



This edition features an article by **Stefan Gigacz**, a canon lawyer and former researcher at the International YCW. His research into YCW history reveals a greater nexus between lay movements and Catholic social thinking than had previously been appreciated. Recognising the lay movements' heritage and significance is an important first step towards its renewal for the 21st century in which groups like ACMICA must play an important part.

You will get to hear Stefan next month on Thursday, 10 June at ACU North Sydney, when he joins a panel of speakers addressing the question of how Christians can do better to contribute to the moral life of our nation and world. Other speakers will include **Frank Brennan SJ**, lawyer, human rights advocate and prolific author. Fr Frank will commence a 1-year research fellowship at Boston College in September, which makes this event one of the few remaining chances to hear him live in Sydney. The 3rd speaker is **Sandie Cornish**, the former Executive Secretary at the Bishops' social justice commission. This is one of Sandie's first public appearances in Australia after her return from a post in Hong Kong.

Three great reasons why you should not miss our event on 10 June! Mark the date in your diaries now!

**FREE SEMINAR –
A Catholic Social Conscience: Can it be
Reclaimed in our Time?**

Thur, 10 June, 7-9pm

Venue: Ryan Auditorium, Australian Catholic University, 40 Edward Street, North Sydney

Speaker panel:

- Frank Brennan SJ, Jesuit and human rights advocate
- Sandie Cornish, Co-author, *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*
- Stefan Gigacz, Canon lawyer and lay activist

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Reflection

Making the Gospel ideals real in our lives

A Catholic Social Conscience: Can it be Reclaimed in our Time?

The Synod of Bishops in 1971 noted that "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive element of the preaching of the Gospel". How do we make these Gospel ideals real in our lives, where do we find the inspiration, and what steps do we need in contributing towards a just and democratic world?

We live in a time when there is ambiguity in moral thinking and action privately and publicly in the face of the tensions wrought through fundamentalism in a whole range of ideologies. In an era of terrorism and national insecurity, we are hearing a diversity of opinions on how we ought to respond to these challenges. Many of these policies, such as the indefinite detention of unvisaed asylum

seekers and the war in Iraq have left many people including Catholics divided and morally confused.

How can we sort through the diversity of opinions on contemporary questions and make best use of the rich Catholic thinking on social issues to contribute to the high ideal of the 1971 Bishops Synod – transforming the world?

Church documents often begin with scriptural and theological reflection but this is not the way most people come to the big questions of life. We are mostly moved by what we see and hear, either in our own lives or by what the media thrust before us.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes that “the Church’s social teaching proposes principles for reflection; it provides criteria for judgement; it gives guidance for action”. This is the Christian methodology, developed by the late Belgium Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, which reminds us that if we are to move forward we have first to **see**, to discover the real facts; then to **judge**, and this is where the Gospel and the social teachings can help; and then to **act** in whatever way we can.

Aware of the need to stimulate Catholic social thoughts and action, the free seminar on June 10th will help us assess how we as Christians can do better to contribute to the moral life of our nation and world.

The seminar to be held at **7pm on Thursday 10 June at the Ryan Auditorium, Australian Catholic University, North Sydney** will feature three distinguished Australian Catholic speakers.

Fr. Frank Brennan, a well-known Jesuit and social justice advocate, will look at how we might engage with the issues at a faith level. Ms. Sandie Cornish, past National Executive Officer of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) for the Australian Catholic Bishops and recently returned from two years working in Hong Kong in a Social Justice centre, will bring a cross-cultural and gender perspective on acting for justice. Mr. Stefan Gigacz, a canon lawyer with extensive experience in the International Young Christian Workers movement will explore the broader picture of how to rekindle the spirit of social action.

Analysis

Healing the Fractured Memory of the Lay Movements

Catholic social teaching owes much to the pioneering work of lay movements, argues Stefan Gigacz*

For a renewal of the lay movements

It is often said that Catholic social teaching is the Church’s best kept secret. If so, then a greater hidden asset would be the history of Catholic lay movements’ contributions toward this tradition. This is the real story of how Catholic social teaching was fashioned.

Similar to judge-made common law, Catholic social teaching comprises the accumulated wisdom of papal and episcopal teaching on many of the major social issues of the modern world. The history of lay movements, by contrast, is the story of how Catholic lay people confronted those issues in the conditions of every day life, thereby providing the framework for the development of social teaching.

It is well known that many of the classical lay movements such as the Young Christian Workers (YCW), Young Christian Students (YCS), and also Pax Romana went into decline after Vatican II; a decline from which many have not yet fully re-emerged. This was a paradoxical outcome of a Council to which the lay movements had contributed enormously and which highlighted the Church’s identity as the people of God and affirmed the role of lay people in transforming the world.

What was behind this decline? In the period following the Council, the world went through the upheavals of the 1960s and 70s – the end of colonialism, the impacts of the Cold War conflicts, even the invention of the contraceptive pill. These events created a cultural rupture – “the generation gap” – in the Church and in society in general which impacted negatively on the Catholic lay

movements, particularly the youth movements.

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The rupture of the 1960s and 70s was but the latest in a series of generational breaks which collectively resulted in the lay apostolate movements losing touch with their own historical memory over the last century or more. This left the post-Vatican II generations of the lay movements with a stunted appreciation of their own roots and traditions hence weakening them in their own identity.

In seeking to renew the lay movements for the 21st century, I have therefore become convinced that a key task will be to reconnect with their history. Here, I would like to use the example of my own research journey into the origins of the YCW movement to illustrate this challenge.

An unhealed wound

Having finished working for the International YCW in Brussels, I had enrolled to study canon law in Paris. My plan was to write a paper investigating the canonical basis of the YCW and the lay movements in the Church. I also wanted to look into the reasons for the long series of conflicts between the YCW and the Church. At least that was my plan until my adviser, Prof. Jean-Paul Durand, suggested that I should set aside the recent past and start by looking at the origins of the YCW. Great advice!

I already knew that the late Belgium Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, a key Vatican II figure, had often insisted that YCW history began not with the “official” foundation in 1925 but with the early efforts at Laeken in 1912 “and even earlier” while he was still teaching or even studying. This intrigued me and I wondered how to begin, especially since I was still in

France and all the YCW documents were in Belgium.

Some time later while browsing in a Catholic bookshop I noticed a biography of Marc Sangnier, the founder of the Sillon or Furrow movement of the early 20th century before its “condemnation” by the Church. I picked up the book in a half-interested way and started flicking through the preface.

“The Marc Sangnier whom I knew much later”, wrote the author Madeleine Barthélemy-Madaule “was secretly the man of the lightning-struck Sillon, scarred with an unhealed wound”. That sentence was enough to get my attention. By the time I had reached home on the Paris Metro with my new book, I found myself thunderstruck. It seemed that I had stumbled upon a YCW-type movement, the Sillon, that incredibly had pre-existed Cardijn’s YCW by 20 years.

In the following weeks, I delved into the libraries of the Catholic Institute, digging up everything I could find about the Sillon and Marc Sangnier. The more I looked, the more certain I was that the Sillon must have been the main source of the YCW. How could it be then that Cardijn’s biographers’ made only a passing reference to the Sillon? Moreover, what did Cardijn himself have to say, if anything, about the Sillon?

Discovering a secret history

The answers had to be in Cardijn’s and the YCW archives in Belgium. Sure enough, when I returned to Belgium some months later, I found Cardijn’s own copies of many of the original Sillon publications preserved in his personal library at the Catholic University of Louvain la Neuve.

His biographer, Marguerite Fiévez who was then still living also alerted me to an original document of Cardijn welcoming Marc Sangnier to Brussels in 1921. Strangely, this document was not listed in the catalogue of Cardijn’s archives. It turned out to be one of the few handwritten documents that he had kept from that early period of his life, which also seemed to indicate something of the value Cardijn placed on the contents.

By now, it seemed to me that I had discovered the key to my research. Reading all the old

Sillon texts cast a new light on much of what Cardijn had later written and done. For one thing, it was now clear that what Cardijn referred to as the “see-judge-act” methodology was a kind of short hand way of referring to methods of democratic education pioneered by the Sillon in their campaign to promote study circles. Even Cardijn’s notion of forming elite leaders drawn from the worker masses was based on the methods of the Sillon.

Democracy at Vatican II: Breaking the code

As I researched further it became clear that Cardijn continued throughout his life to use certain key phrases that were touchwords, or even codewords, for the Sillon. The most important example of this is found in the Sillon’s definition of democracy as the “system of social organisation that maximises the civic consciousness and responsibility of each person”. The code words “conscious and responsible” thus became a trademark of the Sillon in much the same way as “contemplation in action” has become a trademark of the Jesuits.

From the time of his 1921 welcome to Marc Sangnier, Cardijn never ceased to refer back to this definition. The words “conscious and responsible” appear together in different ways in all Cardijn’s major keynotes including at the First International Congress of the Lay Apostolate at Rome in 1951 and most importantly in his three speeches to Vatican II.

They can even be found in Pope John XXIII’s 1961 encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, which Cardijn is reputed to have suggested to Pope John and for which he proposed an outline of points to be addressed by the encyclical. The same emphasis on “responsibility”, “conscience” and “consciousness” (in French, the term “conscience” means both) is also found in *Pacem in Terris* in 1963.

I found that the same terms also appeared in several of the documents adopted at the final session of Vatican II in 1965 in which Cardijn participated as a Council father. These documents included *Gaudium et Spes* (Church in the Modern World), *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Lay Apostolate), *Ad Gentes* (Missionary Activity) and *Dignitatis Humanae*

(Religious Freedom). The opening lines of the latter document read as follows:

“ As I researched further it became clear that Cardinal Cardijn continued throughout his life to use certain key phrases that were touchwords, or even codewords, for the Sillon. ”

“A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man [sic], and the demand is increasingly made that men [sic] should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty...”

Significantly, *Dignitatis Humanae* was one of the documents of which Cardijn’s friend and ally, Mgr (later Cardinal) Pietro Pavan, had been a principal drafter. Pavan had also been the main drafter of both *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*.

In effect, Cardijn and Pavan had succeeded in embedding the Sillon definition of democracy at the heart of several key Vatican II concepts such as religious freedom, the role of lay people, the mission of the Church in the modern world and even the missionary activity of the Church. It was an incredible achievement – especially given the fact that 50 years earlier Pope Pius X had explicitly condemned the Sillon’s notion of democracy in his letter to the French bishops that resulted in its closure. It’s no surprise that since the Council many traditionalists have continued to attack these very phrases for being heretical.

A struggle at the margins of the Church

As I continued my research, it became clear that the Sillon and the YCW were born out of a tradition that had existed on the margins of the Church since the days of the radical French priest, Félicité de Lamennais, in the early part of the 19th century. Lamennais had already been excommunicated for his insistence on freedom of conscience in the 1830s.

Even Frédéric Ozanam, now beatified, and another key inspiration of the Sillon-YCW tradition was faced with attempts to excommunicate him after he supported the revolutionary republican French government in 1848. Similarly, with Alphonse Gratry, another key influence on Sangnier and Cardijn, who found himself marginalised after he had opposed the definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council. Finally there was Marc Sangnier's unhealed wound at the closure of the Sillon.

“ Restoring the memory of lay movements can help heal the multiple wounds and ruptures that have scarred its history and concealed its significance in the eyes of many Catholics. ”

All this had a great impact on the way Cardijn and others wrote and spoke. In the climate of the Church at the time, he had to be extremely cautious – just to avoid the fate of Lamennais and/or the Sillon. For example, returning to Brussels following a London meeting with the trade unionist Ben Tillett in 1911, Cardijn spoke often of the magnificent educational programs of Tillett's General Workers Union. What he never mentioned was that Tillett was a Christian socialist. This fact certainly explained why Cardijn sought him out. It was equally clear that it was not possible for Cardijn as a priest to mention Tillett's socialism back home in Belgium!

Healing the wounds

The history and significance of lay movements has not been properly understood or appreciated. To penetrate the secret history behind Catholic social teaching requires cracking the code that many of the principal actors were forced to employ. This code was understood by many of those who lived the struggles of the time. However, with the passing of each generation, the chain of memory gradually weakened and was eventually broken. Today, for example, the only way of recognising the code words “conscious and responsible” in the Vatican II documents is to go back to the story of the Sillon itself.

I am convinced that there are many other such aspects of the history of the lay movements that are yet to be illuminated, and not just in Europe. Here, I would mention the example of the progressive Catholics in Vietnam who supported and participated in the struggle for independence from France – despite the opposition of the French bishops in Vietnam at the time.

An intellectual movement like Pax Romana has a vital role and responsibility to help us become more conscious of these stories which are part of our heritage and identity. In the short term, this means encouraging students to take up the study of these issues, perhaps organising study circles and seminars. In the longer term, it might require establishing centres of documentation and learning which will gather and mobilise the necessary resources as well as developing links with centres in other continents.

Restoring the memory of lay movements can help heal the multiple wounds and ruptures that have scarred its history and concealed its significance in the eyes of many Catholics. It is a big task but a necessary one to renew our movements for the 21st century.

** Stefan Gigacz has worked for the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW) and the French development NGO, CCFD (Catholique Comité contre la Faim et pour le Développement). He is now a Malaysian-based writer and translator. He will be speaking at a free seminar on June 10, in company with Frank Brennan SJ and Sandie Cornish.*

State of the Movement

International News

A Call to Members – Contributions to ICMICA World Assembly

ACMICA in Pax Romana-ICMICA Assembly, Poland, July 2004

Members may have noted in the last news that the 29th ICMICA World Assembly will take

place in Warsaw and Krakow, 24 - 30 July, 2004. The theme will be **“Poverty and Injustice - Challenges to Ethics and Cultures: Christian Professionals' Responsibilities”**. Bill Neville and Peter Maher will represent Australia at this meeting and we would like to hear comments from members that may assist in our contributing to the assembly. We are not asked to offer a formal report – so we will be able to use insights, no matter how small, to inform any interventions we might wish to make about the Australian scene and the movement in Australia at the formal and informal level. Questions that may serve as a guide for contributions are:

- What are some ethical and cultural challenges facing Australia today?
- What is a Catholic response to the political, social and economic landscape of Australia's domestic and international policies and practice? Of specific importance here are our treatment of uninvited refugees and asylum seekers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- How do graduates engage with these issues? Please give concrete examples and/or theoretical insights.
- What are some possibilities for ACMICA in addressing poverty and injustice?
- How do we relate to the Asia Pacific region?

Comments on the role of Catholic graduates in the Church and the world.

Please send comments, no matter how small to Peter: pmaher@acmica.org

Local News

Jenni Whelan's new appointment in ACMICA

Executive member Jenni Whelan has resigned from the committee having moved to Lismore and taken on new work commitments. However, she will remain an integral part of the executive through her new appointment as consultant and regional contact person for Northern NSW and Queensland. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution that Jenni has generously offered to our

movement, despite her very hectic work and family commitments.

Members and supporters in Queensland or Northern NSW interested in contacting Jenni can email at her jwhelan@acmica.org.

Action and Events

3rd International Interfaith Conference

Theme: “What is Our Future Together: Muslims Christians and Jews”

Are today's Muslims, Christians and Jews ready for tomorrow's world?

Can we build a common future in a multifaith society? Can we overcome the barriers to harmony that might exist in the way we understand our respective faiths?

Will religion have a place in “the public space” of a secular society? These are some of the thought provoking questions this conference will explore building on the experience of previous years' conferences.

Day 1: Wednesday 26th of May “The Place of Religion in the Public Space”

Abraham Lecture will be given by:

Dr Mustafa Cerić
Grand Mufti of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Recipient of Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize under the auspices of UNESCO

Respondent:
Rev Prof James Haire
Director, the Australian Centre for Spirituality and Culture, Former President-Uniting Church

Day-2 Sunday 30th of May Workshops.

For more detail and to reserve your place please call the Conference Hotline on 9702 0789 or send an e-mail to info@affinity.org.au

A Catholic Social Conscience

Can it be Reclaimed in Our Time?

Thur, 10 June, 7-9pm

*Ryan Auditorium, Australian Catholic University
40 Edward Street, North Sydney*

All welcome. Entry by donation.

Catholics comprise a significant portion of Australia's population but are they meeting their potential when it comes to engaging with today's overarching social issues? How do we start reclaiming our Catholic sense of right and wrong on social issues?

Speaker panel:

Frank Brennan SJ

Jesuit and human rights advocate

Sandie Cornish

*Co-author, *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus**

Stefan Gigacz

Canon lawyer and lay activist



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