

Antony Francis Campbell SJ

It is good that we can come together to honour and celebrate the incredibly rich life of Antony Francis Campbell. A staunchly loyal Jesuit who acknowledged the strengths and vulnerabilities of the Society and firmly planted his feet in Jesuit earth.

My deepest sympathy to every Jesuit. In your own unique ways you influenced Tony and shared with him the Ignatian charism and Jesuit life. My deepest sympathy to everyone else who knew Tony, colleagues, students and friends. I am especially mindful of long term friends. You too were part of his vibrant life.

I feel very honoured and privileged Brian, that you asked me to share some reflections about Tony. Thank you. We all come with our own experiences of this man. May our gathering enable us all to know deepening solace, wonder and gratitude.

When I consider your vastness, O God,
what are we that we are so special to you?

Yet we are!

Psalm 8:3–6

Frank Gill (AFC), 2013,

Have Life More Abundantly,

Like the Psalmist, Tony tussled with this too. He marvelled much about the awesomeness, the bigness of God, caring for him, caring for us all. His wondering came up in various ways. He often referred to conversations with his friend Paddy Marr. Did Paddy believe in an unconditionally loving God given all the struggles and heartbreaking situations he had encountered in his missionary work? Paddy's thoughtful pause ended with a definite 'Yes!'

Tony often puzzled over God's unconditional love and how that fitted with the mess we have made of much of our world and the violent injustices.

For a long time he also wanted to know if God really existed. Ironically, there was a period in his life as a Jesuit where he took on an atheist's stance. I remember him telling me that sometime before taking solemn vows he realised, 'Hell, I'm jealously in love with God.' Tony believed. Believed deeply. He just wanted to know.

Antony Francis Campbell once described himself as 'a New Zealander by birth, an Australian Jesuit by choice and a lover of the Older Testament by passion.'

Family

Nancy, an accomplished pianist, loving wife and dedicated mother and Bill, a quiet, resourceful and successful manager of a meat factory were Tony's parents. His brothers John, Henry and Jeremy completed the Campbell household along with Monty, the dog. Tony often described childhood as care-free. He spent much of his free time roaming

along the banks of the river at the edge of their family property in NZ with his best mate Mike. Their eyes keenly peeled for rabbits to take a shot at.

After school he often went to his dad's office and waited to catch a ride home. Once out of town, Tony took over the wheel under the watchful eye of his dad as they chatted about the day.

At home he often watched his mum tending Jeremy who had been diagnosed with autism. Tony often said that part of his faith was shaped by the fact that Jeremy was not cured of autism when he was taken to Lourdes by his mum. When Jeremy became agitated, mother often called on Tony to calm him.

Henry was a great pianist, following in the footsteps of his mother. Visits to see Henry in London, where he had made his home were not easy, though, there were moments of Tony hearing his brother's brilliance as he played Chopin, Shubert and Joplin.

And, in Tony's eyes, John, would probably have been a brilliant lawyer or stockbroker, had he not died in a plane accident while serving in the air force. In 1953 Tony joined the Jesuits. They were the best, he said.

Parkville

After studies at Loyola College, Watsonia, Melbourne University, Lyon-Fouviere, the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and time in London, Israel and Munich and finally doctoral studies at the then Claremont Graduate School in California, Tony settled into Jesuit Theological College, Parkville. He took on a range of roles: administration, teaching, research and writing and supervising doctoral students.

Tony was a formidable creative administrator as dean of studies and later principal. He was instrumental in transforming theological studies and ensuring that the new venture of an ecumenical theologate, United Faculty of Theology, thrived.

Much of Tony's research and writing was done late at night into the early morning. He was an erudite scholar steeped in integrity. He writes in **Ancient Bible: Modern Faith**, *"The passion for integrity and the making of meaning fuels much of my faith and biblical interpretation.*

first proofs, August 4, 2009, **Ancient Bible: Modern Faith**, p. 8

His classes at UFT and no doubt those in Berkeley California were almost indescribable. Certainly not point by point. Tangents, ideas, links with the current religious, social and political positions sprang up everywhere. He was at once, all over the place, inspiring, paradoxical, challenging, engaging and even a tad crazy. He stretched minds, expanded hearts and fired spirits.

For years on Thursday afternoons into the wee hours of Friday morning Mark O'Brien and Tony Campbell plumbed and mulled over texts and wrote several books together. Aided by the best Scotch. Two magnificent men, a Dominican and a Jesuit, who enjoyed one another's company, respected each other's intellect and capacity for rigorous

attention to the text. Beyond their writing and research they met regularly at Papa Gino's in Lygon Street to share a pizza, red wine and plenty of gossip and conversation sorting out the world.

Tony was an intuitive compassionate spiritual director. He could be with you in those tough places of vulnerability, shame and regret and leave you with a feeling of ease and hope.

Sabbaticals

Tony did his doctoral studies at the Claremont Graduate School, California. Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Church, Claremont became his primary base. He made many good friends and was greatly appreciated and valued for his parish involvements.

During this time, he met Feliz Gil-Jimenez, a Felician Sister. Feliz was a dynamic teacher at OLA School for many years and later became the Principal. Her energies extended to OLA Parish where she was involved in many activities. Tony and Feliz became long and lasting friends. Their abiding friendship of 47 years was nourished by letters and phone calls

Sabbaticals were also a concentrated time for further research and writing. Tony's contributions to scholarship are vast. A look at the Jesuit website will leave you in sheer admiration.

Tony's writings on Samuel have been particularly significant. **The Ark Narrative**, Commentaries on both **1 and 2 Samuel**, and it is said, that his work in, **Of Prophets and Kings: A Late Ninth-Century Document** contains the most comprehensive examination so far of Pre-Deuteronomistic composition in Samuel and Kings.

Just days ago, Mark O'Brien gave Tony the good news that his writing on **2 Samuel** for the New Jerome Biblical Commentary was done and dusted.

Tony immersed himself in the texts to the point of saturation. The texts fascinated him, drawing him into ever deepening and expanding levels of possible understanding. I say possible, as Tony had the deepest reverence and respect for the text. Mystery was there! What was its message? Its many and varied messages?

The text was alive for Tony. He was a passionate scholar and delighted in sharing his passion with others. There were many times when I would say, 'Tony, it's OK to take a breath here, a full stop.'

Tony would mull for days on end to find the most appropriate word to convey what he wanted to say. I remember vividly several of our long walks at Warrandyte where he listed umpteen words to capture the title of the work he and Mark were doing on the Deuteronomistic History. Finally, he settled on *Unfolding*. **Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History**.

When Tony reached 75 years he asked the Council of Jesuit Theological College for Emeritus status and retirement from JTC and UFT. He was presented with a testimonial document – part of it said, *'His teaching has combined evocation and provocation in the best sense of those terms. He has mentored research students with scholarly exactitude and personal care. He has published books of the highest scholarly quality, of engaging readability, and of passionate conviction.'*

Campion

The move from Parkville to Campion was not an easy transition for Tony. He missed the academic-student environment. The free ranging conversations, the spacious back garden and glorious trees, the easy access to the UFT Library. And more Lygon Street, where Tony met with dear friends Bill Uren, Peter Steele and Michael Stoney and many other Jesuits and, Carmel Wallis and Sue Boorer, along with many other friends.

A change of study rooms reveals the stark enormity of the transition. Tony's study in Parkville had a ceiling to floor bookcase, numerous filing cabinets and stacks and piles of books and papers on the floor and even the arm chair. His Campion room had a small book case of selected texts and one filing cabinet. What remained the same were the numerous piles of paper scattered around.

Gradually Tony came to enjoy his Campion room. The outlook to the garden, the trees and the sound of the birds were a delight. More, he grew in appreciation of the evening gathering with the community, enjoying a drink in the sitting room before dinner and those spontaneous, one to one conversations.

Faith was a recurring part of our conversations and became even more so during his time at Campion. Tony's faith, always firmly grounded in integrity.

For him, Scripture was there for us to *"Go think!"* Scripture *"invites to thought, rather than imposes it."* For Tony, the diverse and contrary positions in scripture had *"the indispensable role of arousing feeling, firing imagination, and fuelling faith."*

A.F. Campbell and M. A. O'Brien, 2000, **Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History**, 2002, p.7; **The Bible's Message: Go Think!**

As the months and years passed at Campion, Tony slowly started to come to grips with the challenges of being diagnosed with Binswanger's disease, a subcortical vascular dementia. Tony was confronted with his slow and unsteady gait, frequent falls and some short term forgetfulness. Campion Community and the staff supported him lovingly through these changes. Their time, patience and care meant a lot to him. As the symptoms became increasingly more debilitating it was clear that Tony needed more fulltime intensive care. Thus, his eventual move to Nazareth House after several hospital stays and a long spell in St George's Rehab, Kew.

Nazareth House

For the first few months at Nazareth House Tony was in Holy Family Wing. His small single bedroom housed a desk, computer and a handful of books. While there, he still went for coffee to a couple of cafes nearby and a few times managed a meal out. But that time was short.

On a Sunday, after sharing lunch in the dining room with the other residents, Tony was making his way back to his room using the walker. Suddenly his legs stopped walking. That shift necessitated moving Tony to a shared room in St Joseph's Wing where the staff could provide the extra care he needed.

On a few occasions it was possible to take Tony in a wheel chair to the balcony or into the garden. He enjoyed the changing skies, the fresh breeze, trees and birds. These little outings did not last. Sitting in a wheel chair became too hard. Tony was confined to bed.

While constant adjustments had to be made by Tony and the staff, a strong bond of respect, gratitude and affection developed. He knew many of the carers by name; where they originated from – Uganda, India, Philippines, Italy, Ireland, Hungary and Australia; and who had children.

Not long ago, while sitting on Tony's bed I said, 'Tony you are doing a Job. You taught Job many times at UFT, now you are surely living the experience.' He grinned broadly, paused, and replied:

I can't eat and drink.
I can't read and write.
I can't walk and talk.

And in the last days, Tony Campbell, wordsmith par excellence moved into mouthing one word at a time in a bare whisper. And then no words came.

In all this bodily diminishment I have been constantly in awe at Tony's humility and patience. He didn't quite agree about being humble and patient. But he was. And he was gracious and grateful. For months Tony had to be fed, to be constantly repositioned in bed, to be toileted, to be washed. He could do none of these things for himself. The man who was larger than life, who made his presence felt whenever he strode into a room became totally dependent in having his bodily needs met.

Yes, Tony got frustrated and angry, and confusion played havoc with his state of being, till things were sorted out. But, by and large, his attitude was gracious and grateful. His intellect remain fairly astute and keen and his affections loving and loyal.

My friendship with Tony Campbell spans 41 years. He has been teacher, spiritual director, workshop colleague and deeply loving faithful friend. I've known his wacky, quirky, nonsense, infuriating, larrikin, prattle side and his deep compassion. Sometimes, he was an absolute conundrum and utterly impossible. We enjoyed countless picnics, walks by rivers and along bush tracks, movies, hours of listening to music and a tender comfortability being together in silence.

Tony believed God to be unconditionally loving and committed to us. In his final days, I felt his disposition was reflected in his words from **The Whisper of Spirit**, *"The goal of the journey: fuller awareness of the feeling for our restlessness, in search of the rest, that is the source of the existence of the universe."* A.F. Campbell, **The Whisper of Spirit** p. xiii

I believe that you, Antony Francis Campbell, have seen with your own eyes and felt with your own heart the source of the existence of the universe whom you sought with the whole of you. When you died at 2.04am on August 2, it was clear you finally knew. Your face Tony was utterly utterly radiant.

Thank you, my dearest friend Tony, for your immense fearsome integrity. Your profound loving fidelity. L'Chaim!

Nicole Rotaru RSM
6 August 2020