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Triptych in tears: Towards a theology of redemption. Facing sexual abuse within the church

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Ordinary Time: Trinity & Corpus Christi

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Triptych in Tears: Towards a Theology of Redemption. Facing Sexual Abuse within the Church

by Dr Glenn Morrison

Abstract

The article seeks to develop a pastoral theological response to sexual abuse within the Church. The response introduces the importance of the emotivity or affectivity of tears as the basis for a theology of redemption. To this end, three key biblical passages, Ps. 137, Matt 2:16-18 and John 11:1-44, speaking directly of tears or weeping, will help to form as it were, a Triptych. The aim here is to help to 'think otherwise' to become close to the Father's heart (Jn 1:18), the newness and nearness of the Kingdom of God, and hence to encounter the outrage, pain, hurt and wounds of people suffering from sexual abuse.

I do not think it is meant to be easy to approach sexual abuse within the Catholic, or other, Christian Churches. Even calling it an 'issue' immediately trespasses upon the hurt, outrage and enduring pain of being groomed and molested. To 'objectively' speak of sexual abuse as crisis, scandal and tragedy, or even metaphorically as the horror of the night, one must learn humbly how to face the evil that has transpired, to 'think otherwise' (to possess a 'thinking heart') through the gift of tears. I want to suggest therefore that the first step begins through the vulnerability of tears.

The pastoral care of people suffering the wounds and outrage of sexual abuse demands a liturgy of responsibility, a 'difficult freedom' and 'difficult adoration'.² The idea of a difficult freedom speaks of being responsible for-the-other to the point of seeking a future and new world of peace, justice and mercy. Such seeking for the Kingdom of God portrays a difficult adoration or devotion towards the other's pain, fears and needs for healing, justice and compassion. Here, the gift of tears becomes the breakthrough of God's grace to develop a 'thinking of heart' of knowing the Gospel and the suffering of others.³

Tears are a profound expression of a person's soul. And in the transfiguration (sudden outburst) of tears, there lies the transformation of tears from the soul to the body.⁴ Accordingly, a desire for righteousness comes to mind as much as a vision of redemption: 'the Word became flesh and lived among us' (Jn 1:14). Through the gift of tears, people of faith may learn to live out and encounter the flesh and blood realities of the other's profound pain and tragedy. In terms of pastoral care, this speaks of the ability to be aware of the danger of words without empathy such as the creeping force of aphasia (ideological mumblings trying to explain away and bury another's suffering) and acedia (the spiritual laziness of unconcern about another's welfare). A challenge then for the people of God in the Church is to learn to develop a thinking heart holding the gift of tears to cut through the unease of encountering the other's suffering.

To walk upon the journey of approaching sexual abuse in the Church and the suffering of people living with

the memory of such abuse, I propose to bring into conversation three key passages of Scripture that focus on tears, and in this way create a Triptych or threefold portrait of tears to underline the need for a theology of redemption, a foretaste of eternal life and encounter of the nearness and newness of the Kingdom of God. Accordingly, I will introduce theological reflections on Psalm 137, Matthew 2:16-18 and John 11.

Psalm 137: Tasting a River of Memories and Tears

Verse 1 of Psalm 137 exclaims, 'By the rivers of Babylon - there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.' Psalm 137 realistically relates the terrible feelings of suffering the loss of one's children and world. It begins in a Father's lament and weeping. There is a key lesson here about tragedy: to be free to respond in tears. The transformation of the soul into the bodiliness of tears produces something earthy: the beginning of the healing of memories.

In the journey of moving to tears, it can be natural to try as hard as one can to hold back tears even in the encounter of a beloved's death. Nonetheless, the Psalmist's tears initiate the bodiliness or affectivity of letting emotions flow, sharing with us his suffering, hatred and brokenness. However, his suffering is that of suffering not just for the murder of his own children, but for all the deaths and devastation at the destruction of Jerusalem. Such passion awakes the hope of waiting for the Messiah, for a future and new world where memories can be healed. For Christians, in meeting Jesus the Messiah, there lies the hope that 'no tear is to be lost'.⁵ Moreover, in meeting the risen Jesus, there remains an eternal moment of salvation and revelation. For the risen Jesus 'dries all tears'⁶ as much as safeguards and keeps the memory of every tear.⁷ We can begin to envisage here that tears are essentially the breakthrough of God's salvific word and healing presence into the body, mind, heart and feelings.

In the Talmudic tradition, the Jewish sages knew that God's word cannot be reduced to social, economic and political systems for they erode the power of language. The Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on

the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* no. 4 expresses this quite eloquently: 'True, there is a growing exchange of ideas, but the very words by which key concepts are expressed take on quite different meanings in diverse ideological systems.' As a result, the world has fallen into mumbblings of ideas and propositions to create systems of governance and control with the end of making idols and images of itself: to steal away a person's tears and soul, forging a production of aphasia, the nonsense of words to relish and spit out, to terrorise the minds of innocents and good people intent on sharing a little goodness wherever possible. Hence, it is not surprising the sages of the Talmud knowing a time in which meaning of words had been betrayed, 'spoke of a world in which prayers cannot pierce the sky, for all the heavenly doors are closed except that through which the tears of the injured pass'.⁸

In the face of humiliation, persecution, suffering and death, everything can be lost. However, paradoxically, the catastrophe bears within it the possibility to become a triumph whereby the endurance of the human spirit seeks the intimacy and comfort of God rather than trying to wield and control a two-edged sword of blessings and curses. The act of lamenting through tears produces a depth of melancholy and heartache that penetrates 'the heavenly doors'. These innermost feelings are not useless and for nothing, for they unveil the search for embodying a beatitude. And in this mourning, God stills at all vulnerability, brokenness and loss to become Comforter, Helper and Healer. Available to silently listen to all anger, hatred, grief, sorrow, frustration and despair, God, as it were, touches our guts (our pain) to tend to them with compassion, help and healing.

The words of the Psalmist, 'The Lord is near the broken-hearted, and saves the crushed in spirit' (Ps. 34:18) takes on a decisive meaning for one devastated by tragedy and loss as we see portrayed in the Psalmist's cry for revenge in Ps 137: 9: 'Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!' We must look therefore at the Psalmist's words not so much as the venom of revenge, an eye for an eye. His words come directly out of his soul embedded in tears to form a gift to God. In this sense, the Psalmist teaches the tenacity to give to God our hatreds, 'to leave vengeance to God'.⁹ Entering the mystery of suffering and evil, where tears take the form of prayer, there is confidence that our tears will not be effaced or lost. The resurrection of Jesus attests to this.

Tears help us to discover an opportunity for the spiritual imagination to form hope for a new world. In terms then of people suffering the wounds, devastation, outrage and horror of sexual abuse within the Church, let us think imaginatively that the tears of the abused come from the first waters that God created (Gen 1:6). The tears of the faithful wounded by sexual abuse are God's tears. Not one tear will be lost. Figuratively we can imagine further in the light of Gen 1:1-2 that God's face was an empty void without Creation, and so God's tears brought life to the world. The tears then of people sexually abused holds the very key to new life and a new world.

It may not be easy to shed a tear, to express vulnerability and fragility before others. But we can learn much from the Psalmist. We can discover something creative and full of melancholy that redeems. This is the ability and possibility to weep and create a new world (not just a better world)¹⁰ of the little goodness of a thinking heart. To weep is to save the world for a moment from the course of rationalisations that starve mercy or compassion. Maybe then we need to go back to imagine the Garden of Eden, encounter a river of God's tears, and see how they flow to give life to the world and to our bodies and souls.

Matthew 2:16-18: Rachel Weeping for her Children

The weeping of tears unveils the subterranean depths of the soul. Tears are like an idea that cannot be contained within consciousness (such as thinking of God). Tears exceed ourselves. The profound depth of tears produces an excess that cannot be measured. As a result, tears journey outside and beyond any ideology, managerial structure or office of leadership. Tears provide the vision for what a people bent on power and governance cannot see. Tears then act in a hidden way of revealing the tears of others. In this sense tears incarnate and reveal the tears of the Infinite God-in-us as the hope for a new world. The prophetic nature of tears is that they unmask the folly of wish-fulfilment. Tears swell to open a new world of compassion for those who weep and a readiness to partake of God's word of consolation, inspiration and animation (orientation to truth, justice and peace). Accordingly, the lamentation of tears are the 'yeast' of the kingdom (Mt. 13:33) (cf. Luke 13:21: 'until all of it was leavened') in contrast to 'the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod' (Mk 8:15), that is to say the inauthentic yeast of religious (and political) leaders (Lk 12:1).¹¹

In Matt 2:16-18, the story of the massacre of the innocents, we read:

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

'A voice was heard in Ramah,
wailing and loud lamentation,

Rachel weeping for her children;
she refused to be consoled, because they are
no more.'

In Psalm 137, the Psalmist experienced firsthand the massacre of his own children whose heads were crushed against the Temple walls. Now in Matt 2:16-18, we see again the violence of murder and evil done upon innocent children. The imagery here can help present some room for reflection particularly with regard to child sexual abuse within the Church. Together, the Psalmist's prayer (of Psalm 137) and Rachel's voice tell that the yeast of the Kingdom of God includes the '*faithful human action to rage and protest*'.¹²

Listening seriously to anger and rage within our own lives and as much to the people we care for will help to build up the bonds of trust and hope as a means to touch upon the 'primal scream'¹³ and cry of truth: (i) that those with power, prestige, honour and riches can fall prey to abandoning their humanity and conscience; and (ii) that those who are materially poor/ poor in spirit such as the elderly, the sick, the disabled, the hungry and those without a home are where we may find a place of warmth to share, taste and feast in the Kingdom of God.

To encounter then the outrage of one's own or the other's suffering demands a response of the whole person – body, mind, strength and soul. Could we then envisage that anger and rage is a form of confidence and trust in God 'and an acknowledgement that finally one must come to terms with this One in whom we are grounded'.¹⁴ Could also we not then conceive that the anger and rage of tears open 'the gate to hope' for a new world to speak the language of covenant and 'vigorous faith'?¹⁵ Who then can give a voice for people who have been sexually abused within the Church?

We need to locate strange archetypal voices like Rachel, a heroic woman of faith and Mother of Israel,¹⁶ evidencing the bodiliness, vulnerability and affectivity of lamentation, tears and rage in the face of abuse, injustice and murder. Facing the desolation of loss, Rachel is in a position to hope in God for a new world: 'your children will come back to their home country' (Jer 31:17). Her tears contain the hope for the Kingdom of God, that goodness will not be defeated by evil. Her tears are strange because the world cannot easily understand or see her true face of suffering. To lament and rage through tears, to speak out with a covenantal resilience of trust in God, is to take a step further towards a time and place, a future and new world, embedded in Rachel's face where there will be no more abuse of children and others by those bent on destroying the innocence and dignity of others. Here also we must also search for another stranger to open 'the narrow gate' (Matt 7:13-14) to Redemption – to Jesus also who is also weeping.

John 11:1-44 Lazarus, the One Whom Jesus Loves

Jesus' tears reveal something almost invisible,¹⁷ namely the yeast of the Kingdom of God (Mt 13:33 – 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened'; cf. also Lk 13:21). In the light of John 11:35, where Jesus weeps, we can suggest that the yeast of love and being close to the Father's heart (Jn 1:18) is mixed with the measures of the tears of grief of all those who loved Lazarus.

Jesus' relationship to Lazarus, Martha and Mary is special. Lazarus is 'ill' or sickly. Even perhaps he has a profound disability.¹⁸ The Kingdom of God is at work in the three siblings, and it here where the yeast of the Kingdom of God works its miracle of new life. Jesus has received a message from Lazarus' two sisters. 'Lord, he who you love is ill' (Jn 11:3). Jesus waits another two days before doing anything. God's glory and new life then is a production of slow love,

of allowing the Spirit of God to reveal the wonder of the newness and nearness of the Kingdom of God. The yeast of new life and redemption needs time to form. On the face of things before his relatives, friends and others, Lazarus is surely dead. Now all the hopes for the coming of the messiah, for the coming of the beloved, arrive at the point of death, grief and at the outpouring of tears. Jesus is ready to meet and raise to new life the one whom he loves (Jn 11:3). And dead within the tomb, Lazarus, whose soul has been sleeping in a four-day old corpse, is also seemingly ready to awake and meet his friend.

Jesus' miracle of raising his friend, Lazarus, from the dead unfolds a foretaste of the drama of healing and redemption. What initiates the miracle are tears. Jesus weeps through the weeping of Lazarus' sister, Mary, and other Jews. Each of Lazarus' sisters have a key role defined by the different personalities. Martha is direct, energetic, intelligent and taking control like an older sister meeting Jesus on the road to Bethany. Mary just throws herself at Jesus feet and weeps; the voice of tears has begun. Mary's simplicity and outpouring of openness shows a greater intelligence (cf. Lk 10:42): that the language of tears are more profound even than theological propositions of faith. Mary's simplicity of grace then has stirred the yeast of the Kingdom of God in Jesus. In the miracle of Jesus' resuscitation of Lazarus all tears are dried, yet not one has been lost or forgotten. Lazarus, the one whom Jesus loves, rises from death (Lk 11:44) through prayer and the word of a friend. Amidst the sensational and spectacular event of the miracle of Lazarus' coming back to life, the non-sensational and non-spectacular work¹⁹ of the break-through of grace and yeast of a new world has begun. The almost invisible yeast of the Kingdom of God, initiated through the weeping of tears, has produced the outpouring of hope for redemption; for the new life, resurrection and healing of the body and soul. And such healing can happen in any mundane moment such as the sharing of bread, listening to the other's pain and outrage or even stumbling upon a word of compassion.

What does this story of Lazarus then help to establish in regards to sexual abuse by within the Church? Mary, the sister of Lazarus, has cried like a Mother of Israel (as we have seen with Rachel). Her tears, femininity and maternity have revealed the force and little goodness of compassion and a thinking heart. She 'has chosen the better part' (Lk 10:42). Mary's tears are tears for the other, beyond herself. She evidences an irrational rupture of breaking through the rationalisations of the masculine to reveal the divine as the yeast of the Kingdom of God in Jesus' tears, prayer and word of healing. We discover that God is not revealed through any rationalisations or virility ('being-for-oneself')²⁰ that seeks to repress the tears of the other's heart and soul. To better understand what is going on, we must take a step back to Mary who stirs the yeast of the Kingdom of God in Jesus through her tears. Otherwise than all impersonal reason or seemingly intelligent reasonableness, Mary reveals that God is the One that is also weeping. Further, Mary's tears unveil that God is 'touchable, sensible, feminine, maternal'²¹ and willing to act despite poverty or riches. Mary's

simplicity of 'being-with-Jesus' helps to better define how she has learnt to 'desire the better part', namely that she has discovered the meaning of the wealth of poverty (of being near Jesus) and the poverty of wealth (the danger of self-interest, self-care and self-reward). Beyond solutions and systems, Mary's feminine goodness of tears gives hope to reveal the brittleness of the human condition of sin, that redemption and new life is possible if we allow God into the mess and horror of human life, to breathe new life through the gift of tears.

Conclusion: The Tenderness and Brokenness of Tears

Tears are but a start in the experience of God to begin to hear the voices of the victims of people, systems and organisations. The tenderness and brokenness of tears are like sacramental moments that unveil the fragility, vulnerability, outrage and hurt of victims. However, it may well be difficult to breathe in systems or with people who reject, alienate and resent the vulnerability, fragility and poverty of others. The people of God need to have confidence that through their baptism, they share in the mission of Christ and the Church, and that their tears have the power even to penetrate 'the heavenly doors' at the moment where all seems lost. Otherwise there remains the tragedy that the Church may lose the sense of love and commitment to respond to the question, 'Who is Jesus Christ today?'

The tenderness and brokenness of tears unveil the divine light of mystery helping people to meet Jesus and to seek to understand his mission and identity. We come then to the newness of the Kingdom of God in Christ, his intimate presence who takes us out of our self-interested lives towards an encounter of love ... the healing of a blind beggar ... giving a little goodness that feeds a multitude ... and offering the joy of forgiveness. We might then begin to talk to God, pray and wonder: Is there a face that can begin to heal the pain and horror of sexual abuse? Could it be the wounded, weeping face of a Psalmist or a Mother of Israel (like Rachel or Mary, the sister of Lazarus) or even a weeping God-man whose resurrection into new life dries all tears and makes sure that not one tear will be lost?

The tenderness and brokenness of tears reveal the gift of maternity, of motherhood and compassion, healing a sick world 'devoid of spiritual birth' which St. Augustine knew so well: 'Words cannot describe how dearly she [St. Monica] loved me or how much greater was the anxiety she suffered for my spiritual birth than the physical pain she had endured in bringing me into the world. ... So it was that you healed my sickness'.²² To possess a thinking heart and the gift of tears is to give birth to the maternal prayer of kenosis, 'May God help you!' Through this prayer, God breaks through the divine majesty to associate with the one who suffers.²³

Let the tenderness and brokenness of tears become a prayer to gestate hope for a pure expression of the heart, to be with the one who suffers despite any unease. To pastorally care then for people suffering from sexual abuse within the Church, there remains the challenge to come close to the Father's heart like Jesus (Jn 1:18), offering our will and vulnerabilities through the gift of tears. In meeting the risen Jesus, tears initiate the healing of memories, sacraments of responsibility, and liturgies of passion to imagine the world otherwise. Tears open oneself spontaneously and vigilantly towards the messianic hope for a new world. Let us pray then that the Church, in the face of sexual abuse, will take to heart the maternal gift of tears. Let us remember and take to heart that even St. Peter himself, after much betrayal, found new life through the tenderness and brokenness of tears: 'Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly' (Matt 26:75).

Endnotes

- ¹ The metaphor of a "thinking heart" comes from the writings of Etty Hillesum. During her incarceration at Westerbork Transit Camp before being transported to Auschwitz, she expresses, "The thinking heart of the barracks," to summarise her search for "the great redeeming formula" that "sums up everything within" her of the "overflowing and rich sense of life". In sum, to possess a thinking heart is to come near to the heart of poet reflecting on the mystery of life and the presence of God. See Etty Hillesum *An Interrupted Life. The Diaries, 1941-1943 and Letters From Westerbork* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 199.
- ² Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, translated by Seán Hand (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 145, 272.
- ³ Jean Vanier, *Man and Woman He Made Them* (Homebush NSW: St. Pauls, 1985), 42.
- ⁴ Roger Burggraeve (Professor of Theology, Catholic University of Leuven), email message to author, May 23, 2019.
- ⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existence*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 91.
- ⁶ Levinas, *Existence and Existence*, 90.
- ⁷ Roger Burggraeve, email message to author, June 7, 2019.
- ⁸ Tractate Berakoth 32 B and Tractate Baba Metzia 59 B. See Emmanuel Levinas, "Ideology and Idealism" in *of God Who Comes To Mind*, translated by Bettina Bergo (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 13.
- ⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg, 1984), 77.
- ¹⁰ Walter Kasper, *Jesus the Christ* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 96.
- ¹¹ Roger Burggraeve, email message to author, May 29, 2019.
- ¹² Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: A Discussion of the Relation of Bible and Pastoral Care," *Interpretation* 33: 2 (April 1979): 123.
- ¹³ Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation," 122.
- ¹⁴ Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation," 123.
- ¹⁵ Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation," 123.
- ¹⁶ See "Preface d'Emmanuel Levinas" in Catherine Chaler, *Les Matriarches* (Paris: Cerf, 1985), 9. Other "Mothers of Israel" include for example, "Sarah," "Rebecca" and "Leah".
- ¹⁷ Roger Burggraeve, email message to author, May 29, 2019.
- ¹⁸ Jean Vanier, *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004), 195-196.
- ¹⁹ Roger Burggraeve, email message to author, May 29, 2019.
- ²⁰ Roger Burggraeve, email message to author, May 31, 2019.
- ²¹ Roger Burggraeve, email message to author, May 31, 2019.
- ²² Saint Augustine, "Book V, parts 9-10" in *Confessions* (Ringwood, VIC: Penguin Books, 1974), 102-103.
- ²³ Jill Robbins, ed., *Is It Righteous To Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 281.



Our Contributors

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Anthony Doran is priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, currently Parish Priest of Ringwood. Prior to entering the seminary, Anthony was a secondary school teacher, teaching in country and suburban schools in Victoria. Ordained in 2003, he has held various appointments in suburban and country parishes. He completed further studies in Liturgy, focussing on the Rite of Dedication of a Church. He has written for *Liturgy News*, *The Summit* and *The Australian Journal of Liturgy*. He is currently the President of the Australian Academy of Liturgy and a member of Societas Liturgica, the international society for liturgical study and renewal. In 2017, the Archbishop of Melbourne appointed Anthony to the Board of the Catholic Development Fund for the Archdiocese of Melbourne, and as a Commissioner for the Diocesan Pastoral Development Fund. He has undertaken the Foundations of Directorship Course of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is an Affiliate Member of the AICD.

Joe Tedesco

Joe Tedesco has been involved in tutoring and teaching theology for over ten years at The University of Notre Dame Australia and at the Centre for Faith Enrichment in the Archdiocese of Perth. He completed masters level studies focusing on scripture and Christian anthropology. He recently completed a thesis in the area of Wisdom Literature and its relationship to moral theology.

Gerard Moore

Professor Gerard Moore is the Principal and CEO of Broken Bay Institute – the Australian Institute of Theological Education. His most recent publications are *Earth Unites with Heaven: an introduction to the Liturgical Year* (Melbourne: Morning Star 2014), and *The Disciples at the Lord's Table: Prayers over Bread and Cup across 150 Years of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015). He is also a member of the Charles Sturt University Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre.

Glenn Morrison

Glen is associate professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle, lecturing in systematic and pastoral theology. He has a PhD from Australian Catholic University. He is also the author of *A Theology of Alterity: Levinas, von Balthasar and Trinitarian Praxis* (Duchesne University Press, 2013).

Vincent Glynn

Fr Vincent Glynn is a priest of the Archdiocese of Perth WA. His seminary training was completed at St Charles Seminary Guildford WA and St Francis Xavier Seminary Adelaide SA. He was ordained a priest in December 1982. After parish appointments to city and country parishes he was sent to Rome for further studies. In 1991 he completed a Licentiate in Sacramental Theology from the Pontificio Anteneo San Anselmo, Rome. On his return from studies he lectured at St Charles Seminary, the Catholic Institute of Western Australia and The University of Notre Dame Australia. Fr Vincent was the Director of the Maranatha Institute for Adult Faith Education in the Archdiocese of Perth from 1999-2005. Fr Vincent completed and was awarded a Bachelor of Laws degree from The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle, in 2011. He is a theological advisor to the Religious Education team of the Catholic Education Office of WA. He is presently senior lecturer in Sacramental Theology at Notre Dame, Fremantle and a co-editor of Pastoral Liturgy.

Michael Mangan

Michael is a composer, teacher and music liturgist who is based in Brisbane, Australia. A former specialist music teacher, he has composed over 250 pieces which are widely used in Liturgy and Religious Education programs in schools and parishes throughout Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. His music is published in North America by World Library Publications, Chicago. His compositions are known for their "singability" and suitability for liturgical celebrations, especially with children. Michael tours extensively each year presenting concerts and workshops for students, teachers and parish musicians and speaks at conferences throughout Australasia and North America. His vibrant liturgical leadership sees him regularly engaged as a Musical Director and Liturgy Consultant for major national and international Church and Catholic Education conferences and events. Michael holds a BA (Mus), a Grad Dip Ed (Arts Ed), a Grad Cert Theol (Liturgical Studies) and recently completed a M. Theol (Liturgical Studies). He is a member of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, National Chair of the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network, and Music Director at All Saints Catholic Parish in Brisbane.