

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn
LAUNCH

Wrestling with the Church Hierarchy: Engaging with the Plenary Council and Beyond

By John Warhurst

A Note of Thanks from all of us at Garratt Publishing, and on behalf of many Catholics to John
David Hughan, Garratt Publishing

27 May 2021

It was 29 October 2020 when John contacted us at Garratt Publishing to 'run past an idea I have for a short book ... about Church renewal and wrestling with the hierarchy'.

I mention the date, because in publishing terms it was not that long ago. To have the book now available in May is yet great testament to John's commitment to the bettering of the Australian Church and for its members.

On the surface, the idea was simply publishing a collection of John's previously published articles. Yet interspersed with these is new and updated material that John presents again offering his unique perspective as an insider/outside of the Catholic Church. Authoring any book is quite an arduous, and sometimes thankless task, and I thank John for his continue commitment to act as an agent for change.

Author John Warhurst wears many hats — including his current post as Emeritus Professor of Political Science at ANU in Canberra — and has received many awards throughout his long and distinguished career. He has served the Catholic Church for almost 25 years on various national councils and boards. He has had the chance to witness the role of the Church in mainstream politics as well as internal Church politics, and is a core member of the Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn (CCCCG). Outside of academia, John is perhaps best known for his long-running political column in the *Canberra Times* and his now monthly articles in *Eureka Street* magazine.

Wrestling with the Church Hierarchy is, in John's words, 'a personal account of attempting to come to grips with the power structure of the Church at a time of necessary reform of those structures...' The book is a collection of articles published between 2017 and 2020, bookended between the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2012-2016)* and the *Plenary Council (2018-2021)*. Inside you will find articles that are a mixture of observation, reflection and calls to action. John asks the reader to get informed and get involved. As he observes, 'Reformers are not the enemy of the Church. They are its future.'

As a writer, academic, and advocate for Church renewal, John Warhurst has brought his own voice to the debate over the future direction of the Catholic Church. It seems fitting, then, that we launch John's book just months out from the first Assembly of the Plenary Council.

It is against the backdrop of the Plenary that John invites us to consider democratic values such as 'inclusiveness, representation and transparency' when discussing Church renewal. He asks us to consider the lack of central authority and cohesion in the collection of 29 territorial diocese which we loosely call the Australian Catholic Church. He is aware that many Church reformers are exhausted by their past efforts to have the Church embrace Vatican II. That many, including most younger people, have left and made their lives outside the Church. Change is never comfortable. The task is enormous.

Advocacy and lobbying have become a primary activity for many Catholics seeking renewal and is a significant aspect of this book. John's hope is that the Church in Australia is on its way to becoming more democratic and egalitarian, reflecting the nation we live in today.

Wrestling with the Church Hierarchy is a timely book that offers lively debate, food for thought, and positive solutions moving forward for the future of the Catholic Church in Australia.

John's new work builds on Garratt Publishing proud tradition in publishing works that support, and challenge, the Australian Catholic Church and Australian society. John's book continues our proud tradition of bringing progressive and informed voices to the fore. We thank him so much for choosing Garratt as his preferred publisher

Apart from all that, John's book is just a darn good read. And he is a true pleasure to work with.

As a Victorian, I cannot be here in person this evening. As a Victorian you probably do not want me here in person! But please know I and the Garratt Team are with you in spirit.

Finally, if I may, I would also like to publicly acknowledge the work of the Garratt Publishing Team, and in particular, Karen Tayluer, our Publishing Director, for her dedication to the book.

Please join me in wishing John, and the book, every success.

David Hughan
Garratt Publishing
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