Companions

together for a faith doing justice

Inside

Indigenous ministry past, present and future
Tackling asylum seekers’ ‘multiple discrimination’
50 years of St Ignatius’ College Adelaide

The Bookends Project
Bringing together our concerns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and asylum seekers

In the name of Jesus
in the spirit of Ignatius
companions
for a faith that does justice

www.jesuit.org.au
Companions is a publication of the Australian Jesuits, which is produced twice a year for friends and supporters of the Jesuit Province.

CONTACT Australian Jesuits
20 The Vaucluse
Richmond Victoria 3121
Telephone 03 9421 9666

From the Provincial

Dear Friends

In a recent article in Eureka Street, Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ drew our attention to what I once named ‘the bookends of rejection’ in Australian history.

The arrival of the First Fleet constitutes the first bookend. Notwithstanding the many decent and heroic chapters that have followed, there is no denying that our nation’s triumphs have come at great cost to our Aboriginal sisters and brothers.

The second bookend is the reality that innocent people, who have been subjected to persecution and are seeking Australia’s protection in accordance with our international obligations, have been expelled to Manus Island and Nauru.

Because the Society’s mission is always to stand with the poor and marginalised, I have launched dual Province initiatives in response to these bookends.

Background work on the first of these initiatives — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reconciliation — has already begun. In the months ahead it will become more visible and I will invite your active participation in it.

Significant initial work on the second bookend has also begun with the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Task Force, which I set up last year.

Its work was to look at what is already being done around the Province on asylum seeker and refugee issues; current and future needs; the resources of the Province that could help address those needs; what a Province-wideresponse might look like; and how it might be resourced, implemented and evaluated.

The Province will be pursuing these two initiatives and, where possible, activities in support of them will be coordinated to maximise their effectiveness.

This edition of Companions explores each of the bookends in greater depth. Firstly, through an essay by Fr Pat Mullins SJ (pp 5–6) about the history of our Province engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on which the bookend initiative hopes to build.

And secondly, through an interview with Carolina Gottardo, Country Director of Jesuit Refugee Service (pp 6–7), about the shape of JRS’s present service and advocacy work in the area of asylum seeker rights and the role JRS will take in facilitating further Province-wide responses in relation to this second bookend.

I commend our bookends projects to you most strongly and I ask you all to engage in this whole-of-Province process prayerfully and generously.

Fr Brian F. McCoy SJ, Provincial.
Fr Paul Coleman SJ died on 25 September 2017 at Mater Hospital in Sydney, aged 90. He had been a Jesuit for 69 years and a priest for 58. Born in Melbourne, he studied arts/law at Melbourne University for two years before joining the Jesuits. He was appointed assistant priest at St Mary’s, North Sydney in 1962 and altogether spent 50 years working in Sydney, including as parish priest at North Sydney (1975-85) and St Clair in Parramatta (1986-89) — where he added prison chaplaincy to his responsibilities — and as chaplain at Mater Hospital (1990-97, 2007-17) and Mary MacKillop Chapel and Centre at North Sydney (1998-2006). In 2015 Paul was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to the Church and refugee support organisations.

Fr John Doenau SJ died on 3 September 2017, aged 86. He had been a Jesuit for 65 years and a priest for 54. Born in Sydney, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1952. After tertianship in Austria, he studied dogmatic theology in Rome, then completed his doctorate on the writings of Bonhoeffer at Heythrop College, UK. John taught systematic theology for 43 years. In 1983-85 he was academic principal at JTC. He had a passion for theological reflection on justice issues, and served as province consultor and provincial assistant for social ministries. For three decades he celebrated weekly Mass at Regina Coeli/McAuley House for vulnerable women while living at Corpus Christi Community Greenvale.

Fr Kevin King SJ died at Nazareth House, Camberwell, Vic., on 28 March 2017, at the age of 88. Just six weeks earlier he had moved there from Arrupe House, Pymble, where he had been in retirement since 2008. He had been a Jesuit for 69 years and a priest for 57. Born in East Melbourne and educated at St Patrick’s College, his Jesuit formation followed the usual course. Apart from five years as assistant director of the Jesuit Mission Office in Melbourne, his active priestly life was spent in schools in Sydney and Perth, including 25 fruitful years as chaplain at John XXIII College in Perth.

Fr Kevin Penry SJ died at Mary MacKillop Residence, Hawthorn East, Vic., on 24 July 2017, at the age of 84. He had been a Jesuit for 67 years and a priest for 53. Born in Melbourne, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1950. He worked in a variety of ministries: schools, adult education, a parish, hospital chaplaincy, a seminar in Fiji, with homeless alcoholics at Corpus Christi Community Greenvale, helping care for senior Jesuits. He was a founding member of the Centre of Ignatian Spirituality at Pymble (Sydney) and the Victorian Christian Life Community Guiding Committee.

Fr John Wilcken SJ died on 3 September 2017, aged 86. He had been a Jesuit for 65 years and a priest for 54. Born in Sydney, he entered the Society of Jesus in 1952. After tertianship in Austria, he studied dogmatic theology in Rome, then completed his doctorate on the writings of Bonhoeffer at Heythrop College, UK. John taught systematic theology for 43 years. In 1983-85 he was academic principal at JTC. He had a passion for theological reflection on justice issues, and served as province consultor and provincial assistant for social ministries. For three decades he celebrated weekly Mass at Regina Coeli/McAuley House for vulnerable women while living at Corpus Christi Community Greenvale.
In 1899, the Austrian Jesuit Mission ended its involvement with Indigenous people in Daly River, which had begun in 1882. It was not until 1979 that the Australian Province renewed its commitment to engaging with Indigenous people.

The renewal related to the pursuit of faith and justice in the Jesuit Order worldwide promoted by the 32nd General Congregation of 1974. It coincided with the visionary message of the Superior General, Fr Pedro Arrupe SJ, who said: ‘Love of God which does not issue in justice for others is a farce.’

The renewal gave rise to new ministries such as Jesuit Social Services, Uniya, Jesuit Refuge Service and initiatives within existing ministries in schools, parishes and colleges. It was a time of great hope and energy in our Province and gave rise to a new ministry among Indigenous people.

While a formal Province re-commitment began in 1979, there were a number of initiatives from individual Jesuits that formed a precursor. One of these began when my fellow scholastic Brian McCoy and I sought permission from the then Provincial, Fr Peter Kelly SJ, to spend one year of our regency in 1973 at Balgo Mission in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

At Balgo we worked in much the same way as lay missionaries did at that time. We cared for the school-aged boys in a dormitory and helped on other projects from supervising children in the dining room, helping construct water tanks and other infrastructure, to even helping muster and brand cattle.

The mission was all about to change. Basically, the wider world came to Balgo over the next few years. We are fortunate to remember an era when everybody worked, children all went to school every day and the elders sang the traditional songs and stories at night.

In 1979 the Provincial Fr Pat O’Sullivan SJ sent Brian and me to Townsville. We rented a house, supported by part-time employment as a bus driver and taxi driver respectively, and directed our efforts to developing relationships with Aboriginal and Islander people living in Townsville.

Other Jesuits followed our lead into Aboriginal ministry, including John Egan, Mauri Heading, Robin Koning, Tom Nicholas and Dave Ryan. Between us, we spent significant periods of time in different contexts such as Aboriginal chaplaincy in Townsville, Darwin, Garden Point, Broome, Alice Springs and Mt Druitt.

Though living in different places, we rejoiced to form the Jesuit Northern Community, happy that a precedent for such a ‘dispersed community’ had been set by Francis Xavier and others. Frank Brennan, though not stationed in the north of Australia, was part of the Province’s renewed engagement, especially with his legal and advocacy work, and, also joined our bi-annual community gatherings when he was able.

There are few monuments to our work, which is not such a bad thing. It has always been that relating, encouraging and seeking to empower Indigenous people were the highest priorities. We continue to have blessed relationships with Aboriginal and Islander people, which extend over the whole continent.

And, if not monuments, there have been ongoing fruits of our work beyond individual relationships, while always grounded in them. We have been involved variously in developing Aboriginal Catholic communities in Townsville, Darwin, Garden Point, Nguiu, Palm Island, Broome, the Kutjungka Region (Balgo, Malarn, Kururrungku and Yaka Yaka), Alice Springs and Mt Druitt, training five Aboriginal men to become deacons, and developing the Catholic component of Nungalinya College to join with the Anglican and Uniting Churches to form the only theological college in the country in which Aboriginal Catholics have a formal involvement.

We have worked to develop NATSICC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council) to become a truly national network. And Frank Brennan has established himself as a legal authority and advocate on aspects of Indigenous issues such as land rights, legal rights and the Constitution.

Then there are the numerous books and articles that have come out of this work, including those on the lives of Willie Thaiday (which I wrote), Marnie Kennedy (by John Egan), Theresa Illin and Sr Alice Dempsey (both by Brian McCoy), and Brian McCoy’s landmark work on the Aboriginal concept of ‘holding’. As well, there are all the hours spent visiting prisoners, attending courts, giving evidence, writing reference letters, and conducting pastoral work, especially hundreds of funerals.

It has been a great ride — mostly. One day in Alice Springs we set out early to conduct a funeral at Muckatty Station,
near the Queensland border. By the time we arrived, the funeral was over, so we said a prayer and turned around. We got back late after 750km on dirt roads and bull dust. That was not a great ride!

Generally I receive much more than I give. I was especially blessed to learn some of the Arrernte language of Central Australia and experience some of its spirituality, notably the equivalent of Dadirri (from Daly River), which means to be is to contemplate; living is contemplative, surely the highest possible expression of spirituality. I might just be starting to get it!

Much has happened over the last 40 years. Our engagement with Aboriginal people has extended to education thanks to Redfern Jarjum School, the inclusion of Aboriginal boarders at Riverview and Xavier, and immersion and exposure experiences conducted by several of our schools.

Jesuit Social Services engages with Aboriginal communities in a variety of ways. Mauri Heading continues his long involvement in the Darwin diocese, which takes in most of the Northern Territory, in his current role as diocesan facilitator of the Aboriginal apostolate there, while I am involved with Aboriginal peoples in the west of Sydney. Frank Brennan continues to advocate on Indigenous issues as they arise. And the other Jesuits who are no longer directly involved in the ministry maintain contact and relationships with the people with whom they have worked as they are able.

This is not just another ministry among others for our Province. The ‘bookends project’ identifies this engagement as one of the key pillars of our Australian Province’s mission and identity.

The matter of our connection with Indigenous people touches us so delicately that there is a kind of wound in all of us which can issue in anger or guilt, or merely frustration that things don’t change, that the history of atrocities cannot be changed, or that sometimes well intentioned efforts like assimilation or missions result in humiliation and alienation.

On the other hand we can receive the spiritual richness of Dadirri. We can grow to be humble in our consideration of Aboriginal life, and receive practical forgiveness as we encounter Aboriginal people who hold no grudges against us.

In the words attributed to the well-known aboriginal activist Lilla Watson: ‘If you are coming to help me you are wasting your time but if you are interested in your and my liberation let us sit and talk.’

Fr Pat Mullins SJ
Working with refugees is more than a service

The recently announced ‘bookends project’ emphasises the Province’s work firstly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and secondly with refugees and people seeking asylum. The Provincial is hoping that a whole-of-Province approach will help sharpen and enhance our current focus on these concerns. When it comes to the second ‘bookend’, Jesuit Refugee Service Australia will be taking the lead, under the direction of JRS Country Director Carolina Gottardo and newly appointed project officer Anne Nesbit, who commences on 25 October 2017.

’Looking at Australia’s human rights record, I believe that the most critical human rights issues in this country are related to the treatment of people seeking asylum, and the treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’, Gottardo tells Companions. ‘These are now historical issues that are still current and are leaving deep scars in our country. JRS will be mapping the response of the Province to people seeking asylum, and developing a coordinated approach for the Province.’

Gottardo began at JRS in March, following her most recent role as Director of the Latin American Women’s Rights Service in the UK. She brings a swathe of credentials to the role, having previously worked for the UN Development Program, the UK’s Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, the British Institute of Human Rights, the British Red Cross and the Refugee Council of Australia. ‘I really care about the rights of refugees and asylum seekers’, she says, ‘of people who are most excluded. I have dedicated my life to working with the most disadvantaged people.’

The bookend project’s emphasis on working with asylum seekers is certainly timely. Australia, Gottardo points out, is a ‘world leader’ in terms of resettlement of off-shore refugees, but also in terms of its punitive treatment of asylum seekers who arrive on-shore, setting a hardline example that other countries have sought to emulate. It is this group, ‘the most excluded’, that JRS Australia is typically concerned with. Gottardo believes that to serve them JRS needs to do more than simply provide services, but must combine this with policy and advocacy work to address systemic issues.

The importance of this came to the fore in recent months as the Australian government moved towards cutting financial support and accommodation for, and effectively putting at risk of deportation, roughly 400 people, mostly recognised refugees, who had been medically evacuated from offshore detention on Nauru and Manus Island and brought to Australia for treatment. The cuts have started to be implemented with the first 100 people. ‘They are forcing some of the most traumatised and vulnerable people in our community into destitution’, says Gottardo. ‘These are some of the most vulnerable people JRS serves.’

JRS is now prioritising this group in both advocacy and service roles. It has been providing accommodation for some...
of these people, and has stepped up to provide emergency financial assistance, casework support and in-kind support. ‘People are very scared,’ says Gottardo. ‘We have coordinated our efforts with other service providers to provide the most effective response, and are working with other organisations to fundraise to meet essential support needs.’ JRS has launched an appeal specifically to support these efforts.

Another priority for JRS under Gottardo’s stewardship ‘is to continue working in close partnership with our regional and international counterparts. JRS is in 51 countries and we could inform asylum policy not only at national but also regional and global levels.’ In particular, says Gottardo, regional protection and joint work with JRS in the Asia Pacific region are key, ‘as Australia’s policies affect the rest of the region and conversely Australia is affected by refugee movements and policies across the region’.

‘We work closely with JRS Asia Pacific and other JRS country offices in our region including JRS Indonesia, JRS Thailand and JRS Cambodia, and with Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), which is the peak refugee network in the Asia Pacific region, consisting of more than 300 members from 28 countries. We are also active in advocacy related to the development of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration.’

These global partnerships and regional initiatives extend from an organisational level to the individual level. JRS caseworkers went to Bangkok in May to exchange best practice, experiences and wellbeing techniques with other caseworkers from across the region. Gottardo visited JRS offices in Bangkok in May and will be training JRS staff from Thailand, Indonesia, and the JCAP Regional Office on gender and asylum issues in November. She will also be visiting JRS Indonesia to explore joint policy initiatives and projects and attending key regional advocacy meetings.

‘JRS will be working more closely with the Province to continue our work advocating and attempting to enact change on the second bookend, addressing current and future needs in the areas of refugee and asylum-seeking rights and access to services.’

With this global perspective comes a need to recognise the diverse needs of particular groups. Gottardo specifies the ‘multiple discrimination’ experienced by women and girls seeking asylum. ‘We are here to serve all asylum seekers, but we need to respond specifically to groups that are facing enhanced challenges’, she explains. For example, many asylum-seeking women have experienced domestic and gender-based violence prior to coming to Australia, and many are vulnerable to it once they arrive. JRS aims to respond accordingly.

To this end it has obtained funding from Parramatta Council for a pilot project on violence against women and girls (VAWG). ‘The idea is to consult with women seeking asylum and to develop a larger project following this pilot, to address the issue of women seeking asylum who are also affected by VAWG’, says Gottardo. ‘JRS staff will also be trained on VAWG and asylum and the identification of cases and responses. The project has started successfully and we hope to obtain funding next year for a larger project.’

At the same time, on the national, regional and global advocacy fronts, JRS Australia is developing a joint project with the University of New South Wales, Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network and Australian National Council on Refugee Women, which will aim to influence the development, implementation and evaluation of the Global Compact on Refugees and the International and Regional policy framework, to ensure that the protection of asylum-seeking and refugee women and girls is effectively embedded in international law and policy.

Given that such issues are its dedicated focus, JRS is naturally at the forefront of the Province’s work on them. At the same time, it recognises that many other ministries contribute in a range of ways to work for refugees and asylum seekers. Hence JRS is very keen to coordinate the Province’s work on this second bookend.

‘JRS will be working more closely with the Province to continue our work advocating and attempting to enact change on the second bookend, addressing current and future needs in the areas of refugee and asylum-seeking rights and access to services’, says Gottardo. ‘We are committed to our work with the Province to map the work on refugees and people seeking asylum and explore potential collaborative projects and best practice. And we are committed to helping to ensure the two bookend projects are coordinated and are a success.’

Tim Kroenert, with Carolina Gottardo, JRS Australia Country Director

*JRS is asking for financial donations to sponsor an individual or family, to cover emergency payments and accommodations, and donations of food or other material goods. See www.jrs.org.au.australian-government-cut-income-support-people-seeking-asylum-need-help/
The three Australians were among twelve Jesuits ordained at St Ignatius’ Church in Chestnut Hill on 2 September. Three of the others came from Nigeria, while the remaining six were from the United States.

The diaconate belongs to the sacrament of Holy Orders. Deacons proclaim and preach the Gospel, lead people in prayer, preside over baptisms and marriages, and conduct funeral services. For those on the path to priesthood, the diaconate ordination usually takes place several months to a year before priestly ordination.

Speaking in the lead-up to the ordination, Rob Morris said that the initiation into sacramental ministry ‘completes’ his vocation.

‘I don’t mean that to put the priesthood or ordained ministry above other forms of ministering in the Church. But for me, in terms of my own sense of vocation, I get a sense of fulfilment at the thought of being a sacramental minister for people’, he said.

In his homily at the ordination, Cardinal O’Malley spoke of the extraordinary witness of the Jesuits in Japan — recently depicted in the movie *Silence*. He noted that over 50 Jesuits had died as martyrs in Japan.

‘They had been underground for 250 years, braving persecution, baptizing their children and observing the liturgical year without priests’, said Cardinal O’Malley.

‘They passed on the teachings of the church and long quotes from the Bible, all from memory. Their faith and resilience are in part a result of the formation that they received from Jesuit missionaries, many of whom witnessed to that faith by their own martyrdom.’

‘How blessed we are that our God is still calling young men to this way of life, to be companions of Jesus, ready to go to the most difficult posts to set the world on fire, to be God’s instruments.’

The three Australians will be continuing their formation in Boston, and preparing for priestly ordination next year.
Robert Morris receiving the Book of the Gospels from Cardinal O’Malley

Some of the ordinands, with Robert Morris on the left and Alan Wong on the right.

Pictured above (right): Alan Wong

Ordinands prostrating themselves as the congregation invokes the intercession of the Saints on them.

Cardinal Sean O’Malley with the recently ordained deacons in Boston

Pictured above: Nico Lariosa
It’s a year of celebration and change for St Ignatius’ College Adelaide. On the one hand, 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of its senior campus at Athelstone. On the other, at the end of the year it will farewell principal Fr Robert Davoren SJ and welcome its first lay principal, Peter Coffey, who will take the reins from the start of 2018 alongside new rector Fr Peter Hosking SJ.

For Peter Coffey, this is but the latest phase in a long journey with St Ignatius’, where he gained his high school education during the 1970s. After completing a bachelor of economics and a diploma of education at the University of Adelaide, Peter had stints teaching at St Michael’s College, a Lasallian school at Henley Beach, and at a mission school in the Central Province of Papua New Guinea.

Then, in 1995, he returned to St Ignatius’ as religious education coordinator. He played a significant role in the developments which occurred in 1996 under then principal Fr Greg O’Kelly SJ: the transition to a fully co-educational school, the transfer of year seven from the junior campus at Norwood to the senior school, and the introduction of junior primary at Norwood.

‘It’s quite extraordinary what happened’, Peter recalls. ‘The dynamic of the place changed enormously in a very short space of time. Being present and part of that was very exciting.’ Peter would go on to become deputy head of the senior school for 11 years from 2003, before becoming head of the senior school in 2014, bringing a passion for Ignatian spirituality and Jesuit education to these roles.

‘Our identity as a Catholic school in the Ignatian tradition is fundamental to all we do’, he tells Companions. It is embodied, he says, ‘in the language we use, in the expectations we have both for our staff and our students, our view of the world, and the extent to which we are able to live up to all those things. Education is central, but we think we’re involved in something greater than that.

‘Whether I’m talking with staff, parents or students, we talk about formation. It’s about not just the mind but also the heart, the body, the spirit, the will. We often refer to that concept of the “graduate at graduation”; what are we hoping for our students as they leave the school? We want them to be not only intellectually competent but also open to growth, religious, loving, and committed to justice.’

Phrases such as ‘men and women for others’, ‘competence, conscience, compassion, commitment’, ‘finding God in all things’, ‘the glory of God is revealed in man and woman fully alive’, ‘contemplatives in action’, and ‘we make the world a better place because of our presence in the world’ are more than mere slogans for Peter, but flow through to the expectations held for staff and students alike.
‘We try to put Christ at the heart of everything we do’, explains Peter. ‘Love is at the heart of everything we do, and Christ is love. So that should animate everything that happens in this place, whether it’s a lesson in the classroom, a sporting team, a musical performance, or an immersion experience. It’s all drawing us to be the people that God calls us to be.’

In light of this it’s no surprise to learn that of all the school has achieved in the past five decades and more, in Peter’s eyes it is the lives and achievements of past students that most call for celebration. ‘We’ve got lots of people in the law, the arts, education and so on’, he says, but equally important are those who are ‘just being good people in their community’ or in their family life.

‘We could talk about our beautiful grounds and facilities’, Peter says. ‘I think we’ve got a very gentle, welcoming community feel to our school. We’re pretty tolerant, very accepting, and I think our students are largely happy. Those are all things to be celebrated, but ultimately it gets back to the sort of young men and women our old scholars turn out to be.

‘If you have a look at the former students that are out in the world, and the sort of things they’re engaged in, you get a sense that the language we use and the hope we have for our students are being lived out in many different circumstances. They are trying to be large-hearted, generous, compassionate, involved in their community. That’s the greatest achievement we can have.’

As he takes his place in the principal’s chair, Peter is reflecting on the school’s history, and looking to what the years ahead will hold. ‘We’ve had some fantastic leaders, some terribly generous and visionary people in our community who have helped bring the school to this point. Compared to our brother schools like Xavier and Riverview we’re still relatively young. We’re still making our story.’

Peter hopes his contributions to that story will include strengthening the bond between the junior school at Norwood and the senior school at Athelstone ‘to try to ensure that, irrespective of which campus you’re at, what’s going on is a genuine Ignatian education. We’re trying to ensure those links are as strong as they possibly can be, with a sense of one school across two campuses.’

He also contemplates the countercultural role Jesuit schools can continue to play in a world that is ever more ‘complex and secular’. ‘Our world is increasingly driven by personal gain and gratification, and we’re promoting a message of generosity, compassion, forgiveness, love and inclusivity. Life is so much more meaningful when lived fully and generously in the service of others.

‘Our college motto is Deo Gloria, To God the Glory, a contraction of AMDG. I find myself using that all the time. How does what we say, what we do, what we’re engaging in reveal God’s glory? Because that is what Ignatius is on about.’

Tim Kroenert

Pictured above: Principal Peter Coffey
Have you ever felt the inner urge to get out into nature? Has your spiritual director ever suggested that you ‘go out’ and pray with nature? This is an excellent practice for two reasons.

Firstly, following the texts of Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises, we recognise with Ignatius God’s presence in creation and the gifts in creation that are from God.

A prayer exercise in the fourth week of the Spiritual Exercises directs the exercitant to relish God’s presence in all plants and animals and the elements, and God’s labour through them for our good.

We know that Ignatius probably discovered this care of God for him when he was walking across Europe — from Loyola to Manresa, to Barcelona, to Rome, to Jerusalem, through Spain and France and back into Italy, all on foot and without an umbrella!

Secondly, we have a better understanding of human psychology today, which Ignatius intuited well, regarding the value of nature for our wellbeing. The Japanese have identified the benefits of walking among trees, which they call ‘forest bathing’.

Simply being in a garden, a park, or in the wilderness relieves the human mind and body of stress, partly due to the colour green and partly to the gentle stimuli of wind in leaves, bird calls, moving clouds. Unlike many elements of the human-centred world, nothing is demanding us to pay attention, to want or buy something or to be something other than what we are. The environment simply is, and it welcomes us without a word. It allows us to be present.

This is one way that God touches us. God provides food and water for our existence, but more than that, God, immanently present in the earth and its creatures, welcomes us, gives us a space to be, soothes our senses, fills us with wonder.

I am sure that sometimes you have experienced something of God’s presence in nature unsolicited — some sense of God’s care for you, a message of love from God in seeing a butterfly, or enjoying the rain, or seeing some animals at play.

There are also spiritual exercises that can direct our conscious awareness to nature. One of these, for example, suggests that the person walking through some parkland or bush notice the different trees — some small and crowded by others, some broken or fallen, some dead but still giving in some way, some loaded with fruit for all.

We are to listen to each one and sense which of them is calling to us. We are to notice what makes that tree singular, what its story is. We are to spend some time in the tree’s company, touching it, leaning against it, sharing our story with it.

Finally, we give it thanks and farewell. It delights me how many people return amazed at what they have encountered in finding a tree that has something to say to them!

At Campion CIS, Peter Saunders and Helen Lucas have taken the Ignatian insight of finding God in nature and have given it a deliberate structure in the ministry of Being with God in Nature.

While there is an intellectual component on our retreats and walks, particularly with the afternoon or evening sessions on the writings of eminent scholars such as Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin, and the Pope’s encyclical, Laudato Si’, more emphasis is given to the actual experience of God in nature.

Peter, Helen and I take small groups on day walks in some areas of bush not far from the metropolitan centre of Melbourne. In silence and in companionship the men and women of all ages become attentive to the gentle and friendly signals of nature.

They return refreshed and with a greater appreciation for plants, animals, birds and rocks, for the ground and the sky. They rediscover that all these things are their brothers and sisters born of the hands of the one loving God. This challenges their sense of how to live responsibly on the earth.

Next time you are in the bush or in a park, enjoy God’s presence with you!

Fr Iain Radvan SJ

Read more about the Campion CIS nature retreats at www.campion.asn.au/nature/
What in your view is the difference between philosophy and theology?
The main difference is that philosophy begins from reasoning, using the mind to work out answers to questions, what things mean. Theology also uses reason, but it starts with revelation; working out eternal truths, but from the perspective of assuming that those truths have been revealed to us, that God has said something about them, using scriptures mainly, and tradition, and how people have interpreted scriptures down the ages.

How did you come to focus on philosophy as a field?
I was born in a Muslim country, Kuwait. When I was a kid we were among many different religions, particularly Islam, and also Hinduism among some of the Indians and others who were there. So the attraction to asking questions purely, before having some authoritative [faith-based] answers, was strong. Even though my family is of strong Catholic origin, the freedom to investigate with the mind was quite attractive, from my early days.

Why is philosophy an important part of the formation of Jesuits?
It gives you the open-mindedness to tackle a question through reason without the hindrance that come with too-easily presumed faith answers. Also it is thought that it is better that philosophy come before theology, because once we’ve investigated a given question in that particular way, and found the answers from all directions, then we can add theology as a layer that integrates [all of those things].

It’s very good training in debate and argument. That becomes a tool to use, particularly when you’re talking to people who don’t have faith. If you want to bring the message of the Gospel to them, you can’t presume they start from a viewpoint that ‘the Word was God’. You have to start from an open question; say, ‘What is justice?’ or ‘What is love?’ or ‘What is truth?’ Which begins with experience rather than a theological or faith formula.

Faith-based perspectives are increasingly being deemed unacceptable in public debate on many issues. From a philosophical perspective, how would we go about trying to create a different space for discussion where religious perspectives are allowed?
Fr Frank Brennan has been good at that, being a person of faith, but speaking in the public forum on (for example) same sex marriage. Seeing those who have been successful in this, my instinct would be that it is important to bring a respect for the issues that isn’t coloured by any pre-determination from a faith perspective that presents as pre-emptively dismissive of other positions. Being genuinely respectful of other views becomes a way of expecting genuine respect for our views.

Also if our views are taken as coming from a fixed point that has no room for change, or for listening, then it becomes invalid in the public sphere — as we would also dismiss someone else who came from a purely ideological position. An ideology is a bit more closed whereas if faith is alive, it remains open to discovery. An ideology has a predetermined answer to everything. Our being able to stay away from that would become a condition for our being accepted in the debate.

A longer version of this interview is forthcoming on the Province website, Jesuit.org.au
In Fr Richard Leonard’s latest work he puts together in a revised form the heart of his previous three books. As his titles show, he asks all the big, hard questions. He responds to them by taking his conversation partners seriously, acknowledges the truth in their criticisms of church, Catholics and weak arguments, but he also criticises weak and unfair treatment of Catholic life and faith by hostile critics. He deals honestly with the contemporary challenges to faith from scientific discovery, from sexual abuse within the Church and from diminishing parish congregations. He enlivens his book with a wide range of stories, some funny and others very moving.

Fr John Martis follows in the tradition of St Augustine and Continental philosophers who have wrestled with the questions, ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What am I?’ Augustine asked whether the self who knows is identical with the self whom I think I know, and whether we know other people as they are or as they are trimmed to our minds. Fr Martis argues that we are most ourselves and know ourselves when we go out to other people and the world to welcome them on their own terms. In his exploration he engages with the complex arguments of contemporary philosophers, always carefully and respectfully.

When Fr Chris Gleeson SJ wrote the first edition of *A Canopy of Stars* he had recently completed many years as teacher and headmaster in Jesuit schools. It contained many moving, humorous stories of his easy engagement with the schoolboys and their parents in good times and hard. The stories remain fresh in this revised edition, to which he has added four points of the canopy to complement the eight stars that illuminate the many aspects of living faithfully and fully. His style is expansive and leisurely, as befits an understanding of human life as full of messiness. The God he portrays loves unfailingly and enjoys the richness and untidiness of our lives.

Fr Tom O’Hara SJ was a noted retreat giver and spiritual guide. This book, published posthumously and introduced by the funeral homily of his nephew Fr Frank Brennan SJ, offers reflections on many of the Sunday Gospels. They are characterised by attention to the texts of the Gospels, a feeling for the human situations in which we live out Jesus’ teachings and a thorough grounding in the Ignatian tradition and the psychology of the spiritual life. Those who knew Tom will also hear attractive echoes of his lively and lightly declamatory voice.

In tribute to the Jesuits who have lived, worked and died in Australia and New Zealand, Fr David Strong has written this unique, generous and illustrated biographical encyclopaedia. This is an updated second edition, which includes new entries for those Jesuits who have passed away since the publication of the first edition, as well as an appendix of abridged entries of Jesuits who spent time in, and contributed to, the Australian province. *The Australian Dictionary of Jesuit Biography 1848–2015* is a record of almost 500 members. Fr Strong’s distinctive writing captures the spirit and idiosyncrasies of each one.
Australian Jesuits engage in a wide range of work at home and throughout the world. We invite you to join us as a friend and colleague in our service of Faith and Justice.

Your donation or bequest in support of the work of the Australian Jesuits will enable Jesuit ministries to support those in need and build a just and more compassionate society.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title ..........</th>
<th>First name ....................................</th>
<th>Surname ........................................................................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address .................................................................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburb ........................................ Post code .......... Phone ..............................................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email ........................................................................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would like to give $ ____________

I enclose my cheque payable to Australian Jesuit Foundation

OR please debit my Credit Card (Please tick):

- [ ] AMEX
- [ ] Mastercard
- [ ] Visa card

Card no: _______ _______ _______ _______

Expiry date _____/_____ Name on card ................ Signature ................................. Date ....................

I would prefer that my donation be directed to (Please tick):

- [ ] Greatest need
- [ ] Jesuit Refugee Service
- [ ] Jesuit Social Services
- [ ] Spirituality
- [ ] Other .......................... (please specify)

Please complete your contact details above so that a receipt can be posted to you. Donations $2 and over are tax deductible and will be applied to approved purposes.

Please return this page with completed form to: Australian Jesuit Foundation, PO Box 6071, Hawthorn VIC 3122.

Donations can also be made at: [www.jesuit.org.au/donate](http://www.jesuit.org.au/donate)

See the variety of ways to seek God’s will for our modern world at [www.jesuit.org.au](http://www.jesuit.org.au)
A people’s faith enshrined in stone

‘For 150 years since its beginning with the laying of the foundation stone, the church of St Ignatius’, Richmond, Victoria, has been the focal point for the expression of the faith life of the Richmond Catholic community, and an iconic landmark for the wider community.

‘St Ignatius’ stands tall on Richmond Hill, a symbol of a community’s faith and involvement in the neighbourhood. Its beautiful fabric and breathtaking interior offer a wonderful display of architecture and art.

‘It is a welcoming place — a place of prayer, celebration, remembrance, solace, care, comfort, belonging and community.’

A People’s Faith Enshrined in Stone, edited by Patricia O’Halloran and featuring a commemorative essay by Michael McGirr and original photographs by Andrew Esposito, Shayarana Gooneratne and Fr Nguyen Viet Huy Sj, is available now via St Ignatius’ website, www.ignatius.org.au