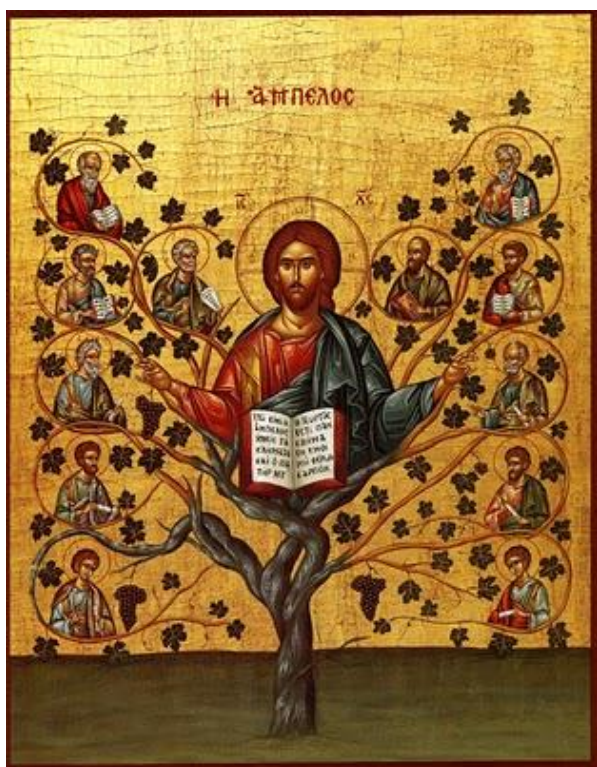
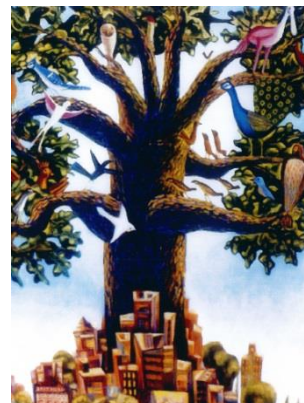


Reflection on NCCA and Australia's moment:

At our NCCA devotions this week we reflected on Jesus parable of the mustard seed. We pondered the wonderful tree of life which is the Universal Church, growing from the tiny seed of Jesus and a few disciples in Galilee. (Mt.13.31)

There is an evocative picture at the entrance to the World Council of Church's, in Bossey, near Geneva, which captures our vivid and wonderful diversity, across every generation and culture. Saints of every land. "I am the vine, you are the branches"



What does this parable and that image say to our NCCA at this point in time?

Now placed in this Interim role as General Secretary, my spontaneous response is one of gratitude for what this little particular mustard seed has become:

The earlier achievements of an Australia Council of Churches which overcame earlier rivalries and misunderstandings; then it's evolution into our NCCA.

Looking at us now, more from the inside, one better appreciates this achievement.

Relatedly, one better appreciates the missional wisdom which led our founders to look out from the institutional life of the

member churches to see how we can better contribute to the common good together, including through Act for Peace and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC).

This seventh floor of NCCA in Kent Sydney is a daily Icon of our vital purpose, especially as we also include the NSW Ecumenical Council.

Fr Shenouda and I now meet and pray together within Jesus matter of fact word to us, 'Apart from me, you can do nothing.'" (John15:5)

Our prayers encompass our councils of churches around the nation and all of you who are receiving this Newsletter.

Australian context

In our prayers today, Fr Shenouda and I were drawn to that question echoing from the book of Revelation, as we asked “what is the Spirit saying to the Church?” (Revelation: 2:29 “let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Churches”)

As far as our Australia goes we know we are blessed with many advantages which mean we should be a great civilization and a sign of hope to others, at this time in global history.

We have economic strengths; political stability; a range of healthy intermediary organisations between the individual and the State to balance political power (including the Churches, Universities, Trade Unions, other faith communities).

We have a separation of powers between the legal and political to further protect against power becoming absolute; we have a relatively free media and access to a range of opinion in the digital age.

We have a flourishing arts community, as one soon appreciates here in Sydney with a visit to the Archibald and to the White Rabbit Gallery collection of contemporary Chinese art. [This example below remind us of the artists crucial role in helping us see clearly!]



Compliments of White Rabbit Gallery – Photo taken by +Philip Huggins

With all this, we in Australia have a record of multicultural harmony, having settled many people including from war-torn places.

We are a nation which encompasses the human family in all our glorious and interesting diversity, all of us made in the divine image.

Of course there are issues.

But what seems most lacking is a high vision of our potential to be a great civilization and a sign of hope as to how the human family can more than just co-exist but authentically flourish in the abundance of life which is God's purpose in our Creation. (John 10:10)

Just to use this 'religious language' is already to convey what it is that Spirit may be saying to churches – our NCCA:

That we are to embody and articulate in our words, images and action this visionary purpose both to ourselves and for our nation.

Accordingly, as we look into this period ahead, my encouragement is to live with the highest vision of what is possible for the NCCA and all encompassed in our togetherness!

We are called to be a radiant, vital, passionate sign of hope. St Atanasius, affirmed: we are an “As Easter people of an alleluia is our song”.

All this brings us back to the fine prayer for the NCCA at the Inaugural Forum in 1994. That is, as we celebrate our 20th birthday in 2014.

LET US PRAY....

God of life, unity and peace,
you have called us to be your people.
Bring us to closer unity with you
within the household of your Church.
Direct our steps as we journey in the
National Council of Churches in
Australia,
that we may become
what you have called us to be;
and that together
we may walk in newness of life;
new and old, east and west,
indigenous and
all who have gathered in this land
from the corners of the earth.
We ask this in the name of Jesus
and through grace
and communion of the Holy Spirit...
Amen



A prayer for the
National Church of Churches in Australia
From the Inaugural Forum 1994

To fulfil what the Spirit might be saying to our Australian Churches requires our prayers and intentional practice.

A key matter is that we move beyond siloed, somewhat competitive, even combatative relations between the churches and between elements of the NCCA.

Visionary leadership requires collaborative, co-operative partnerships in the Holy Spirit.

Everyone has a contribution to make and every contribution is significant.

As St Paul conveyed:

Some News

- 1) Interview on ABC Radio PM by Mandi Sami and +Philip Huggins on Monday 28 July. Terrified Christians flee Iraq after having their doors marked by ISIS

Web link: <http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2014/s4055640.htm>

Via Fr Shenouda's excellent work and contacts, we have put the ABC in contact with Mosul Church Leaders.

Hopefully, we can keep generating Australian support for Iraq's Christians. Alistairs Gee is at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade this week following up on a range of matters, including our Appeals for Iraq and Gaza.

We are aware of Prayer Vigils and Rallies in Sydney and Melbourne. Please send any details of this which we can publicise.

- 2) **Ken Sumner** NATSIEC National Director has a **Theology Forum** this weekend at the UCA Centre for Ministry North Parramatta. The focus is on developing an Australia theology in a post-colonial context. More news after the Forum!
- 3) We are in the process of distributing the document for Social Justice Sunday, 28 September 2014. [Gambling and it's impact in Australia: Is nothing sacred](#) Former General Secretary Tara Curlewis has written an excellent Introduction, hoping the S.J. document can help redirect attention "to the sacredness of daily life".
Addiction of any kind is a terrible thing, robbing people of their freedom to properly appreciate, yes, the sacredness of daily life!
28 September is around the Grand Final for the AFL and NRL. There will be plenty of gambling adverts linked to the football.
Our document has an important section on "Gambling and Sport" as we try to prevent a delight in sport sucking more people into a gambling addiction.

Thankyou to the NCCA Social Justice Network (2014) and Tara Curlewis for this fine document.

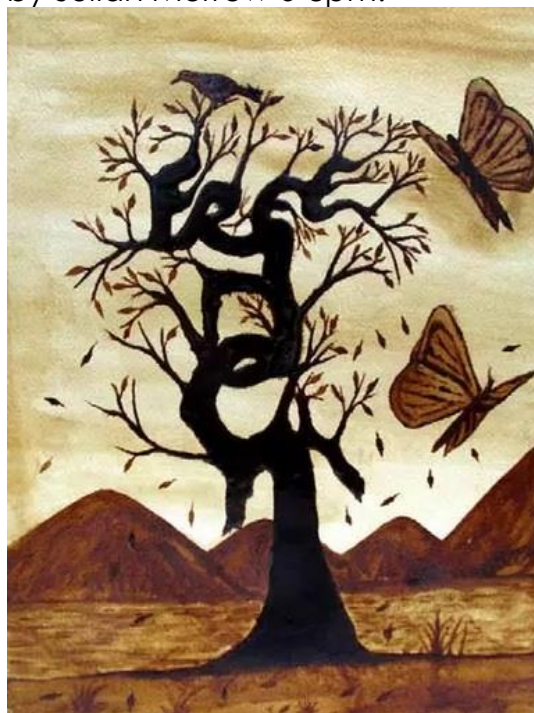
It is also available for download at www.ncca.org.au.

- 4) Jewish Christian Muslim Association of Australia–Statement by JCMA President, Bishop Philip Huggin's for more information go to <http://jcma.org.au/statement-by-jcma-president-bishop-philip-huggins>
- 5) The Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Hon Julie Bishop MP has provided humanitarian assistance of 5 Million in aid, for Gaza, in a Media release on the 28 Jul 2014, to view this go to foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2014/jb_mr_140728.aspx?ministerid=4

- 6) There will be a protest / demonstration called “**Make a difference**” – **MAD!** on Saturday 2nd August 2014, meet at Central Train Station at 9.00am and depart on foot on route from Central Station at 10am heading to Martin Place, the duration of time expected is 35 minutes.

The Program Protest will take place from 11am onwards and will conclude at 1pm.

- 7) In a Preliminary Appeal from **actalliance** for Survival Assistance for Displaced Populations and their Host Communities in Northern Iraq for more information go to <http://www.actalliance.org/resources/IRQ141%20Preliminary%20Appeal%20issued.pdf>
- 8) Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce has just produced ‘Protecting the Lonely Children’ which are the Recommendations to the Australian Government and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child with respect to unaccompanied children who seek asylum and refuge in Australia, to access this document go to <http://www.australianchurchesrefugeetaskforce.com.au/>.
- 9) In an article by Sarah Whyte in the Age ‘Morrison accused of ‘state sanctioned child abuse’ it outlined the report from the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce to view go to <http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/morrison-accused-of-state-sanctioned-child-abuse-20140729-3cs3i.html>
- 10) Stanley Street Gallery has an exhibition by asylum seekers and refugees as a part of the Refugee Art project at Still Alive, from the 4th -10th August 2014 – Exhibition will be opened by Julian Morrow 6-8pm.



Mohammad, Freedom, coffee on paper, 29x41cm, 2013.

11) France offers asylum to Christian refugees from Iraq : News Headlines - Catholic Culture <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=22155>

Next week I am in Sydney, Monday and Tuesday, then in Perth for the consecration of +elect Jeremy James, plus a meeting with our colleagues at the Council of Churches W.A.

The next Newsletter will probably come the week after.

Thank you for your kindly responses to our first Newsletter as we try to be a blessing to one another.

Grace and Peace in Jesus

+Philip Bishop

P.S. On a lighter note, after Church on St. James Day in Sydney, we met Jimmy the giraffe in the zoo!

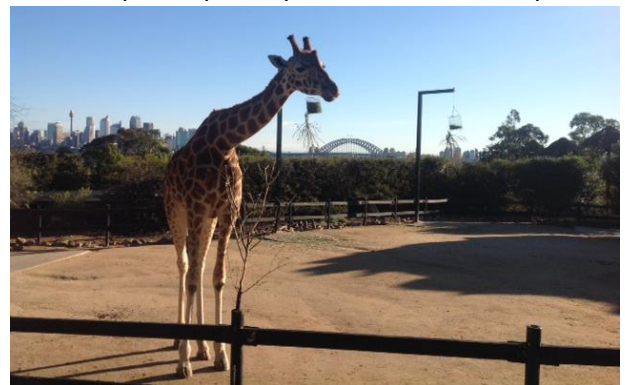


Photo taken at Taronga Zoo – compliments of Jimmy!