

Liturgy

Liturgy is Communicating through Symbols

by Father Brian Gleeson

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My fourth and final message in this four-part series is that, from start to finish, liturgy involves communication. It is about making signs, or, more exactly, making symbols. So much so, that liturgy may even be called 'a symbol system'. Vatican II insists on this in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy no.7: 'In the liturgy the sanctification of women and men is given expression in symbols perceptible to the senses and is carried out in ways appropriate to each of them.' This implies that the words which we say, the things which we use and the actions which we do, take us beyond ourselves and put us in contact with the God whom we cannot see and touch and hear directly with our human senses.

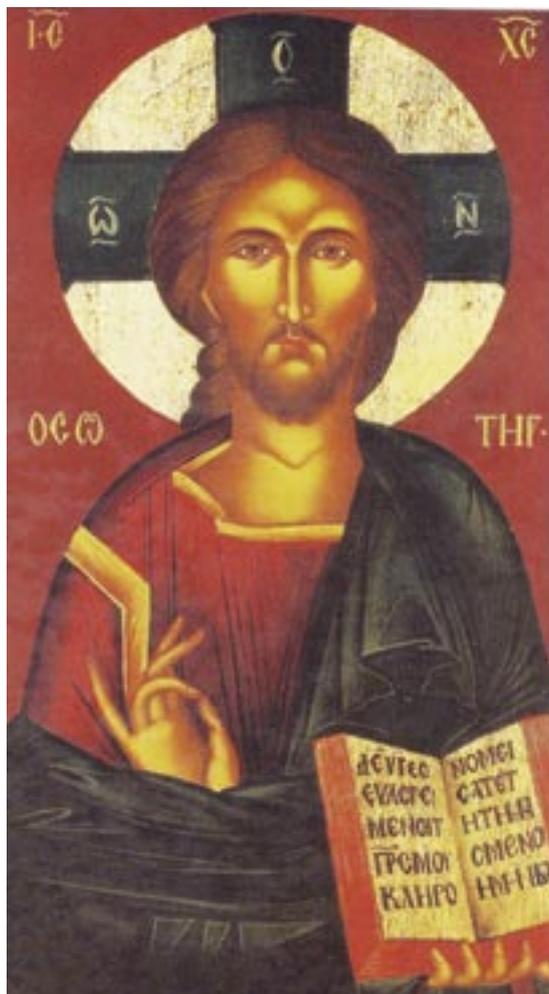
Liturgy, in fact, is an extension of the Incarnation (the embodiment of God). The reality of God which liturgy expresses is embodied in our human gestures and actions and in the objects we use. When we use water, oil, bread, wine, words, movement, music, singing, etc., we express and experience the presence of God and his love and we make appropriate responses of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, repentance, etc. We also experience one another as fellow-Christians and reach out to one another in openness, acceptance, welcome and hospitality. So e.g., in our celebration of 'the Lord's Supper' (1 Corinthians 11:20), i.e. the Eucharist, we are involved in a joint action, both with one another and with Jesus Christ. In the bread and wine which we take, bless, break and share, he is also alive and present and he really gives himself to us and empowers us with his life, love and strength.

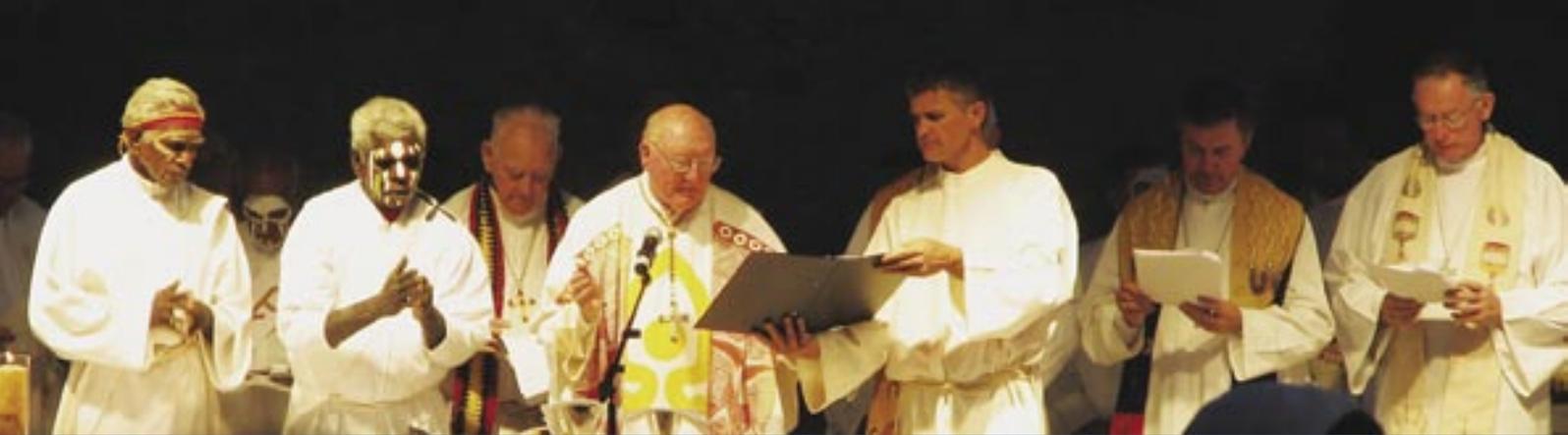
In the joint actions which sacraments are, our part is to make the kind of signs which will facilitate Christ's communication with us. Just as during his earthly

life he submitted himself to his earthly body and its powers and limitations, so today he submits himself to us. Christ depends upon us as his representatives and instruments. We are now his body, his face, his hands, his feet, his heart and his voice to others. The challenge for us is to make 'good' signs, authentic and appealing signs which truly communicate Christ's love and Christ's power to change one another for the better. We have the responsibility to do our part well, but if we do it poorly, then we are interfering with the work of Christ (and his Spirit). If, on the other hand, we do it well, we are facilitating the work of Christ (and his Spirit).

If we consistently make good signs, i.e. give the best homily possible, not any old talk, read with clarity, understanding and feeling, sing and play musical instruments with skill, sensitivity and beauty, if we employ uncluttered space, beautiful vessels for the table of the Lord and bread which looks, feels and tastes like bread, etc. and if we pray in a way which says we

mean it, then our sacramental celebrations become genuine celebrations of faith which foster and nourish one another's faith. The United States Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, echoing Vatican II, insists: 'Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken and destroy it.' Good intentions and good will are not enough. We are called to make signs which truly communicate, i.e. effective signs. In every form of liturgy, then, we are called to celebrate Christ in ways which attract rather than bore or repel.





The Anniversary Mass celebrated at Blatherskite Park. The Principal Celebrant is the Papal Legate Cardinal Cassidy. (From Left): Deacon Boniface Perdjert, Deacon Theodore Tipiloura, Bishop Ted Collins, Cardinal Cassidy, Fr. Michael Digges, Bishop Christopher Prowse, Bishop Michael Putney. (photo courtesy of NATSICC)

Dreaming From The Heart'

Alice Springs, 2-7 October 2006

"Dreaming from the Heart" was the theme for the 7th NATSICC National Assembly held in Alice Springs in the center of Caterpillar Dreaming Land of the Arrernte people.

The Assembly celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Alice Springs in 1986 and his well known speech to the Aboriginal people of this country.

Nine Message Sticks, one from each State and Territory, were presented at the opening and closing liturgies. Each Message Stick was decorated with artwork depicting the totems of each Aboriginal group in Australia.

Eleven people from the Lismore Diocese participated in the Assembly, several having celebrated with Pope John Paul II in 1986. Each expressed that it was a wonderful, inspiring, faithfilled experience.

Along side the 600 plus Aboriginal people were many religious, priests and bishops, supporting and walking in partnership. Cardinal Cassidy joined the Assembly for the final two days of celebration.

The Assembly captured and celebrated being Indigenous and being Catholic. A celebration of culture, faith and hope. It touched the heart of all.



Priests and Bishops in Procession at Closing Mass



The Yeperenye Dreaming

This painting itself is something holy. It is a sacred object - a 'Yeperenye' (or 'Spring') of the Yeperenye Dreaming.

The Painting
The painting is a description of the Creation story. It records for Anemte Aboriginal people the activities and travels of the three caterpillars, 'Mparke', 'Yaperenye' and 'Uremengapal' in the Dreamtime. These creatures shaped this land, 'Mparke' Alice Springs.

Caterpillars in the painting have special significance. In the three main circles, the white caterpillar, for example, is used for the ceremonial body paint. The red caterpillar is for the dancing ground and the black caterpillar is for the ants. 'Mparke' used on the backs of the 'kuditcha'. Small dots in the painting represent the tracks of the caterpillars as they searched for their eternal home. Each of the large and small circles signify particular sites in Alice Springs. The three large central circles represent 'Mparke' (Fossilised Gaps), 'Uremengapal' (Biny Gaps) and 'Yaperenye' (Linnos Gaps).

God gave us the Dreaming.
Because the land is given - and comes from God, it is cherished and protected. It is unalienable property and used with respect. For the Anemte Aboriginals of Alice Springs, the sacred nature of the land must be preserved and strengthened. All those who live on it must be 'of home in our land' and live in harmony with the environment and with fellow Australians. If the Dreaming is not passed on and the right laws are not understood and followed, the people's spirit will die and they themselves will pass away. The young people must learn and follow. Like the Yeperenye caterpillar, they must grow up into the butterfly and become whole and free. The Caterpillar Dreaming is like that - as is Jesus. He had to struggle too and break through His death to be made free and perfect by His Father.

God's Own Word, Jesus, has made everything clear.
The Dreaming is seen now in a new and even more perfect way. In the sacred Yeperenye painting, the Cross of Jesus is there. Along with the description of the important sacred sites, the artist reveals the shape of the Cross and speaks with authority and enthusiasm about the one great, and on-going act of creation. There is no division. The Caterpillar tracks of the Dreamtime are also the new flesh of which Jesus' death brought to the world and the people. The fact that the MacDonnell Ranges and the hill of Calvary are all naturally one, may be mysterious to the non-aboriginal person, but to the Anemte of the Yeperenye Dreaming there are not two Dreamings, but one - made perfect in Jesus.



Above: Entrance procession at the closing Mass held at Blatherskaite Park where Pope JP II celebrated Mass twenty years ago

I appeal to you, as Papal Legate and in the name of both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, to be Ambassadors of reconciliation and apostles of love, ready to share your gifts with others and learn from others to enrich further your own tradition. I know that in the past you have not always received the best gifts that other communities have to offer, but rather harmful and deadly offerings. Let us put this sad past experience behind us and work together to share our best gifts, the wonderful gifts that God had given us.

— Cardinal Cassidy





The Archbishop of Sydney, George Cardinal Pell, has labelled Federal parliamentary approval of cloning a 'mistake' that will "push us further and faster down a slippery slope".

He was commenting on the Senate's decision to allow scientists to clone human embryos for research. The Senate did, however ban the mixture of human eggs with animal eggs in a last minute compromise to appease critics who complained that therapeutic cloning would create human-animal hybrids.

The Senate had been considering a private member's bill put forward by former Health Minister Kay Patterson. It will now go to the House of Representatives, where it is widely expected it will win approval and become law.

this is not a debate between science and superstition, nor between religion and scepticism

Cardinal Pell says this is not a debate between science and superstition, nor between religion and scepticism, but a debate about "the value to be given human life".

"The bill before Parliament proposes that we reject the fundamental principle of medical research ethics – *primum non nocere*, 'first, do no harm' – and that we condone the manufacture of laboratory human beings for destructive experiments," he said.

"This represents a failure of respect for the human embryos to be created and destroyed and for human dignity more generally.

"Few Australians would know that it is proposed to legalise the manufacture of cloned human embryos with only one genetic parent; hybrid embryos with multiple genetic parents; embryos whose genetic mother is an aborted girl foetus and human-animal crosses.

"Few Australians realise that these will be destroyed after experimentation and dismemberment for parts such as stem cells."

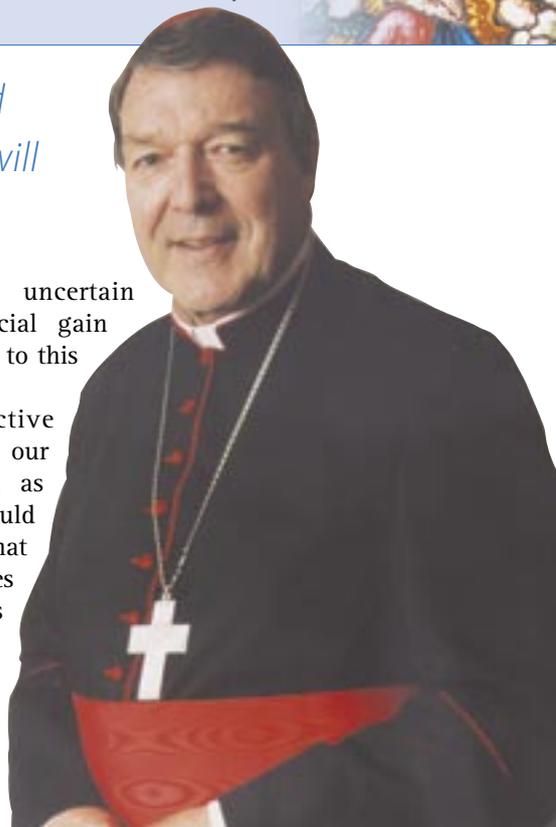
He added: "It seems too that many parliamentarians do not acknowledge that human embryonic stem cells have produced none of the cures that have been foreshadowed.

"Any substantial progress so far has come from other

stem cells. The uncertain prospect of financial gain should not blind us to this lack of progress.

"The protective barriers erected by our Federal Parliament as recently as 2002 should not be reversed. What scientific advantages might legitimise this upheaval?

On the Senate vote, Dr Brigid Vout, executive officer of the Sydney archdiocesan Life



it is proposed to legalise the manufacture of cloned human embryos with only one genetic parent

Office, said: "Some commentators have described this as a 'vote for science over irrationality' and a 'win for rationality over belief'.

"These sorts of comments are misguided and provocative. Arguably, it is the Senate's decision to abandon the fundamental principle of research ethics, 'first do no harm', which belongs to the realm of irrationality!

"What is there to celebrate about a 'victory over belief' in the value of early human life, human equality and justice? These are values to be upheld, not torn down."

Dr Vout says opponents of human cloning and embryo research are not "luddites".

"All we ask is that science remains reasonable and humane," she said.

"We are not 'anti science' but 'pro ethical science'."

The human embryo: someone or something? by Dr. Brigid Vout

You were an embryo once. You were smaller that the full stop at the end of this sentence. You looked a lot different to how you look now. But were you a human being then, or something else? Were you someone or something?

These are not just abstract questions for scientists, philosophers and theologians. New ways of generating, manipulating and experimenting upon human life in the laboratory make them important questions for us all.

These questions have also been at the heart of the recent debate in federal parliament about human embryo research and human cloning. Here, however, the prevailing logic and ethic has been that a human embryo only counts as 'someone' if it will be nurtured and brought to birth. Otherwise it's just 'something' to be studied in the lab, used for drug testing, dismembered to obtain stem cells and ultimately destroyed.

This new legislation will allow the creation and destruction of human embryos solely for research.

Destructive embryo research on so-called 'excess' embryos left over from IVF has been permitted in Australia since 2002. This new legislation will allow the creation and destruction of human embryos solely for research. These embryos will belong to a sub-class of living human

Dr. Brigid Vout has degrees in medicine and bioethics, and is the Executive Officer for the Life Office in the Archdiocese of Sydney. The Life Office is an agency established to extend the research, policy and educational activities the Church undertakes in life issues. These include pro-life issues generally, but with particular attention to abortion, euthanasia, reproductive technology, embryo experimentation and genetics.
www.lifeoffice.org.au



beings, only ever used and destroyed and never wanted for their own sake. They will not be offered the prospect of nurture in their mother's wombs. They will not be allowed to survive for longer than 14 days.

Why do scientists want to experiment with these embryonic human beings?

Human embryos are a rich source of stem cells. These are cells which are capable of becoming and multiplying as specialised types of cells, such as liver, skin or blood cells. Some scientists hope to use human embryos and/or their stem cells to develop cell-based therapies to replace damaged tissues and cells. Others hope to use them to

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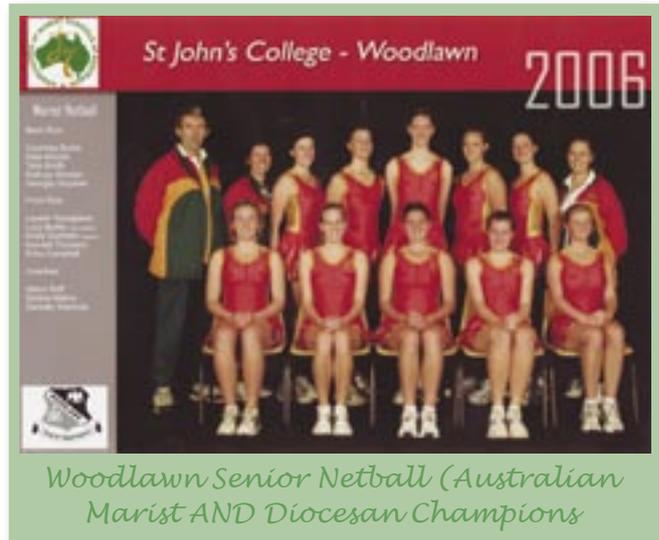
St John's College Woodlawn

Woodlawn's Landmark Year Nets Landmark Titles

St John's College Woodlawn's 75th year is a fitting year to add Australian Marist Netball Champions to the trophy cabinet; the first National Girls title since becoming a Co-Educational Day College. The story, though, does not end there. 2006 saw the students add another seven titles to that cabinet. Congratulations to staff and students for the following achievements:



*Tournament of the Minds
National Runners Up*



*Woodlawn Senior Netball (Australian
Marist AND Diocesan Champions)*

- Cochrane Cup (under 14's Rugby League) State Champions
 - Tournament of Minds – Australian Runners Up
 - Chess Tournament – State Regional Finalists
 - N.S.W. Constitution Convention – State Representative
- And at Diocesan Level, titles included
- Senior Netball – Diocesan Champions
 - Intermediate Netball – Diocesan Champions
 - Softball – Diocesan Champions

It is significant that in such a year of academic and sporting triumphs, the College has also been publicly acknowledged for its outstanding efforts for Caritas and Catholic Mission.

McAuley Catholic College Grafton

Final Re-development Complete

McAuley Catholic College opened the final stage in its buildings on 9th November. The buildings complete what has been a massive re-development program over the past three years. This saw the re-location of the entire school from its original site in Victoria St in central Grafton on the banks of the Clarence River to its new very prominent position on the Pacific Highway just north of Grafton.



Drama auditorium



Commercial kitchen

As well as two art rooms and two music rooms, a well-designed air-conditioned drama auditorium caters for audiences of up one hundred and comprises flexible staging, changerooms, costume and storage facilities, as well as full sound and lighting equipment. Wall to ceiling curtaining allows for adjustable acoustics

A new canteen features self-serve procedures for students and an undercroft area. A fully-equipped commercial kitchen has completed the already excellent hospitality facilities in the TAS department.

The Parish of St Mary's can be justifiably proud of its achievements in this huge step forward in Catholic Education in the Clarence Valley.

Saint Joseph's Primary School South Grafton

Maureen Snelling's Retirement

A very touching ceremony was held on November 14 at Saint Patrick's Church for the retirement of Maureen Snelling. A much loved and appreciated teacher at Joey's. Maureen's spent the

last 21 years of her career teaching at the school and was recognized as an excellent teacher by students, parents and staff alike. The special mass incorporated many facets of Maureen's life with a focus on the enthusiasm she displayed in all matters of learning. It was touching to see so many of Maureen's past students in attendance and the school appreciates the fact that the Grafton High Schools allowed and organised representatives to be in attendance.



The late Maureen Snelling attending the graduation dinner at St. Joseph's School

Maureen was presented with a 'Scrap Book' lovingly prepared by staff and parents highlighting her time at the school. Maureen was delighted with the presentation of flowers by a Robert Ellison who was a past principal of the school and who attended as a representative of the Catholic Education Office.

Editor's Note: We were saddened to hear of Maureen Snelling's death on the 29th November 2006. May she rest in peace.

St. Joseph's School South Murwillumbah

Rosary Bead Making – Year 2



Year 2

On Tuesday October 17th, Year two were very fortunate in getting to make their own set of Rosary beads.

Mr Michael Jandura had done the first knot on the string to get us started. We could choose yellow, blue or white beads and we had to thread them in groups of ten for the Hail Mary's, with a different coloured bead in between the decates for the Glory Be / Our Father prayers.

The threading was easy and fun, but the knots in between were hard, so they had to be done by a Parent or Legion of Mary helper, using a small metal stick. They also helped us to finish them off with the crosses.

We are now saying a decade of the Rosary every day at Prayer time and we'll take our Rosary beads home on Thursday after Father Colin blesses them.

We would like to thank Mr and Mrs Jandura for supplying the equipment and organising the Legion of Mary helpers to come to our school. They are really busy making thousands of Rosary Beads for World Youth Day in 2008.

We'd also like to thank the Year Two parents who helped. We loved our Rosary bead-making afternoon.



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

A Pastoral Letter to those suffering from the Drought

December 1, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We write this letter to you as we are gathered together in Sydney. There are Bishops from rural Australia, from all the capital cities, from the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory and from every state of Australia.

We are well aware of how difficult life is in rural communities. We know about crops that have failed, about livestock that cannot be fed and must be sold. We know of farmers who cannot get a good price for their produce. We know of families and communities who live from the land and who are under great stress at this time.

We stand in solidarity with all our brothers and sisters who in any way are suffering because of this unrelenting drought.

At times like this we realise that we are not the master of the forces of nature. This can be deeply unsettling. Yet our faith provides us with a reason to hope and trust in God who cares for us and loves us.

We believe that God walked the earth as a human being without ever ceasing to be God. This reveals God's love and concern for us in the person of Jesus Christ. All our hope is in Him. We know how difficult such hope must be for you now, but we believe that it is more important than ever.

The Bishops stand as one with all who are struggling and we are all keen to offer still more practical assistance to meet the growing needs.

We have prayed for you here and you will be in our prayers from day to day through this difficult time.

We ask all Catholic people to join us in praying for rain and for those suffering the effects of drought.

The Catholic Bishops of Australia.



Peter Joseph Gannon

The Little Book Reborn

It's often said that a book is never lost. Whether that was thought up as a consolation to authors or not, in this case it is certainly true. Mr Paul Gannon, a member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in Lismore, recently came across a copy of "Maxims and Counsels of St. Vincent de Paul" for every day of the year. The little book belonged to his father, the late Peter Joseph Gannon, who had a very distinguished architectural career. The work of the late Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Halifax, it was published by M.H.Gill & Son, Ltd of Dublin.



The book offers words of advice for each day of the year. The entry for the 13th of September reads: "If two ways lead to the same, it is of little importance which we select; but to submit our own to our neighbour's will is no indifferent matter."

The last pages of the book contain a Litany in honour of St. Vincent de Paul.

Born in Auburn N.S.W on the 19th July 1889, Peter Joseph Gannon was educated by the Lewisham Christian Brothers and at Sydney Technical College. He was associated with a number of constructional enterprises as an architect in Sydney and in 1909 went to Newcastle as a naval architect at the Government Dockyards, Walsh Island..

Several years later he embarked on a private practice and achieved a State-wide reputation as an ecclesiastical architect.

Mr. Gannon was a prominent church worker and was involved with the establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the Newcastle area. He was President of the Particular Council of Newcastle (now called Regional Councils) for the last 10 years of his life. He was an inspiration to his fellow-workers and an example of the spirit of the best traditions of the Society.

Among the church buildings that were planned and erected to his design and under his supervision in N.S.W. were :

<i>St. Columba's, Adamstown</i>	<i>St. Kevin's, Cardiff</i>
<i>St. Therese, New Lambton</i>	<i>Church of Our Lady of Peace, Scone</i>
<i>Corpus Christi, Waratah St</i>	<i>Laurence's, Broadmeadow, The Church of the Sacred Heart (now the Cathedral), Hamilton</i>
<i>The Ursuline Chapel, Armidale</i>	<i>Renovation of St. Mary's, Newcastle</i>
<i>St. Joseph's, East Maitland</i>	<i>Church of the Holy Rosary, Taree.</i>
<i>St. Mary's, Dungog</i>	<i>St. Henry's, East Moree.</i>
<i>St. Mary of the Angels, Guyra</i>	<i>St. Augustine's, Narromine.</i>
<i>St. Patrick's, Ben Lomond.</i>	
<i>The Ursuline Chapel, Armidale</i>	

Other prominent buildings completed under his guidance were:

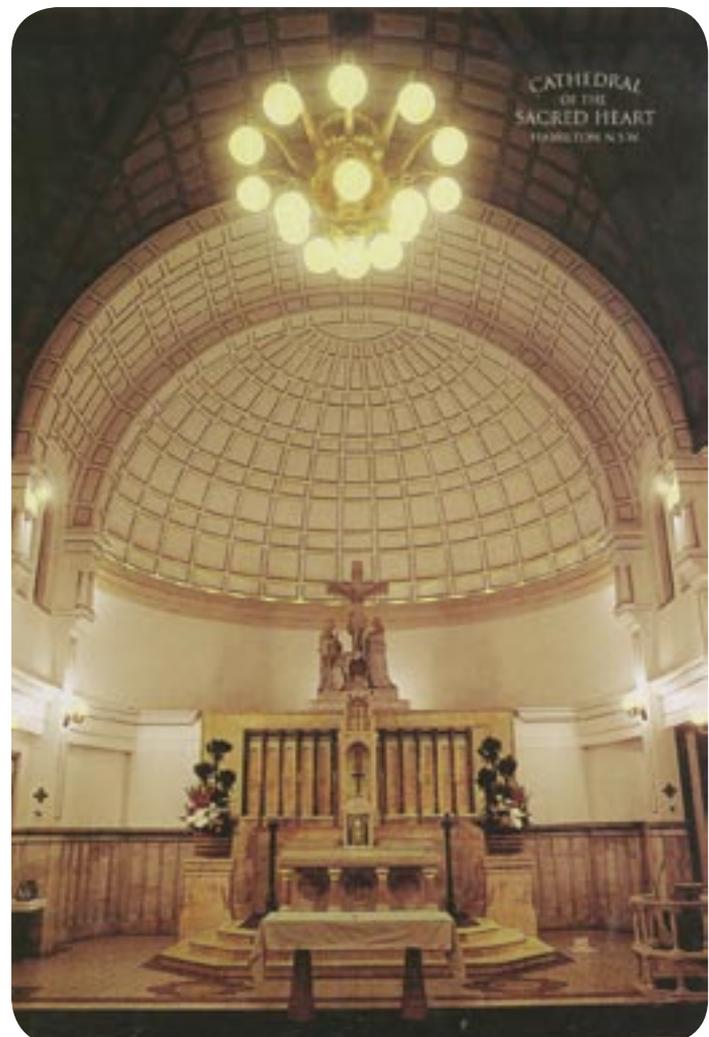
<i>St. Joseph's Convent, Merewether</i>	
<i>St. Francis' Xavier's School (Marist Brothers), Hamilton</i>	
<i>Convents of Mercy at Hamilton</i>	<i>Tighe's Hill, Lambton</i>
<i>The Novitate Building, Singleton,</i>	<i>De La Salle College, Armidale</i>
<i>The Mater Misericordiae Hospital at Waratah</i>	

Many other building activities of various natures make up a long list of outstanding achievements of a particularly talented architect. Just prior to his death at the age of 45 years, he was preparing plans for the renovation of St. Joseph's Convent at Auburn. His ecclesiastical architectural career spanned some 20 years.

Limited copies of the "Little Book" are available to readers.

Please contact the editor by email:

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The Church of the Sacred Heart (now the Cathedral) , Hamilton.



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study the development of diseases, test drugs, trial new reproductive technologies or train laboratory technicians.

The big problem with embryo research, however, is that although it could yield life-saving or life-enhancing outcomes in the future, it is death-dealing to the human embryos now.

At any rate, when it comes to outcomes, human embryonic stem cell research really doesn't hold great promise. No therapies in humans have ever been successfully carried out using embryonic stem cells. These cells have a high propensity to produce tumors and appear too dangerous for use in humans. Many scientists also doubt whether these highly immature cells provide meaningful models to study 'adult' diseases or test drugs.

Meanwhile, research and therapy involving stem cells from the tissues and organs of children and adults, placenta and umbilical cord blood is already helping patients with over 72 medical conditions, including Parkinson's Disease, spinal cord injury, blood diseases and heart damage. Often referred to as 'adult stem cells' these can be obtained without harming anyone. The Church embraces adult stem cell research as a practical and ethical alternative to embryonic stem cell research. Adult stem cell research demonstrates that science does not have to kill in order to cure.

The new laws will allow human embryos to be created by cloning as well as by IVF.

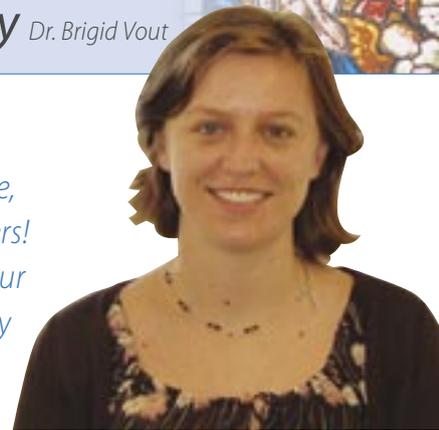
The new laws will allow human embryos to be created by cloning as well as by IVF. Cloning involves a process called somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT) which was used in the creation of Dolly the sheep. The genetic material (nucleus) from a person's body cell is introduced into an egg which has had its own nucleus removed and then triggered to develop as a human embryo. This embryo will be a genetic copy of the person who provided the body cell.

But whether beginning by fertilisation (of an egg by a sperm) or by cloning, the resulting single-cell human embryo has all the genetic material and power to direct its own growth and development as a human being. Once formed nothing other than nutrition, good health, the nurture of a woman's womb and time is needed for this embryo to become a foetus, an infant, a child and eventually an adult human being.

Unlike any other kind of embryo, a human embryo has the inherent nature, organisation, 'soul' as some call it, which means that it will grow up as a human being and never as a kangaroo or some other creature. While events like implantation in the wall of the womb are necessary for an embryo's survival, they do not change what it is. Even in the laboratory, he or she already is and will remain human.

If these embryos are human beings then the fact that they are tiny and very young is no more morally relevant than that they are black or white, Australian or Kalathumpian, male or female, at the beginning of life or soon to die. Every individual human life, every human being, matters!

Every individual human life, every human being, matters! Why? Because our value, our 'dignity' is found in our very being.



Dr. Brigid Vout

Why? Because our value, our 'dignity' is found in our very being. We are of great value simply because we are human and not because of how we look or what we can do.

Christians believe that every human being is precious, from the very beginning of his or her life, until natural death. The concern of the Church to be inclusive, to recognise the claims of each and every human being to our protection and compassion is surely Christianity at its best. In doing so, we join many people of other religions and some of no religion, who believe that respect for the dignity of every human being gives rise to the recognition of the so-called sanctity or inviolability of human life and a series of basic human rights.

Belief in the dignity of the human embryo means no hoped-for therapeutic good is sufficient to justify the immorality of killing our very young. Biomedical science should be at the service of human life and dignity. Human life and dignity should never be exploited for the sake of science.

Do we really want a society which includes a 'laboratory underclass' of embryos, useable and disposable, whether leftovers or deliberately fertilized or cloned for the purpose?

Do we really want a society which includes a 'laboratory underclass' of embryos, useable and disposable, whether leftovers or deliberately fertilized or cloned for the purpose? Leon Kass, former Chairman of the US President's Committee for Bioethics observes.

Fewer people yet (worry) about the effects not on the embryos but on our embryo-using society of coming to look upon nascent human life as a natural resource to be mined, exploited, commodified. The little embryos are merely destroyed, but we – their users – are at risk of corruption. We are desensitized and denatured by a coarsening of sensibility that comes to regard these practices as natural, ordinary and fully unproblematic. People who can hold nascent human life in their hands coolly and without awe have deadened something in their souls.

Human embryo cloning and destructive embryo research might have become legal in Australia, but these practices continue to be grave injustices and proper objects of our protest and opposition. We must continue to stand up for the smallest and most vulnerable members of the human family, for their sake, as well as for the sake a just and fair Australia.