



Getting Back on Mission

Reforming our Church Together

What people are saying...

ISBN:
9781925009651

Price:
\$29.95

Interest:
Catholic Church Reform,
Plenary Council 2020,
Canon Law, Women,
Religion

Format:
Paperback

Specifications:
152mm x 229mm

Extent:
336pp

Publication Date:
September 2019

Publisher:
Garratt Publishing

I wish *Getting Back on Mission* well and hope this book helps navigate our Church's sacred pastors to the wisdom and action needed to get us out of this mess.

Mary McAleese
Former President of Ireland

Getting Back on Mission provides us with a blueprint for the reformation of the Catholic Church so necessary for it to be faithful to the mission of Jesus. The bishops and religious leaders are called to listen to the laity and to implement standards of governance where accountability, inclusiveness and transparency become the norm and not optional extras. Only then will it have any chance of reclaiming its credibility among the faithful.

Rosemarie Joyce CSB
Former President, Catholic Religious Australia, Marriage Tribunal Judge

Getting Back on Mission is an extraordinary work – a labour of love by Catholic women and men whose abundant faith in God's Spirit, steadfast commitment to the Gospel, and uncompromising dedication to intellectual and theological rigor can be found on every page of the document. This work reflects the exemplary manner in which a relatively small group of Catholics throughout Australia have pioneered a new way to exercise lay leadership, committing their gifts, talents, and expertise to the remaking of an institution torn apart by corruption and clericalism. This document is a model and manual for any Catholic who seeks to exercise lay leadership more effectively in their own region.

Deborah Rose-Milavec and Russ Petrus
Co-Directors, FutureChurch, USA

Those Christians hoping that their faith will appeal to their children have every reason to share passionate insights on Church reform so that the vessel might be more fit for purpose. Faith seeking understanding thrives when there is an openness to all that is best in a world which espouses primacy of conscience, democratic participation and transparent governance. Synodality, subsidiarity, and collegiality are the key. In *Getting Back on Mission*, Catholics for Renewal have provided a realistic, hopeful and authentically Catholic roadmap for the forthcoming Australian Plenary Council.

Frank Brennan SJ AO
CEO of Catholic Social Services Australia

Reading *Getting Back on Mission* by Catholics for Renewal – from the perspective of Ireland, where I live, and where our Church is facing similar challenges – I am enormously impressed by the clarity of its analysis of the problems we are faced with, and the list of recommendations, though challenging, are as necessary here as in Australia.

Tony Flannery CSSR
Co-founder of the Association of Catholic Priests Ireland
Author of *A Question of Conscience*, Londubh Books (2013)

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Catholics for Renewal speaks for the wider church reform movement in correctly identifying the crisis facing the church and is right to point to the serious limitations of current church governance in Australia. Good governance has three essentials: accountability, transparency and inclusion. This new book is a most comprehensive compendium of necessary reforms for consideration not only by the Plenary Council 2020/21, but immediately by every church leader as a matter of urgency.

Emeritus Professor John Warhurst AO
Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn
Member of Australian Bishops' Church Governance Review Panel

In one document, Catholics for Renewal has captured all the major issues confronting the Catholic Church in Australia. Although prepared primarily for the Plenary, the origins of this book are to be found in the hearts and minds of so many Catholics (mainly the laity) who over many years have refused to walk away from the Church, despite many understandable reasons for doing so. After years of rejection by the hierarchy, the Plenary (hopefully) provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard. It is a balanced and fair document, carefully and lovingly prepared by hearts and minds fully open to the ongoing revelations of our God. It speaks of and to God's Australian people today."

Michael Gill
Former President of the Law Council of Australia
Convenor for Voice of Catholic Australian Laity (VOCAL)

This absolute mine of information calls on Australian Catholics to leave behind a clericalist, self-engrossed church and embrace a renewed vision that includes full lay participation with a faith inspired by Jesus and the gospel message, while at the same time embracing the very modern virtues of equality and accountability.

Paul Collins, Broadcaster
Church Historian
Writer and Commentator on Catholicism

The Australian Catholic Plenary Council is of a piece with the participatory mode of governance Pope Francis wants generalised throughout the Church today. *Getting Back on Mission* can only do good in supporting that process with which Catholics in Australia have little experience in the Church. But as citizens of a democratic, pluralist society, we have the skills and experience to make a vital contribution to the Church in these times that require reform urgently, breaking out of the time warp in which much official teaching exists. I commend *Getting Back on Mission* to your consideration.

Michael Kelly SJ
Chief Executive Officer, UCAN Services

Some have blamed the appalling sexual abuse of children within the Catholic Church on the Second Vatican Council, the sexual revolution and the decline of Eucharistic devotion. Commissions of inquiry in the United States, Ireland, the Netherlands and Australia have found more worldly explanations in the Church's structures and canon law. *Getting Back on Mission* by Catholics for Renewal provides a program for reform of these earthly causes along the lines recommended by the Australian Royal Commission into the Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Church will ignore it at its peril.

Kieran Tapsell
Author of *Potiphar's Wife: The Vatican's Secret and Child Sexual Abuse ATF (2014)*

The forthcoming Plenary Council 2020/21 provides a unique opportunity for Australian Catholics to reflect on their own faith journey, their relationship to Church, and the situation of the Church in relation to civil and canonical norms. The Church's governance needs careful review as recommended by the Royal Commission. Catholics for Renewal are to be commended for actively engaging in the process of reflection, analysis and engagement.

Susan Pascoe AM
Former and founding Commissioner of the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission
Former Director of Catholic Education Victoria
Member of Australian Bishops' Church Governance Review Panel
Chair of Community Directors Council

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Divide and conquer has been a favored strategy of Rome since the time of Julius Caesar and it is still used today by the Church. When a problem or issue emerges in one country or another, Rome simply dismisses it by saying it's only an American problem or it's only an issue in Europe but doesn't reflect the whole Church. *Getting Back on Mission* by Catholics for Renewal accurately reflects similar statements coming from Europe, the United States, Latin America and now Australia. These statements can no longer be dismissed as simply regional. Australia's very isolation has intensified its experience and has in effect made it the canary in the coal mine. As such *Getting Back on Mission* must be regarded as particularly cautionary for the future of the Church.

**Gerry Bechard Parish Priest,
Ss Simon & Jude, Westland, Michigan, USA
Founder 'Elephants in the Living Room' blog
on Catholic institutional blindness to clerical child sexual abuse**

Want to know what the Plenary Council 2020/21 should be dealing with? Then read Catholics for Renewal's *Getting Back on Mission*. All the key issues, big and small, are listed with practical steps on how to deal with them – and with an eye to history, theology and Canon Law. The Plenary Council is a council of bishops, but the Church is overwhelmingly lay. The bishops should be pleased that so many are so keen for the Church's success as to produce this sophisticated document.

**Eric Hodgens
A Senior Priest of the Melbourne Archdiocese
A 'retired Pastor Emeritus' who 'writes a bit'**

For those interested in the Plenary Council 2020/21, here is a most comprehensive exploration of the issues that confront the Catholic Church in Australia today. *Getting Back on Mission* by Catholics for Renewal represents the reflections, thoughts and methodical research of many Catholics who contributed to the various stages of bringing to birth this important book. It covers issues of governance, lay participation, liturgical reform, inclusion of women, people of diverse sexualities, gender and marital status, clericalism, training and professional development of clergy and church leaders and much more. All Australian Catholics interested in the Church's future will find this book informative, challenging and essential to understanding the issues that should be addressed at the Plenary Council 2020/21.

**Peter Maher
Editor of *The Swag National Council of Priests Quarterly Magazine*
Former Parish Priest of St Joseph's Newtown in Sydney**

Getting Back on Mission is a well researched document that is grounded in the larger Tradition of the Church and the contemporary reality of Australia. This insightful writing is exciting, creative, courageous and visionary in its scope and depth. As such, it deserves a thorough and thoughtful reading.

**Rev Jim Clarke PhD
Senior Lecturer in Spirituality, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, USA**

I see the Plenary Council of the Australian Catholic Church as crucial to the future of our Church. The world needs the Church more now than perhaps at any time in its history. In order to meet this need, the institutional Church must get its house in order with the grace of God and the good will of the people of God. In *Getting Back on Mission*, Catholics for Renewal has provided invaluable guidance for the Church.

**Kevin Mogg
former Episcopal Vicar for Social Services for the Archdiocese of Melbourne (27 years)
Founder of Catholic Social Services Victoria
Former Rector of Corpus Christi Seminary for Victoria and Tasmania**

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It took the world-wide catastrophe of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clerics and the discovery of the systemic cover-up and enabling by Catholic Bishops to force the People of God to finally realize that toxic clericalism still reigns supreme. *Getting Back on Mission* by Catholics For Renewal, Australia, is far more than an evidentiary document for the Australian Plenary Council to be held in 2020/21. It is a clear, concise, detailed, factual and prophetic examination of the distortions, failures and subversion perpetrated by the clerical culture. This historic work, inspired by the disastrous debacle of sexual abuse in the Church that was exposed by the Royal Commission, is far more than another cry for reform that falls on the deaf ears of the hierarchy. It is a glaring exposition of reality. It is a prophetic description of what has been, what is and what will be if the clerical establishment continues to run from this reality. *Getting Back on Mission* is both terrifying because it tells the truth and hopeful because it comes from believing, courageous and determined members of the People of God who are making the future happen.

Thomas Doyle

Doctor of Canon Law

Former Dominican priest

**Internationally acknowledged expert in the canonical and pastoral dimension
of clerical child sexual abuse**

**Expert witness before the Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
Received Priest of Integrity Award from The Voice of the Faithful in 2002**
