

THE CARDINAL KNOX LECTURE

FROM WANDERING TO JOURNEYING

Thoughts on a Synodal Church

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Many thanks indeed, Master, for your words of welcome. When I was in your position, I never thought I'd be back to give the Knox Lecture. But I was pleased to be invited and glad that I was able to accept, and I'm delighted to be back among the community Catholic Theological College. I had a hand in designing the new College in East Melbourne, but I never had the chance to work there. So it's good to be back – at least close by – after all these years during which so much water has flowed beneath the bridge. It's also good to honour the memory of Cardinal James Knox, founder of CTC, and to pray that he will find eternal rest beyond the travails of this life, both in Melbourne and beyond.

It was Scripture that I taught in this College, and it's with Scripture that I want to begin this lecture, which takes its title from the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-16). This is a crucial story in the biblical narrative, because it's the first story of the human being outside the Garden after the self-exile from Eden recounted in Genesis 3. It's the first story of us out in the desert far from home.

It tells of brother murdering brother, and at its end we're told that Cain goes off to live "in the land of Nod, east of Eden". For us, the land of Nod is where you go when you're having a snooze: we nod off. But in fact the Hebrew word *nod* has nothing to do with nodding off. It means "wandering". So the Scripture tells us that, having murdered his brother, Cain goes off to live in the

land of wandering. At that point, the prime task for Cain and for the human being is to turn all our wandering into journeying. When we wander, we have little or no sense of purpose or direction. But when we journey we know where we're going; we have a sense of purpose and direction. In fact, as the Bible sees it, our task is to journey home to Paradise, out of the desert, back to the Garden; and the great homecoming starts to happen once Jesus, first-born from the dead, rises from the tomb (in a garden). He's the first one home to Paradise.

The whole Bible may be read as a grand tissue of metaphor. But its root-metaphor is the journey, which is why we find both Testaments replete with journey-stories. The Bible fastens on the root-metaphor of journey because of its distinctive understanding of who God is, who the human being is and how God relates to the human being. For Scripture, the real God never leaves us where and as we are. The real God commands us to leave what is familiar – here I think of the primal call-story of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) – and to set out for the land, and the life, that God will show us. God moves us from one location to another and, in that sense, is a dislocating God whose call can mean a painful wrench. But the dislocation has to happen if we're to come home to Paradise. We have to leave the desert which is so familiar to us that we think it's home. But it's not: our true home is the Garden – and it's to the Garden we must return. Hence the dislocation.

Like the God of Abraham, Pope Francis just popped out of nowhere, or so it seemed. Erupting into Abraham's life, God comes out of nowhere without any introduction. The first word he speaks is the imperative, "Go!" It's all a bit brusque and unsettling. It wasn't quite like this with Pope Francis, but since his election he's shown a flair for the unexpected. We'd heard about him as the Jesuit Archbishop of Buenos Aires who got quite a few votes in the Conclave of 2008, and we thought he was too old in the Conclave on 2013. If he ever had a

chance, it seemed, his moment had passed; but no – elected he was and quickly. Then he appeared on the balcony of St Peter’s wearing only the white soutane, no *mozzetta* or stole; that seemed a bit odd. Then he stood in silence for what seemed a long time; but eventually he broke the silence with the less than thunderous greeting, “*Buona sera*, Good evening”. New Popes, we thought, are supposed to say something grander and more memorable. It seemed too down-beat, as if he couldn’t think of anything else to say. But then came the *coup de grâce* when he asked the crowd in the Square to pray for him before he gave the blessing. A new Pope is supposed to give a blessing, but not have the people pray for him. The silence in the Square was unforgettable as the Pope bowed his head while the people prayed. With simple words and gestures like these, Pope Francis was showing himself immediately a subtly dislocating presence, inviting the Church to move on in ways we didn’t quite see coming.

This became still clearer when not long after his election he decided to convene not one but two Synods of Bishops on the theme of marriage and the family. We’d been having Synods for almost fifty years since the Council, but we’d never had two Synods twelve months apart like this. The Pope, it seemed, wanted to change the experience of the Synod; and he did so in a number of ways. He moved from an experience of Synod as event to an experience of Synod as process. In other (and more biblical) words, he was summoning the Church to set out on a journey. The word “synod” itself of course means “on the road together”; but Francis seemed to be moving the emphasis from “together” to “on the road”, in search of a new way of being together.

In this, he was reclaiming the Second Vatican Council’s biblically inspired description of the Church as a pilgrim people. The significance of the Council’s shift from the static description of the Church as a perfect society to a more dynamic sense of the Church as a pilgrim people can hardly be overstated.

It relates to a more general shift in cultures like ours from a static to a dynamic understanding of human experience. Marriage for instance, is seen now not so much as a state but as a journey – which in this culture often begins with a friendship, then perhaps a sexual relationship, then cohabitation, followed by engagement, marriage and all that lies beyond – with offspring appearing at any point of this journey. Similar things could be said of family life, which is seen in essentially dynamic rather than static terms.

The journey began when the Pope announced the two Synods; then we had the preparation for the first Extraordinary Synod in 2014; that was followed by the aftermath of that Synod and the preparation for the second Ordinary Synod in 2015; then Francis proclaimed a Jubilee Year of Mercy which was closely connected to the Synod journey, indeed the next step on the way. During the Year of Mercy came the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*. It was produced in record time – I presume because the Pope didn't want to lose the momentum of the two Synods; and it wasn't produced in the conventional way – I presume because Francis wanted it to appear sooner rather than later.

Each of these moments was a staging-post on a journey which is certainly not finished. The journey is Abrahamic because no-one – not even the Pope – knows exactly where the journey is heading. Some are anxious about that; they want a detailed road-map or a trustworthy GPS. But the God of Abraham doesn't provide either – never has, never will. Certainly Pope Francis doesn't seem anxious about this.

One of the reasons why Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops – and why successive Popes have convened more Synods than ever Pope Paul did was to give a generation of Bishops who didn't know Vatican II something of the

experience of the Council, which was life-changing for many of the Council Fathers. At the Council, much of the real action happened not at the four sessions but in between the sessions. There was a process of fermentation that began with the announcement of the Council on 25 January 1959 and continued through the sessions and between them at least until the Council's close on 8 December 1965. I say "at least" because in many ways the process of fermentation, the journey, still continues; and it continues with greater impetus, I think, because of the energies unleashed by Pope Francis with his decision for the two Synods.

It seems to me too that the Pope's choice of marriage and the family as the theme was shrewd. Obviously this is an area where the rubber hits the road in the lives of many or most people; there's nothing immediately ethereal about marriage and the family. No less obviously in many parts of the world, marriage and the family are passing through a time of deep change, if not crisis, as the very notion of marriage and the family is being redefined.

But the underlying issue is the engagement of faith and culture, the separation of which Paul VI described in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) as "undoubtedly the drama of our time". In the more than forty years since, the drama has grown greater. What the Church believes and teaches and what the wider culture believes and does have increasingly moved in quite different directions – especially in the area of marriage and the family.

One possible reaction to this is to condemn the wider culture and walk away, confident that we have the fullness of truth to which others are welcome if they care to walk with us. It's up to them; we've done our bit in professing and speaking the truth, even if in terms others find hard to understand. A second possible reaction is to enter into dialogue with those who don't, can't or

won't see things as we do on things that really matter, like marriage and the family. Clearly, Pope Francis – taking his cue from Vatican II – is urging the Church to respond in the second way rather than the first – to enter into dialogue rather than condemn, to open doors rather than close them.

At this point, let me turn to my own experience of the Synod process. In May 2015, the Australian bishops were due to elect two delegates to send to the Synod later that year. Naturally, I'd followed the Synod of 2014 with interest, though Synods from afar can look a bit duller than they are when you're involved in them. I was more intrigued by the process than by any of the controversy that emerged from the first assembly. Its purpose was to identify as fully and accurately as possible the real situation of marriages and families around the world. This was an attempt to inhabit the real world rather than some idealised world in which everything is just as it should be. In fact, things are often not as they should be in marriages and families; and any genuinely pastoral approach has to begin with the facts on the ground rather than the world as we might wish it to be. Methodologically, this was a crucial point in the Synod journey: let's begin with the facts rather than with something more purist and abstract.

The questionnaire that went out before the first Synod struck me as a worthy attempt – in principle at least. But it was dreadfully clumsy. It was good to consult as widely as possible before the gathering, and that too became a crucial methodological point as the process unfolded. But the questions were put in language that many found opaque, and the questionnaire seemed the work of people who simply weren't used to this sort of thing.

When the time came for the bishops to elect their delegates, I thought it would be fascinating to go to the Synod but I didn't think I'd be one of the two

chosen – largely because marriage and the family hadn't really been my area of involvement. Bishop Eugene Hurley of Darwin had been the Conference's very able point man in this area for a long time, so he was a certainty. But I thought that other bishops had better credentials in the area than I did. So it came as a surprise when I was the second bishop elected. I have to say I was pleased; and I was determined to prepare as well as I could for the Synod that lay ahead. Because one thing I learnt from my earlier experience of a Synod is that it pays to prepare. Unless you prepare well, the Synod process, with its speed and intensity, can sweep over you. Preparation is essential; and prepare I did through the six months between election and Synod.

The first thing I did was sit down and look seriously at the Gospel texts which have Jesus speaking of divorce – texts often thought to conclude a discussion before it's ever begun. I'd read these texts of course and knew some of the discussion about them, but I'd never really studied them. Well, now I did – in their Old Testament context, in their rabbinic context, in their New Testament context, in the context of Church tradition, all of which are important. The more I studied them, the more it seemed to me that the texts were authoritative in a strange way and that they didn't really answer every question about divorce and remarriage in the very different world that we know.

The deeper question was the authority of Scripture; and it was at this point that I stumbled upon a published lecture of N.T. Wright which I found very helpful. In it, Wright claimed that Scripture was like a newly discovered manuscript of Shakespeare. It's a sensational discovery, clearly authentic. But there's only one hitch: Act V is missing. We have the first four Acts, and they're vintage Bard. But what are we to do? It may be read, but it can hardly be performed with only four Acts. Yet if a fifth Act were to be written, it would have to be done by someone with a deep and intimate knowledge of

Shakespeare's world and his idiom, both dramatic and poetic. The unfinished manuscript would have to be completed, but what skill and courage it would take to do it. Wright's point is that Scripture is essentially unfinished and must be finished again and again by individuals and communities until the end of time – with no less skill and courage than those composing the missing fifth Act. The first four Acts are obviously authoritative, but they're not enough. More is needed.

That's one of the reasons why we speak not just of Scripture but of Tradition as well. Tradition is the ongoing act of interpretation which, as the rabbis teach us, can never end. For Scripture, they say, lives by interpretation; if interpretation were ever to die, so too would the text. The unfinished text must also be completed over and again in the holiness of life of individual disciples and their communities, which is always an interpretation of Scripture. So we can't just take the seemingly crystal-clear texts of the Synoptic Gospels where Jesus speaks of divorce and remarriage and present them as if they answer every question we face. Those texts are seriously authoritative, but they are not enough. They don't preclude any further reflection and discussion; they require it. That much was clear to me.

As well as listening anew to the voice of Scripture, I sought to listen to as many voices of the people as I could in the time before I went to the Synod. I trawled through the Australian responses to the questionnaire, where there were few surprises or fresh perspectives. Most of the responses were predictable enough, running right across the ideological spectrum, at least as we know it in this country. Many people wanted to speak to me personally, and I saw as many of them as I could. I hasten to add that my normal workload continued unabated, so it wasn't as if I took time out to prepare for the Synod. Any preparation I did was in addition to what I had to do as Archbishop of Brisbane,

which is a fair bit. But I became convinced that the Synod process absolutely required a new listening from those who would actually be in the Synod Hall – not just the voices we might find congenial but all the voices, especially perhaps those we find uncongenial, those with whom we might disagree or those whose assumptions are quite different from ours. This listening wasn't easy, but it was a fundamentally important part of the Synod journey for me; and it was clearly a key methodological point for Pope Francis and an indispensable way of getting in touch with the facts on the ground rather than inhabiting some more abstract world in which eyes may be open but ears are closed.

The third decisive part of my preparation was a reading of history and in this I was helped especially by the Jesuit historian John O'Malley, whose work I had followed for some time but which I now studied more closely. O'Malley's book on the Council of Trent is a masterpiece; it's not a big book, but it offers a compelling account and interpretation of that long and complex Council which I found brilliantly illuminating. I moved then to his book on Vatican II, which builds on his work on Trent and is scarcely less illuminating. I also read various articles of O'Malley which prepared the way for his books, and these were important too.

O'Malley taught me much about the history of reform in the Church – the shift over time from removing the weeds from the field of the Church to reshaping the Church as a whole. He taught me much about the interplay of evolution and revolution in the history of the Church and gave me a deeper sense of the originality of Vatican II in the history of Church Councils, especially perhaps in its language. He showed me more of what it means to call Vatican II the Council of history. He also helped me see that what Pope Francis had done in convening the two Synods was powerfully connected to the deepest impulses of the Second Vatican Council, so that I came to see that the Synods of

2014 and 2015 were, of all the Synods in the fifty years since Vatican II, the ones most closely linked to the Council. There was much else that I learnt from the study of O'Malley's work, but suffice it to say here that at times during the Synod of 2015 I felt like the mouth-piece of John O'Malley. I trust he takes that as a compliment, not an insult.

By the time I left for Rome, I was well and truly prepared – or so I thought. I even had a brand new iPad given to me by our communications people in Brisbane who suggested that I might do a blog during the Synod to keep the locals in the loop. I told them that I wasn't much good at that sort of thing; I'd never been able to keep a diary going, and I'd probably be the same with a blog. But I said I'd give it a go. As it turned out, the blog became a key part of the Synod experience for me. I started off doing the posts without ever thinking that they'd reach much beyond Brisbane. But, to my surprise, people began reading the blog far and wide; and once a couple of the better known journalists got on to it, the blog began to go global. I still don't fully understand why. But it seemed to give people outside the Synod Hall a sense of what was happening. It helped them feel part of the process, which is exactly what they wanted to feel and, I might add, what they had a right to feel. I respected the confidentiality of the Synod, but a lot of stories could still be told. I tried to demystify the Synod, to present its human face, in the belief that doing so, as Pope Francis has done with the papacy, wouldn't be at all to diminish the Synod. In fact, I thought or at least hoped it would have the opposite effect – again as it has with Pope Francis and the papacy. The experience of the blog convinced me more than ever that synods – either universal or local – have to include the whole Church. They're not just for bishops; and if social media can help bring a new kind of inclusion, then so much the better.

Entering St Peter's for the Opening Mass, I was conscious that from all quarters there were keener expectations of this Synod than any I could remember. Some wanted nothing touched; others wanted everything overturned; and there were all kinds of calls in between. I had no idea where the Synod would end up, but I knew it mattered. There was early drama with the mysterious letter of the thirteen Cardinals, but the Pope's brisk reply in the Synod Hall the following morning made it clear that he wasn't going to be a passive observer. That would be much clearer by the end of the Synod.

From the start, it was obvious that the process of this Synod would be different from earlier Synods. The three-minute interventions didn't seem to matter too much. They came in such quick succession and on such a vast array of topics that it was hard to focus on them, let alone remember what anyone had said. The real action moved from these interventions to the small groups to which much more time was given from the start. I say small, but my own group was thirty people from eighteen different nationalities. Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh was elected Chair and I was elected Secretary, which is a more strategic position than it sounds. The Secretary is responsible for summarising the discussions of the group and presenting the summary to the full assembly. That entails a lot of intense and rapid work through the three weeks; at times you're run ragged.

The group itself was hard work too. In part, that was because of the Synod's basic working document – called the *Instrumentum Laboris*. It set the agenda of the small groups and therefore framed the entire work of the Synod. But it was too weak a document to bear the weight it was expected to bear and to do the work it was expected to do.

Another reason was the sheer diversity of the group. At times I sat there thinking not only, Are we in the same Church? but, Are we on the same planet? The universal Church is a wondrous thing, but it can present its challenges; and in the area of marriage and the family, so heavily modulated from culture to culture, the challenges were acute. At times it wasn't at all clear how we could find a common voice.

Then there were the ideological differences – both in the small group and the full assembly. World-wide, the ideological spectrum is considerably broader than we know here in Australia. The extremes elsewhere are more extreme than they are here. I thought I was beyond shock by now, but there were things said in the group that did shock me – for example, that we had to choose between Kasper and Christ. One might want to disagree with Cardinal Kasper, but to cast him as the anti-Christ struck me as outrageous. I could multiply examples, but suffice it to say here that not a few comments in the small group and the full assembly left no doubt that for some at least this Synod was a kind of Armageddon. Such apocalyptic scenarios struck me as anything but helpful and showed what Pope Francis has to contend with.

The new Synod dynamic, with its shift from full assembly to small groups, was refreshing enough; but in many ways the new dynamic seemed all over the place. Again it seemed the work of those who weren't used to this kind of thing. Old dogs were having to learn new tricks – and with considerable difficulty. Perhaps this was the inevitable sense of mess that comes with discernment, which is always harder to manage than dictatorship or rule by decree. That was part of it, but incompetent if well-intentioned foostering was also part of it.

I must confess that at about the halfway mark I thought, This is going nowhere. I couldn't see how we could arrive at anything worthwhile in another ten days or so. The Synod, I thought, was all over the shop – without shape or purpose or direction. It was wandering. But in the end there was a resolution that didn't seem possible earlier on. When the bishops finished voting on the ninety-four paragraphs of the final document – with all paragraphs receiving a two-thirds majority, a few only just – there was a standing ovation which was a mixture of weariness, relief, astonishment, jubilation and gratitude. It wasn't the end of the journey – that much was clear; but it was a significant step forward, a substantial achievement that had seemed unlikely not that long before.

Pope Francis himself was very much part of that achievement. Throughout the Synod his style was striking. He would arrive on foot from Santa Marta each morning carrying his own bag, enter the foyer like any other bishop, talk to a few like the rest of us and then go up to the Hall where he greeted a few more, again like the rest of us. His whole manner was designed to say, I'm a bishop among bishops – not a monarch or an oracle. Yet his authority was unmistakable. I've mentioned his brief but decisive intervention early on. But he spoke at greater length on two other occasions, and these were a key part of the Synod dynamic. On both occasions I was moved to think that we were listening not to the voice of Jorge Bergoglio but to the voice of Peter, as we read in Acts 15. At times through the Synod, I had a strong sense that, for all the intense humanity of the gathering, there was “something greater than Solomon” here. So too on these two occasions, I had a strong sense that there was something greater than Jorge, and it gave me a deeper sense of why the Petrine ministry matters, especially in a situation where the fault lines had become so clear.

The first of the two speeches that left their mark on the Synod – and on me – was at the celebration of the fifty years of the Synod of Bishops on 17 October. We all dutifully traipsed into the big Audience Hall to attend what became an epic Latin talkfest. There were endless speeches of varying quality – so many in fact that it was suggested at about the two hour mark that we stand up and stretch, breathe some fresh air or do whatever else we felt inclined or constrained to do. At the end of this marathon, the Pope rose to speak – and we were all hoping that he'd be short and sweet so that we could head to lunch. He began in that low tone of voice he has at times, and it was all strictly *pro forma* – thanks to all the usual people and so on. But then he got into his speech; and as soon as he did, you could feel the atmosphere in the Hall change. We began to sit up in our seats as the Pope delivered a masterly speech on the synodality of the Church – synodality which means not some of the bishops some of the time but all of the Church all of the time. It was the ecclesiology of Vatican II but expressed in that vivid, down-to-earth way we've come to associate with Francis. Somehow he made it seem fresh and exciting – and you could've heard a pin drop.

It was during this speech that the thought came to me as a kind of flash: now is the time for the Australian bishops to decide for a plenary council. We'd been talking about it for ages, and the Year of Grace was intended to be a time of discernment at the end of which we'd be better positioned to decide for a plenary council or not. When the idea was first mooted, there wasn't agreement among the bishops; that's why the year of discernment was agreed as a kind of compromise. The Year of Grace turned out to be more successful than expected, but at the end of it we still didn't seem ready to decide for a plenary council. Yet listening to the Pope on this morning, I had a strong sense – perhaps an inspiration – that the time had come. I said as much at the November bishops' meeting after I'd returned from the Synod. A vote was put

and the bishops now agreed – I think unanimously – to move towards what we called a national ecclesial event. A steering committee was appointed, with myself as chair; and at the recent meeting of the Conference the committee put to the bishops that we prepare for a plenary council in 2020. The motion was carried, and we are now looking to the first plenary council in Australia since 1937.

The decision was a recognition that we can no longer put up a sign saying, Business as usual. The Royal Commission has made that abundantly clear. It has raised questions not only about policies and protocols but also about culture – making it clear that the culture has to change. That’s a tall order; and for it to happen, the bishops and others will have to make bold decisions about the future. That’s what the plenary council will be about. It will have to be a council not just of the bishops but, in some genuine sense, a council of the whole Church in this country. What that means in terms of process is an important question for us in the immediate future. We’ll need the approval of the Pope to have the plenary council, but I doubt that will be a problem. We’ll also need eventually to submit to him any decision or legislation of the council – to ensure that nothing in it contradicts the teaching, law or discipline of the universal Church.

The decision to move to a plenary council is one of the most important decisions taken by the bishops in my years on the Conference – perhaps the most important. The threefold process of preparation, celebration and implementation will frame much of the Church’s life in Australia for the foreseeable future. It will be the shape of our journey ahead, and I entrust it to your engagement in prayer, study and action. It will have to be your council.

By the end of the Pope's speech, everyone had forgotten lunch. Spontaneously we stood and applauded – not just to stretch our legs this time but because Francis' words had revived our spirits at a point in the Synod when we weren't too sure where it was all going. He had confirmed us in faith.

Another standing ovation came at the end of the Pope's briefer speech when the Synod finished. We'd taken the vote on the final document, and the Pope stood to offer what we thought would be another courtly set-piece. That's how he began – predictably thanking everyone. But once he got the formalities out of the way, Francis launched into an incisive analysis of what the Synod had been, where we needed to go from here and how we might get there. He wasn't playing some crude partisan game. His words applied equally to everyone in the Hall – in some way or other. He wasn't interested in winners and losers. He may be a shrewd strategist but he doesn't play silly politics. That's why I say it was as if we heard the voice of Peter – who had listened to all the voices through the Synod and was keen to bring them to a harmony that denied none of the differences nor hid any of the unresolved issues. No wonder we stood and applauded.

By the time we entered St Peter's for the Closing Mass, we were all weary – or at least I was. God knows how the Pope must have felt. The Synod was exhausting but also exhilarating. However tired we may have felt in some ways, we were refreshed in deeper ways. We may not have seen where exactly we were going, but somehow we saw more clearly. Certainly we saw that a serious process of discernment – for all its messiness – can produce real fruit. That fruit didn't mean the end of the Synod journey: quite the contrary. But it did mean that we had real food for the journey and a taste for the road ahead.

Did the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* do justice to the Synod process? I think it did. Its great strength is that it's an essentially pastoral document, just as the Synod was an essentially pastoral assembly, even if the discussion did at times wander off into an abstract world where the facts of human experience seemed strangely absent. To be pastoral means to start with the facts, whatever they are and however unfriendly they may seem. *Amoris Laetitia* does that. But it goes on to present the grand and ageless poetry of the Church's teaching on marriage and the family; and this becomes a soaring vision of possibility. In a world where the sense of what's possible in marriage and the family seems to be shrinking, the Pope opens up whole new vistas of possibility. He opens doors that had seemed shut for ever. In short, he offers hope, which is precisely what the Synod sought to do. *Amoris Laetitia* isn't the last word, and Francis never meant it to be. But it's a seriously important word for the next phase of the journey – a word to be heard deeply, a text to be read patiently, because – as Francis has said more than once – “time is greater than space”.

The Exhortation also leaves no doubt that Francis stands wholly in line with John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI. His style is different; so too is his language. The differences are easy to note. Harder to spot is the deep point where the different Popes converge, where their voices become one. Yet that's the point where we hear the voice of Peter and truly discover the Petrine ministry.

If I speak of wandering and journeying in my title, it's not because I think Francis is leading the Church out of a time of wandering into a time of journeying. I don't subscribe to such accounts of his pontificate nor of those that went before him. The task of Peter is always to help us turn our wandering into journeying, and each Pope does it in his own particular way. In leading us

more deeply into the reality of a synodal Church, Francis is doing it in a way that's unusually refreshing and energising. He's putting new heart into the brothers and sisters, confirming them in faith. But all that he says and does is made possible by what was said and done – albeit differently – by those who went before him.

Our task is to recognise and seize the grace of the moment – which is one of the two requirements in planning for the future of the Church. The first is to identify the facts on the ground; the second is to identify the grace of the moment. Pope Francis has helped us do both. It's up to all of us now – boldly and imaginatively, humbly and faithfully – to take the path which will lead us not only into a future for the Church in Australia but out of the desert and home to the Garden where Cain can finally embrace Abel, his brother.