in the world.

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# ABORIGINAL CHRISTIANITY IN THE NORTH

David Thompson

'LIKE THE FIRST CENTURY CHURCH' is a comment that aptly describes the revival movement among many Aboriginal Christians in the north of Australia. It is characterised by enthusiastic praise and love of the Lord, and by the exercise of gifts in a shared local leadership. It is like the first century church also in that it is taking place in communities under social stress and overshadowed by the dominant Australian culture. Christians are finding a new life of faith, hope and unity together in situations of apathy, hatred, jealousies, rivalries, and physical and spiritual battles.

## Background

Three Churches in particular have been involved in northern missions — Anglican, Catholic and Uniting (formerly Methodist and Presbyterian missions). For many years these Churches administered both temporal and spiritual affairs of their mission communities. But in the last 20 years local government and other services have been handed over the government agencies and local Aboriginal councils, leaving the Churches with their pastoral work, and in some cases educational, health and community development activities. Despite 30 to 50 years of mission life, by 1970 there was almost no indigenous ordained ministry, even though there were many fine Aboriginal Christian leaders during the mission era. Some reasons are pretty obvious such as the requirements of celibacy in the Catholic Church and

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high academic training in all Churches. Keith Cole records that in 1953 the Bishop of Carpentaria chose four men for training but they were not prepared to be separated from their families for the six years he required.<sup>1</sup> This points to the deeper reasons for the closeness of extended family ties in Aboriginal society, the maturity of real leaders and their family and community commitments, and the importance of locality and kin to Aboriginal identity and well-being. Another important reason was the lack of fit between Aboriginal styles of leadership, based on kinship authority within family groups and consensus between groups, and the individualistic hierarchical leadership structures of the Churches. Hence an individual Aboriginal leader was not necessarily accepted widely in a community of mixed groups.

Other missiological reasons can be advanced such as the predominance of white leadership in mission times. This meant that a deep sense of Aboriginal Christianity remained incipient until it could become rooted in the cultural life of the people. Many missionaries have experienced the natural way Aborigines can defer to even a mildly assertive white leadership in decision-making. Far fewer were the good missionaries who were sensitive enough to adapt to the indirect and circular approach of rural Aborigines in making a corporate decision. They are the ones remembered and revered by Aborigines by the measure of the close personal relationships that became established.

### Transition

The period after the handover from omission to government control in the late 60's and 70's was in many respects traumatic for the Aboriginal communities as the rapidity of social change increased. The increased contact with the secular-sacred dichotomy and materialism of European society was disruptive to stable social life and identity. Mission life at least was comparable to the integration of these elements in Aboriginal heritage of socio-religious identity. Now many communities experienced a retreat from Church involvement. As one man said to me at the time: 'The Church is not boss any more'. But benefits have been reaped in the long term as faithful Aboriginal Christians were thrown more upon their own resources. And their faithfulness to their Lord was rewarded in the

blessings of God in their endurance, their hope and living witness.

Subsequently the combination of their witness, the heritage of mission teaching and Bible translation, a growing disenchantment with white secularism and with cultural and social breakdown, opened up hearts and minds to God's Spirit. Renewal came to many Aboriginal churches, particularly in places where the resurgence of Aboriginal identity in the 1970s was met by a degree of indigeneity in the churches.

### Training

Another important factor was the strengthening of Aboriginal Christian leadership through the training made possible by the establishment of Nungalinya College in Darwin in 1974 by the Anglican and Uniting Churches. Nungalinya provides training that is related specifically to the Aboriginal context and styles of learning. From the start Nungalinya sought to overcome the major difficulties about training faced by Aboriginal leaders, especially the strong personal and community ties that prevented long periods away, and the potential for alienation from their own context.

So from the beginning Nungalinya adopted the approach of theological education by extension (TEE). A Certificate course was first developed in modules that could be completed over a short or long period, with some study in the community with the help of a local tutor, and some in short residential courses in Darwin. This flexible approach opened the way for hundreds of Aboriginal people to attend short courses and undertake local studies. After 13 years 26 people have completed the Certificate of Theology, 15 completed the Diploma of Theology, and of them the Anglican Church has ordained three priests, two deacons and two deaconesses, and the Uniting Church has ordained eight ministers.

### Revival

The Arnhem Land Revival in the Aboriginal churches began at Elcho Island in 1979. The Methodist mission began there as late as 1942 and was marked by a positive approach towards Aboriginal religion and culture, discovering links with the Christian way and striving to reveal the fulfilling of Aboriginal concepts

in the incarnation and atonement of Christ.<sup>2</sup> The land rights developments of the 1970s encouraged a renewal of confidence and consciousness of Aboriginal identity in this area. In 1976 Djiniyini Gondarra was ordained and began a fruitful ministry at Elcho Island. The Bible translator Di Buchanan wrote: 'For the first time people were hearing consistent, solid teaching in their own language'. In particular he was able to present the Gospel's challenge to his own culture as well as establish positive links.

During this period particular characteristics of Aboriginal Christianity in Arnhem Land were developing. Aboriginal leaders contributed evangelistic and prophetic preaching and were praying for a movement of the Spirit. New life came through fellowship and prayer type gatherings with a significant focus on singing, as well as larger convention type meetings. Similar developments were taking place at neighbouring Milingimbi. In 1979 these developments consolidated in worshipful singing, confident praying and ministering to each other through the laying-on-of-hands with prayer. The conversion or renewal of about 200 people in the early months of the year was duplicated at a mission in May led by Dan Armstrong. Subsequently a baptism of 80 people took place in the sea.

Of great significance in this movement was the sharing of leadership and the forming of groups who travelled to sing and minister to other Aboriginal communities, including the Anglican communities of Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt, and others in central Australia.

#### Anglican Developments in the NT

Anglicans were also touched by the revival movement. The same style of evening fellowship meetings every night of the week developed with a core of leaders and a style in which singing of choruses predominated. Shared leadership developed especially at Numbulwar and Umbakumba as they were left without missionary leadership. This was clearly 'Aboriginal Christianity' happening in parallel with the more formal verbalised western style of Sunday services.

Several Aboriginal elements are found in the fellowship meetings. Firstly, they take place in the open air at night as

many social events and ceremonies do. Secondly, Aboriginal ceremony is visual and participatory rather than verbal. It is also sacramental. Learning and change of status take place through participation in singing, dancing and other ritual. The fellowship meetings reflect this pattern. The singing involves everyone and draws them into participation as an atmosphere of worship is built up. Clapping and action songs are included. The words of choruses provide a basic repetitive teaching medium, and the revival has sparked considerable creativity in translating English choruses into local languages and composing new ones. The times of laying-on-of-hands with prayer for dedication, healing or spiritual strength are sacramental actions which confirm the integration of the spiritual with everyday life.

The groups of Aboriginal Christians are not large in every place and often the women predominate. But these groups are enduring and maturing in shared leadership and in desire to study God's Word more deeply. For many years there was only one Aboriginal priest in the Anglican diocese of the Northern Territory, Gumbuli Wurramarra, at Roper River. Then the '80s marked the move towards indigenous ministry in each community, encouraged particularly by Nungalinya's Principal, Tony Nichols, and by a landmark conference at Numbulwar in 1983 on Aboriginal ministry. In February 1985 three more men were ordained. Two of them are continuing with studies through Nungalinya by extension to complete the Diploma of Theology.

### Developments in Queensland and Western Australia

In the Anglican diocese of North Queensland a similar revival movement has taken place at Yarrabah with the leadership of Arthur Malcolm (now assistant bishop), and in the last two years seven priests and seven deacons have been ordained there after some local training. Two of these priests have felt called to ministry in the fragile communities of Oenpelli (NT) and Oombulgurru (WA) and they are now bringing hope and new life to the churches in these places.

Aboriginal people from the three Anglican communities in Cape York in the diocese of Carpentaria have also participated in extension courses through Nungalinya and its Queensland branch Wontulp-Bi-Buya. Ministry is currently led by one

European, two Melanesians and an Aboriginal deacon who are all encouraging local leadership to develop.

### Aboriginal Theology

In all the developments of revival and growth in Christian maturity, an Aboriginal theology, or an understanding of God and their relationship to him in their context, has been implicit rather than explicitly spelt out. On the foundation of Scripture belief is more experienced than intellectualised. But this experience is clearly Trinitarian. The emphasis on relationships and closeness to the natural world readily extends to a love of God as Father-Creator, and of the Son Jesus, to them a Brother-Saviour. Then the revival has awakened a deep appreciation of God as Spirit who has moved among them and changed and healed their lives.

The one who has given most reflection too an Aboriginal theology is the Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra, now moderator of the northern synod of the Uniting Church. He defines three marks of Aboriginal theology:

- (a) Biblical. I believe the Bible is the word of God and the Holy Spirit speaks to our people through the scripture;
- (b) Spiritual. God is Spirit and Aboriginal Christians will struggle to put into Aboriginal language this spirituality and speak about God correctly. Our people have always been a deeply spiritual people.
- (c) Prophetic, one that can challenge our culture; what in our culture needs to be kept and built up in Christian faith, and what part of our culture needs to be condemned and done away by the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

Djiniyini also stresses the need for 'holistic evangelism' which includes social concerns, and he emphasises Aboriginal unity across denominational divisions. Such a sense of unity has been fostered by sharing of fellowship between communities as a result of the revival in Arnhem Land, and the joint training experienced at Nungalinga College.

## ABORIGINAL CHRISTIANITY

In the Anglican Church similar pointers to Aboriginal theology emerged during the Primate's National Consultation on Aboriginal Ministry, held at Nungalinga College in July 1985. Twentyfour delegates came from Aboriginal churches around Australia, and the Consultation was chaired by Aboriginal leaders (with no whites present except myself as minute secretary). Major emphases of the Consultation were: a confidence in their ability to take responsibility in leadership, the importance of co-operative unity among Aboriginal Christians and with whites, team ministry, conversion to Christ as the real answer for Church growth and social problems, and a balanced view of the place of their culture.

They rejected a static view of Aboriginal culture and expected it to be modified by Christian understanding. They also rejected the view that their culture was anti-God or that God was ever absent from it. This was expressed in a resolution: 'we endorse Aboriginal culture and identity but express the need to find Christ in the centre of the culture and find what is good and what should not be kept. They also endorsed the development of local ways of worship and translations of Prayer Book services.

### Diversity in Unity

The primary importance of the sense of unity in Aboriginal churches was brought home to me in 1986 during a visit to Oenpelli to lead a week's course on Ephesians. The strong message of unity in Christ in that letter spoke directly to the barriers between different Aboriginal groups and between black and white. And in being reconciled to each other during that time, the message came through that they could also accept their differences in Christ. Hence unity is not the same as uniformity but is the foundation for an enriching diversity of languages, customs and expressions of worship.

This message of diversity within unity comes through in Aboriginal Christianity in two ways. Firstly, in a growing ecumenical sense of solidarity as Aboriginal people, expressed concretely in the formation of the Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress within the Uniting Church, and more generally in the desire to do things in their own way under their own leadership. But at the same time this is not seen as separation



from white Christians but as establishing an equal standing by which genuine interaction can take place. At the Primate's Consultation last year the discussion on having an Aboriginal bishop was crystallised by the prophetic words of Deaconess Dinah Garadji: 'We already have white bishops. If we have Aboriginal bishops this will bind us together in Christ our Lord.'

### The Future

The Spirit of God is doing wonderful things for Aboriginal people too but also laying upon them burdens for the oppressive struggles of their people in bondage. Please pray for Aboriginal Christians, for an enduring and maturing faith, for inner joy and peace in adversity, for the gifts of the Spirit in the patient ministry of reconciliation and healing, that the Word of God may speak to their lives and culture, and for Nungalingya College and its training ministry.

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1. The CMS mission to the Aborigines of Arnhem Land 1908-1985, p.78.
2. R. Bos, Didjeridoo Theology, Nungalingya Occasional Bulletin No.8,p.1.
3. from a paper: Aboriginal Christianity.

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## FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK. . .

Greetings from the place that Fr John Fallon msc calls 'God's Eden'! While Melbourne shivers, Darwin flakes, and rain washes out events in other parts of the continent, we have experienced the most delightful days of balmy weather here in the Blue Mountains of NSW. Picnics galore (in between NYMU work which doesn't quite get neglected) to places like Inga; the Cox River out on the Jenolan Caves Road; and the Glow Worm Tunnel, 30 kms from Lithgow, away out in wild country past Newnes — a memorable occasion. Millions of tiny green glow worms in the roof and walls of a pitchblack disused railway tunnel, set in glorious bushland. Fr Val Patterson msc, Daramarlan, hails from Lithgow. I bet he trekked plenty to that tunnel as a boy! A thrilling, terrifying place: but most enjoyable.

Sad news of the death of Brother John Barrett, msc. He would have been 94 this year, although I always had a sneaking feeling he was much more; never forgot a face or a name; held audiences captive with tales of experiences in the Battle of Jutland, life as a cobbler, and time spent in many missions. Sitting in a dry creek bed at Santa Teresa I have listened spellbound to some of his lurid tales of the past. A man of great sanctity; upright, fearless, — he is missed by so many, including me: Rev. Brother John Barrett, msc. R.I.P.

Mr Chester Street, SIL, of Port Keats School, writes: 'We have recently produced a new book here at Port Keats entitled: *An Introduction to the Language and Culture of the Murrinh-patha*. It is geared for newcomers to Port Keats and is a helpful introduction to the main language spoken, as well as the lifestyle of the people here. The book sells for \$6.00 and the cassette \$4.00, and \$2.00 will cover the postage to anywhere in Australia, a total of \$12.00. Enquiries may be addressed to the Principal, OLSH School, PO Wadeye, Port Keats NT, 5791, and cheques made payable to Wadeye Press.' Wadeye is the Aboriginal name for Port Keats.

## NELEN YUBU

Another book has been recommended to NYMU readers, this time by Ms Heather McDonald of Queensland University, who asks if we 'know about *Traditional Aboriginal Society: A Reader*, edited by W H Edwards (1987), which has Dr Deborah Rose's "Consciousness and Responsibility" included in it.'

Since our last issue I have had a visit from the wellknown FDNSC Sisters Frances and Patricia Walsh, two sparkling actual sisters whose happiness is contagious! A glorious day turned itself on for them, and we sat and talked and laughed and caught up on the news of OLSH friends. Sister Frances is in charge of the OLSH Associates, a tireless writer for our journal *Ametur*, and Sister Patricia backs her up with loyalty and her own talented writing. I was sad when they had to leave me and return to Sydney, and I certainly hope they will repeat that visit before very long.

Fr Peter Malone's book, *In Black and White and Colour* has now been completed and typeset and is ready for the printer. Written with delicacy and talent, this will be an invaluable addition to school libraries as well as to people sympathetic to the cause of the Aboriginal. I met up with Fr Malone msc in Melbourne recently and spent a happy Sunday morning at my daughter's home, taking all our mutual friends out of winding! More details in our next issue about this book, when it is on the shelves.

If there IS a next issue! The NYMU Director, Fr Wilson is off to South Africa for a couple of months to do a missiology course at the MSC Lumko Institute at Delmenville (near Johannesburg), and I will be floundering here — battling along trying to look as if I can bring out *Nelen Yubu* no. 33 on my own without a flinch. Hopefully, that issue will eventuate, but if it turns out to be a dismal failure I may find myself humping the bluey on his return. Wait for it!

A phone call from Fr Dan O'Donovan, Fitzroy Crossing, tells me that he has just met up with his brother who is visiting Australia from Ireland — their first meeting in 25 years!

My thanks to those who have written with encouragement and interest.

Off to Melbourne again for a few weeks in August. Any mail will be attended to very smartly on my return.

Secretary Keren

have responsible positions in their communities. They are under a lot of pressure apart from that caused by their ministry. And it is not unusual for those entering ministry to be discouraged and tested early in their work.

The leaders of the programs also discovered that while the people coming for ministry training often had many years of faithful service in the church (often they were between the ages of 35 and 60), they did not feel confident about exercising ministry. Many expressed this as the question: 'Why me, Lord?'; for others: 'I am not worthy'. And for nearly all there was a period of testing, with members of their own communities often making it difficult for them to exercise ministry at all. They were criticised, taunted and tested in many ways. A typical response was: 'Who do you think you are?' But those who persevered generally came to be accepted and appreciated as ministers in their own communities. It was most important that these people be offered encouragement and support while in training.

What these centres showed was that important questions needed to be asked before a ministry program could be offered for, and in conjunction with, a community. For example, how does the program offered in a centre mesh with the identity and daily life of the local church community? Who is going to decide who joins a ministry program? Can an individual nominate or offer him- or herself? Or is there a community or traditional group which can nominate people? Is there a church or parish group, or do people leave such decisions up to the priest or Sister? These questions determine the theology of ministry for a community. Whether people can come forward if they feel called, or whether it is up to the community to elect ministers, will affect many aspects of ministry. More importantly it will affect the responsibility a community takes for its response to the Gospel. If there is no mechanism for this decision making, then perhaps one will have to be found which satisfies the desires of that faith community.

Another question which will arise is: 'What sorts of ministries are available?' Again there are a number of models, such as the more traditional sequence of lector-acolyte-deacon, or there is the wider group of ministries such as eucharistic, music, catechist and so on. Or the question can be put in another way: 'What are the particular needs in this community, which traditionally were met by particular men and women, and to which the Spirit of God is calling people