

## Presidential Address

By The Administrator, the Right Reverend J.R. Reid.

Monday 29 March 1993

Addresses by previous Administrators at Election Synods have given some background material to the Synod and addressed the character of Christian leadership, or the qualities which bishops have brought to the Diocese over many years. Today I wish to make some remarks about the Diocese itself which may be helpful as you ponder all the issues which come forward in the election process.

The Diocese of Sydney has a unique ethos. This ethos has been discussed in many ways; for instance by looking at the outstanding leadership of some of its bishops or it has been examined in the light of Moore College, HMS and other great institutions. I do not want to repeat these helpful appraisals. However, I want to say that I think its ethos comes from the merging of 7 significant influences.

First there is the influence of the Holy Scripture. Leaving aside the teaching of the place of Holy Scripture at Moore College and serious debates on Scripture in Synod, I can say that throughout the life of the Diocese there has been a conspicuous emphasis on parishioners reading and obeying the Scripture in their daily lives. For generations through sermons, Sunday School classes and confirmation classes, Anglican Christians have been vigorously encouraged to read the Bible daily and to live by its truth. From the beginning of this century it was not always so elsewhere. The Bible was recommended in many places to be read with caution and its historicity was questioned. By the grace of God, in Sydney men and women had the strong encouragement over many generations to read the Scripture and to tremble at its truth. The widespread daily reading of the Scripture and its exposition in the churches has entered into the soul of this Diocese and is at the centre of its life.

Secondly, there has been the proclamation of need for a spiritual birth. The first chaplains in the colony had this clearly before them and it has been so ever since. Undoubtedly it entered deeply into the preaching of the early Evangelicals through the example of George Whitefield. It was challenged by the Gorham case and the subsequent litigation, but in Sydney a second birth, sacramentally set before us in the washing which is called baptism, but not conveyed by baptism and often quite independent of baptism, has been part of our church ethos. There has never been any embarrassment that we are born again people. When Bishop Charles Venn Pilcher preached the Synod sermon in November 1942, he said that every Synod member should be quite clear in his mind that he had been born again. The preacher was not only expounding the words of Jesus, he was stating what was at the heart of the Sydney ethos.

Thirdly, there has been the influence of the Convention movement. This was firstly by the Keswick convention at Katoomba which began in 1902. It was accompanied by many smaller conventions at parish churches over long weekends and for many years there was an annual convention at Moore College. In time, the CMS Summer School at Katoomba took the place of the Convention presence. These conventions had their failings, but they sought to help people to understand the Scripture and to grasp the practical implications for daily living. There was a balance between exposition, godly behaviour and missionary obedience. Its great strength was that it saved Christianity from being merely cerebral by a strong insistence on a deep personal obedience to Christ and the need to grow in Him. For many generations the convention movement had its influence not only at the conventions themselves, but in determining the subjects and style of approach in Sydney Anglican parish pulpits. The charismatic movement has never taken the place which the convention movement had.

Fourthly, there has been a widespread endorsement of the voluntary society principle. There is not another diocese in Australia which has so committed itself to this principle so that the support of bodies not under the control of the Synod or the bishop has been considered normal. The enthusiastic and generous support of CMS, BCA and SAMS are obvious examples. There have been many other bodies over the years which began as voluntary associations. It is worth noting that this was how the Deaconess Institution came into being. This attitude to voluntary bodies has enabled men and women to dream dreams and to act creatively with responsible independence. This is an important element in the Sydney ethos.

Fifthly, there has been from the earliest days the active and powerful involvement of the laity in church affairs. Not only because the laity outnumber the clergy in the Synod, but because over every generation men and women with outstanding gifts of leadership in the secular world have brought these gifts to the service of the churches. The Synod has only been a symbol of this. In the parish churches, there have been theologically literate, spiritually aware lay people who have exercised influence. When one diocesan bishop many years ago thought he could disregard the laity, he learnt the lesson to his discomfort. This has meant that there has always been a great independence in this Diocese.

Sixthly, there has been, over many generations, an involvement in social justice. It is easy to think of HMS, which is one of the largest welfare organizations in the whole country. But it has not only been HMS. There have been great individuals who stirred the life of the Diocese, like R.B.S. Hammond and F.B. Boyce. The Synod hall was packed to the doors when it was known that Hammond was to speak, for there was none to equal him. Boyce and Hammond packed Martin Place in their day on a temperance platform. I think I can say that in every generation of this Diocese there has been widespread support by ordinary Anglican Christians for a practical, sacrificial and godly involvement in the great justice issues of their day.

Finally, the Diocese has had a strong emphasis on academic enhancement of its clerical ministry. The training of clergy has always been a major responsibility of the Archbishop and a concern of the Synod. Over the years, this increase of academic standards has been maintained. The Diocese of Sydney has clergy representing different traditions, but there has been an even emphasis that clergy should be theologically literate. Never before have we had so many men and women who have major qualifications in theology and whose academic qualifications are commensurate with other professional groups. We have a learned group of clergy.

It is these 7 strands in the context of a loyal acceptance of liturgical worship based on The Book of Common Prayer and Anglican church polity which have helped to shape an ethos which in turn shapes us today. Now let me turn from the past to the present.

We face today great difficulties in the communication of the good news of Christ. Both laity and clergy are discouraged by the hard indifference to what we believe is the best news in the world. However, it is important to see that this is not a problem peculiar to Sydney, nor even to Australia. It is equally true in Great Britain and Europe. The difficulty we face is the strength of secularism, and the secular spirit has been with us in Sydney since the beginning of white settlement. Secularism has entered deeply into our culture and at its heart there are a series of dualisms which polarise human behaviour. There is a divorce between the public and the private spheres of life, between knowledge and belief, between facts and values, between the objective and the subjective. Beliefs, values and religious aspirations are subjective and must be consigned to the private realm and consequently have no abiding value. Now after several hundred years, this dualism has resulted in a destructive alienation. While breathtaking advances have been made in human knowledge, they have been accompanied by deep alienation at personal and social levels. For us in Australia the Gospel has been relegated to the private and subjective realm. It has ceased to be public truth, and the Gospel has only a subjective value. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the attitude of many journalists. They cannot recognise that we view the Gospel of Christ as Truth which stands over all peoples and all conduct. They see it as a subjective value or aspiration and their real interest is in the controversy which arises when people assess the "value" or "aspiration" differently. The press and television promotion of Dr Barbara Thiering's latest book on Christ is a clear example. The fact that scholars Christian, non-Christian, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish all dispute the truth of her facts doesn't worry the journalists, for religion has been relegated to the private and to the subjective realm. It is not a matter of Truth. This is why our task is so hard and so unrewarding. We face massive cultural hindrances to Gospel preaching from several hundreds of years of secular convictions.

However, let us not be too disheartened by these principalities and powers. The recent National Church Life Survey shows that the Protestant churches in Australia grew by 6% since the last Survey, which means that the church growth has kept pace with population growth. However, in the Diocese of Sydney, the growth has been 15% and if certain large congregations had co-operated in the Survey, I am advised that rate could have been higher. It is clear 75% of Australian congregations are attended by less than 100 members. In the Diocese of Sydney, 56% of congregations are attended by less than 100 parishioners. This means that the Diocese has larger congregations than other Anglican dioceses as well as other churches. On the other hand, we have fewer rural areas than most dioceses.

When we turn to our congregations, 41% are under the age of 40 years which is markedly stronger than other churches where there is 34% under the age of 40 years. However, within the Diocese of Sydney there is a significant decline of attenders in the 15-19 years age group since 1986. Here is a priority area for ministry. Our congregations are increasingly attended by university graduates. In the community 6% are graduates; in our congregations it is 26%. It means that our clergy, by and large, are well able to minister to university trained people; it also may mean that we have increasingly lost touch with blue collar workers. 43% of our congregations have experienced growth in attenders over the last 5 years; this is to be contrasted with 39% of the Protestant churches in New South Wales which includes the new and large Pentecostal churches.

What is most important when we look at growth is to try to see what kind of growth has been taking place. 11% of our growth has taken place from newcomers who have never attended church previously or who had lapsed in

their church affiliation and have returned to a worshipping community. This 11% is higher than the 8% which marks the Protestant churches over all. This is another sign of vitality. Moreover, this growth has not been concentrated in one or more congregations. 73% of our congregations have had a growth rate of between 5-20% while 8% have had a growth rate over 20%. Of the 11% who have joined our congregations who had never previously attended any church or who had lapsed in church attendance, 20% of these were in the age of 15-19 years. So here is a significant fact - the very group which has declined in church attendance is the group which also has provided a significant number of newcomers. It is also the group in the Survey which found it most difficult to talk about what their faith means to them.

All this underlines that in the next 10 years we need programmes within parishes which especially seek to win the 15-19 year old. This is the age group which more than any other is seeking spiritual values; this is the age group which will become significantly under represented in our congregations if we let matters drift and this is the age group which needs specialist Christian educational help if they are to be confident enough to articulate their faith in a modern world.

These figures cannot be any basis for complacency. If we compare ourselves to the National Sample and we are in better shape than some other churches, this is not to prove that all is well. But it does help to put some things into perspective. The vigorous and faithful ministries of clergy and lay people have not been without their fruit. God has blessed our endeavours and has given us fresh vision to keep on in what are very difficult days. I have seen in both Asia and Eastern Europe churches which have been packed to the doors with a remarkable growth rate. Most of these congregations have shared the experience of suffering and persecution. There is nothing like difficult and painful times to clarify the goals and the priorities. God has spared us from many afflictions, but do not let us despair of difficulties and indifference. This often is the context of some of the deepest works of grace. The last 25 years have been marked by great apathy to our ministry and influence. Some shrewd observers have noted that in the secular societies the apathy is giving way to hostility. In some places overseas, the hostility has expressed itself in constant criticism and ridicule of the Church in the press. Who can tell what is in store for us if we stand firm to our allegiance to Christ?

Furthermore, there has been increasing involvement in the multicultural society which is such a pronounced feature of modern Australia. Multicultural ministry began in the early days of the Diocese amongst Aborigines and the Chinese. The ministry to the Chinese began early, and in 1872, when the Australian Board of Missions Canon was passed in General Synod, the Board took responsibility for this ministry. The leader of the Chinese ministry was the Reverend Soo Hoo Ten, who came to Australia as a tea merchant. In 1892 Dr Eugene Stock of the English CMS described his work as excellent and noted that there was ministry at St Andrew's Cathedral, St Philip's Church Hill and Christ Church Botany. There were 100 baptised converts and a large number of loosely attached adherents attending services. When the ABM was unable to finance the Chinese ministry, the CMS became responsible in 1896 for the 12,000 Chinese in NSW. The Reverend Soo Hoo Ten who was made deacon in 1884 and priested in 1895 was assisted by catechists in Hay, Bathurst and Tumut; the ministry was established at St Luke's Church at Wexford Street, Sydney.

The Chinese Mission in the Diocese of Sydney suffered from 2 difficulties:

(a) The financial resources were inadequate. Only 60% of the money required was provided each year.

(b) The leadership was complicated by tensions between CMS and ABM. There was a frequent succession of superintendents - 7 of them between 1905 and 1922.

Some of the superintendents were former missionaries who had served in China and had returned to Sydney because of ill health. Some could not speak Chinese. However, the ministry fell into decline and this was blamed on low migration numbers. It was said that local parishes were able to minister to the Chinese living within their borders and the Chinese Anglican Mission in Wexford Street closed. However, we should note that on the opposite street corner in Wexford Street was the Chinese Presbyterian Church. This church did not have a Chinese catechist licensed to an Anglo-Saxon superintendent, but a Chinese minister. They suffered the same vicissitudes through the lack of migration. When Wexford Street was demolished in a slum clearance programme, the Presbyterians relocated finally in Crown Street. They have an unbroken history, and today are one of the largest and most vigorous Presbyterian churches in Australia. The Anglicans did not take risks and did not allow the Chinese ministry to take root in the Sydney soil.

But come to this present time. 20 years ago we had no significant multicultural ministry in the Diocese. Today we have a sizeable multicultural ministry with the formation of local congregations - Aboriginal ministry with Pastor Bill Bird, Maori ministry with the Reverend Jim Tahere, Italian ministry with the Reverend Luciano Ricci and the Reverend Rocco Scarcella, Maltese ministry with the Reverend Ray Galea, Vietnamese ministry with the Reverend Quang Vinh Pham, Chinese ministry with the Reverend Albert Leung, the Reverend Ernest Chau and the Reverend Joseph Thiem, Turkish ministry with the Reverend Erol Ozer, Arabic ministry with Mr Abdallah Bahri, the South Indian ministry with the Reverend Dr Abraham Kuruvilla and the Iranian ministry with the Reverend Khalil Razmara. There are 19 ethnic groups in the congregation at Campsie.

This ministry represents a very impressive development and is enriched by small ethnic groups like Spanish Bible Fellowships which meet under the care of our clergy. In addition, there is the imaginative ministry of many parishes in teaching English to migrant groups. In 1986, 4% of those who attended our Sydney Anglican churches had been born in a non English speaking country. By 1991 this had increased to 7%. This means that in the last 5 years, there is a significant trend, with 60% of the 7% having come into our congregations in the last 5 years. It is noteworthy from the National Church Life Survey that they indicated a very high sense of belonging and being valued in our churches. You should note that these statistics do not include the congregations where they, at this stage, could not have completed a survey form in English. Parishes, HMS, MADCOM, the Inner City Committee and the Synod have spent a significant amount of money on ethnic ministry and it has borne fruit.

All this is a matter of great encouragement. Yet, multiculturalism has within itself the biggest challenge to the faith of our Diocese. It is inevitable that multiculturalism will be increasingly promoted with the catchcry for tolerance and mutual acceptance. A pressure will be brought upon us to modify our conviction that Jesus Christ is unique and the only way to the Father. Without denigrating other religions or belittling their achievement, we must not waver on the uniqueness of the person of Christ and the unique character of his reconciling death. At another time in our long history, we were called to confess Christ as "God of God, Light of Light, and very God of very God, begotten not made" and the Church, having confessed Him as such in the context of ancient controversies, now cannot confess Him as less. There is no doctrine which we hold to be more important, and it will become increasingly unpalatable to our society over the coming years. The Uniqueness of Christ is the doctrine which will test our faithfulness in a multicultural society. Years ago, Bishop J.B. Lightfoot wrote:

*"I believe from my heart that the truth which this (St John's) Gospel more especially enshrines - the truth that Jesus Christ is the very Word Incarnate, the manifestation of the Father to mankind - is the one lesson which duly apprehended will do more than all our feeble efforts to purify and elevate human life here by imparting to it hope, and light, and strength; the one study which alone can fully prepare us for a joyful immortality hereafter."*  
(Biblical Essays p.44)

Our church in Sydney is called by God to its mission in a time of social change. A number of times we have faced economic recession, both during the last century and in this one. We are not strangers to poverty and hardship. But today we are probably facing something new in the current recession. In the context of financial constraint and severe unemployment, we are witnessing the restructuring of our industries. The reasons for this are complex but cautious commentators like Mr Hugh Mackay (a member of one of our congregations) has pointed out that high unemployment, even 3 out of 10 persons, and the restructuring of our industries, will transform "our society values and culture". This means that many unskilled persons may never get a satisfactory long term job. Even more seriously, it has the potential of changing our previously cohesive society into 2 classes. The 2 income families will be in contrast to the families who are permanently poor - men and women who live on benefits from one generation to the next. Poverty is not the new element; the creation of the poor as a separate class is. Our dream of a great egalitarian society in a large southern land is breaking up before our eyes.

What has been happening in a distinct way since the 1970's is the decrease in those who have full time employment and a great increase of those who have part time employment. Those most severely affected are the young people between 15-19 years of age and those between 60-64 years of age. There is also a dramatic increase of those who are sustained by part time employment and partial recipients of social service benefits. Since 1972 there has been a marked increase of children who are maintained by social service benefits. Today most of the new jobs which are created are part time. In addition the Australian scene shows the opportunities for work are not evenly distributed. There is an inequality between men and women in various age groups and between those who have full time and part time. There is an inequality which effects children all their growing years. We Christians have a clear theology of work. It is a divine ordinance, but for many this theological exercise of understanding work is an entirely theoretical exercise. We cannot close our eyes to these justice issues when we affirm work is a divine ordinance and see the inequalities in opportunity to obtain work. We have no ideological scheme to offer, but we have a contribution to make on the nature of Christian community and right relationships.

Professor Stanley Hauerwas wrote:

*"As Christians we will speak more truthfully to our society and be of greater service by refusing to continue the illusion that the larger social order knows what it is talking about when it calls for justice."*

It is not easy for us to both participate in our society and call for justice as it affects both ourselves and our society. We, as Christian men and women, have to face the reality of injustice and to ask what is our mission in this context. Our own ethos will guide us here. The social and economic dislocation after the gold rushes saw the activity of clergy and lay people under the leadership of Bishop Barker respond with vigorous proclamation of the Gospel and sacrificial involvement with those who were hurting. Later the call for the introduction of old age pensions was first made in this very Synod by the Rector of St Paul's, Redfern and was pressed year after year until it was taken up in the political arena. HMS has had a major role as one of the largest welfare bodies in the country.

Ultimately our ethos is determined by the character and activities of our God. The Scripture affirms -

*"He upholds the cause of the oppressed  
and gives food to the hungry  
The Lord sets prisoners free,  
the Lord gives sight to the blind,  
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down,  
the Lord loves the righteous.  
The Lord watches over the alien  
and sustains the fatherless and the widow." (Ps.146:7-9)*

It is because God acts in this way that we must too.

Quite frequently our Diocese is described in the secular press as being the wealthiest in the country. It has been so described in connection with this meeting of the Synod. What then is the response of the wealthy church of Sydney to our emerging social and economic reality?

Our greatest material assets are churches, halls, rectories, schools and hospitals. They are used for the purposes for which they were established and are not assets which can be randomly sold and given to noble purposes which are outside the trusts which govern them. Some of our institutions, like Moore Theological College, have received legacies with very clear trusts imposed on the income from these benefactions. The Diocesan Endowment, through the Glebe Board, yearly makes money available to the Synod for distribution for good causes which include evangelistic, pastoral and relief activities.

But when it is all explained, the question still persists - what does it mean for a church with considerable assets, a capacity to raise funds and possessing great assets in skilled and dedicated men and women, to fulfil its mission in the next 25 years? Whatever the answers will be to this question, it should be clear that the option to disengage from the community is no option at all. Otherwise, our integrity to proclaim the Gospel will begin to disappear. Our theological reflection and our growth in the faith must result in some action. The example of Christ is always before us - intimately identified with all classes of people and their problems and yet never compromising his great proclamation of a heavenly Kingdom.

How then do we respond? That is the question. It is a question which must be answered if we have a will to get profoundly involved with the people in our Sydney region. Perhaps our greatest contribution will be to create awareness and sensitivity. We need to reaffirm the mission of church men and women being active in community affairs. Avenues for communicating the Gospel and God's purposes are found when men and women grasp the opportunities provided in their own involvement in the issues of everyday life.

Now I turn to another of the great difficulties in the Diocese of Sydney. I refer to the problems which surround the ordination of women to the priesthood. The canon was passed in November 1992 at General Synod, and many dioceses have acted on it.

First of all, this creates the potential for great difficulty within the Diocese. We have about two-thirds of the Synod opposed to the ordination of women to the priesthood and it is probable that in our churches we are divided about evenly on the matter. Most of those who oppose it do so on Biblical grounds. Most of those who support it do so on Biblical grounds. We have a potentially disastrous situation and yet this situation can also be very creative if we determine not to break fellowship with each other. The Synod would be wise in due course to resolve that any request to the Archbishop to ordain women to the priesthood should have a 75% support in both the house of laity and the house of clergy. We must reject the proposal that to change a law you must first of all break it. Lawlessness will bring endless confusion.

Secondly, the ordination of women to the priesthood creates a new set of tensions between Sydney and most of the Australian Anglican Church. This is a situation we have not faced before, and it will need wisdom to know how to act in the future. It is not surprising that some have suggested that we loosen our ties with the rest of the Anglican Church. It is not the first time that a proposal has been made that Sydney should go it alone. In the Synod in 1932, Canon Langford Smith put this very proposal as a distinct possibility:

*"We could pursue our way much the same as we are doing now. We would still be the Church of England in New South Wales ..... We would not have the privilege of entertaining members of General Synod every five years as at present, but in most other respects, the work of the Diocese would proceed on its own peaceful way."*

This has a strangely modern sound about it.

Over a long period of time, as the Constitution of the Australian Church was being hammered out, Sydney churchmen believed that membership in a national church, with their own diocesan freedoms guaranteed, would give Sydney a greater influence than it would have as a separate Anglican Church. Moreover, they believed that they had a responsibility to evangelical parishes who were small minorities throughout the country and to CMS, whose missionaries were working overseas. It is clear that the Sydney Synod decided to support the Constitution

at a time when both liberalism and ritualism were more pronounced and vocal than probably they are now. Theological liberalism and ritualism are not new factors in the present situation.

It is helpful to see whether Sydney's hopes for influence in the national church have had any reality. Let me take just one possible indicator which may be a help as you remember that this Constitution came into effect in 1962.

In the 1950's, about 3 and sometimes 4 Moore College graduates were ordained each year in other dioceses within Australia. In the 1960's this number increased to 8 per year. For instance, in the 1950's the dioceses which took Moore College men were Canberra/Goulburn, Armidale, Gippsland, Tasmania, Grafton and Adelaide. In the 1960's it included Bendigo, Bathurst, Brisbane, Melbourne, Newcastle and Perth. For instance, in 1966 2 were ordained in Brisbane, 1 in Armidale, 2 in Grafton, 1 in Tasmania, 1 in Newcastle, 2 in Canberra/Goulburn. In 1969 it included again Perth and Brisbane, among others. In 1974, 2 went to Brisbane, 1 to Perth, 1 to Melbourne and 2 to Armidale. That is, Moore College graduates for other dioceses more or less doubled. Dioceses which had never admitted Moore College graduates opened their doors for the first time. In addition I estimate over 60 clergy, Moore College graduates ordained in Sydney for Sydney, have been licensed in other Australian dioceses to a diocesan appointment (this number does not include those who have been service chaplains or have been serving with a voluntary society) since the Constitution was accepted.

At the same time, the CMS has become established in some dioceses since 1962 - like Canberra, Grafton, Newcastle. Branches of EFAC have now been formed in dioceses outside Melbourne and Sydney. Moreover, clergy from Sydney are regularly and frequently invited to dioceses outside Sydney to address clergy schools and conferences in a way which was never known before. However, the ordination of women to the priesthood has brought strains on our mutual relationships. The growing unity which marked the years after the acceptance of the AAPB has suffered stress - not only from Sydney to the other dioceses, but there are signs in some elections which have concerned the national church that there is a prejudice against Sydney from other dioceses.

All this makes the future difficult, and it will take much wisdom if we are to interact significantly and for the Diocese to exercise its influence appropriately. On 4 January 1976, the Most Reverend Frank Woods, formerly Archbishop of Melbourne and Primate, wrote in a letter that so much had been done by the Diocese of Sydney to heal divisions and to promote unity. I have this letter in my possession and, shortly before his death, Archbishop Woods gave me permission to quote it. The Archbishop said that the response of Sydney to the new Prayer Book, grants made to the endowments of some country dioceses and the influence of its Archbishop visiting many dioceses, had done more for Anglican unity than any other section of the Church. Frankly, I want to see Sydney regain its sphere of influence and not to retreat into a ghetto. If we look back, it is possible to see how many in 1892 in England were despairing of ritualism and theological liberalism in the Church of England. For many, it seemed the attractive option to leave the Church of England. This led Bishop J.C. Ryle to say after the Lincoln judgment:

*"I charge my brethren not to listen for a moment to those who counsel secession. I have no sympathy with the rash and impatient men who recommend such a step. So long as the Articles and Prayer Book are not altered, we occupy an impregnable position. We have an open Bible and our pulpits are free."*

I now commend you to the guidance of God. May He show us His way.