

'Overwhelmed by beauty of book about Stations'

'Every now and then we find a book that overwhelms us with sacred awe, taking us far beyond ourselves. It is a rare experience. When we unwrapped this book, we thought, yes, another version of the Way of the Cross, nice publication, good cover, well designed Then, as we opened it and turned pages, we fell silent.'

'What words are there to describe the sacrament of beauty? How do we quantify the way we meet the ineffable in the love-ness of human expression? In this, a book review, words are expected; but anything said falls short of the combined experience of Summers's sculptures and Bernadette Hall's poetry ...'

'We've admired Llew Summers's stations on the walls of the Christchurch Cathedral, the solid South Pacific Jesus whose spiritual strength grows stronger as his body gets weaker, the women who try to balance grief with steadfastness, their large feet planted on earth as firmly as roots, Pilate's bulk channelled into a finger pointing to destruction..'

'There is nothing passive about these figures. The emotions are shown in assertive simplicity and we've felt the force of each station in a way that could not be portrayed by photographic realism. We also felt profoundly grateful to Llew Summers for portraying the truth of the nude Jesus. It's historically true and symbolically true. Nakedness is the ultimate expression of emptiness, humiliation, suffering.'

'If only one word had to be chosen to describe the sculptures, it would probably be 'powerful'. The same word could be used for Bernadette Hall's poetry, which complements the photographs the way music complements a dance. Her words, too, are solid, forceful, and belonging to our culture

Reviewed by Joy Cowley and Terry Coles (NZ Catholic 27/8/06)

The Way of the Cross
SCULPTURES LLEW SUMMERS
POEMS BERNADETTE HALL



*Celebrating the Centenary of the
Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament
Christchurch New Zealand 2005*

NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS OF THE CATHEDRAL



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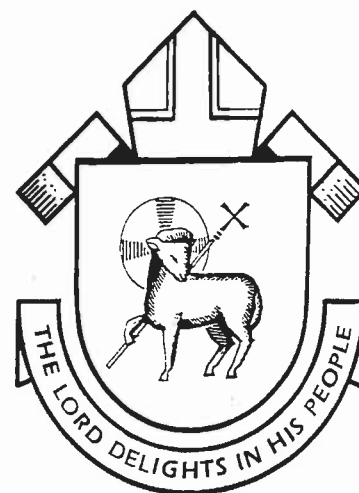
A SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS

After what seemed to be an interminable delay, Rome finally announced that the Holy Father had appointed a Coadjutor Bishop for Christchurch. It was a happy coincidence that allowed Bishop Cunneen to announce the news at a Clergy dinner marking his Golden Jubilee as a priest. The new bishop after receiving episcopal ordination on October 4th, will assist Bishop Cunneen until he chooses to step down. Then without further ado, Bishop Barry Jones will become the ninth Bishop of Christchurch.

Barry Philip Jones and his twin brother were pupils at St Bede's College when I went as assistant to Rangiora in 1959. Their sister was at Sacred Heart College, and Alan, their younger brother, was at the parish school. The Jones' home in Park Street was the kind of place young priests are drawn to. Harry, the father, was a carpenter, a convert to the Church. His mother, Ella, had a sister a nun. They were the salt of the earth, and I delighted in having tea with the family of a weeknight and joining them when they camped at the beach in summertime.

It came as no surprise to me when Barry Jones went off to Holy Name Seminary in 1960. Little did we know that Alan would one day become a priest as well, a member of the Society of Mary, and now the newly appointed Director of the Catholic Enquiry Centre.

The rest, as the say, is history. When I was appointed Administrator of the Cathedral in 1973, Father Barry was on the staff there as Hospital Chaplain. Later, in my time at Mairehau, he came to live next door as Vice-Rector of the newly established Good Shepherd House. With a succession of seminarians on pastoral placement, I had lunch there every Sunday, and welcomed the opportunity to join staff and students on high days and holy days. And, of course, the exchange was reciprocal. The Vice-Rector was often in the presbytery and in the parish church, and it was there that he was invested as a Prelate of Honour, with his proud parents and family present to witness it.



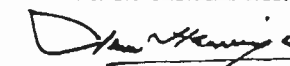
The Crest of the new Bishop

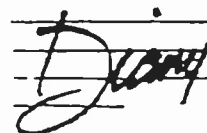
In the years to come, Monsignor Barry and I would serve on the Council of Priests, the Bishop's College of Consultors, and as members of the Cathedral Trust. For years, too, we have been part of a group of priests who have taken holidays together. In a word, you could say I know the Bishop-elect better than most.

And, of course, it goes without saying that the Bishop-elect will come as no stranger to the Cathedral. In addition to his earlier days in the parish as an assistant priest, he has served in more recent times as Administrator of the Cathedral. It was he who, to the delight and admiration of all, shepherded the Diocese through a year of major celebrations to mark the Cathedral's centenary in 2005.

While the Bishop-elect brings to the episcopate a wide range of experience as a priest, as well as a personal knowledge of the Diocese, its clergy and its people, we must support him with our prayer. We must ask the Lord to give him a spirit of courage and right judgement, that he may be a good shepherd of God's people in our local Church as it puts in place its Pastoral Plan for the future.

For the Cathedral Trust


Monsignor J.M. Harrington



**'FRIENDS OF THE CATHEDRAL'
ANNUAL MASS AND LUNCHEON
Sunday October 1st : 10.30am**

'Friends of the Cathedral' Newsletter: Cathedral House, PO Box 4544, Christchurch.

An Artist and the Pope

Earlier this year I had the joy of visiting Rome once more. There, as elsewhere, it is who you know that matters; they can open doors that are closed to others. And so it was that I teamed up with our man in the Vatican, Monsignor Charles Drennan, and Father Steve Lowe, presently studying there. Not only did they introduce me to their favourite watering holes, but they got me access to the Irish College, as well as the inner halls of the Secretariate of State, where I had the privilege of joining members of the Papal household for Vespers in the Sistine Chapel.

But what had drawn me to Rome this time were the 'Doors of Death' in St Peter's Basilica. They were not unfamiliar to me. I had seen them before. But a strange series of events had prompted me to view them again and to study them with fresh eyes.



Blessed Pope John XXIII with Giacomo Manzu

Before protests arose over the 'Stations of the Cross' in our Cathedral, Mons Drennan's mother had lent Fr John O'Connor of Sockburn a book called *'An Artist and the Pope'*. He thought it 'a gem, a delight, and an inspiration.' This book by Curtis Bill Pepper, an American news correspondent in Rome, was published in 1968. It is based on the personal recollections of Giacomo Manzu, the artist who sculpted the 'Doors of Death' for St Peter's Basilica, and tells the story of his friendship with Blessed Pope John XXIII.

The work is long out of print, but on a visit to the United States in 2005, Fr John O'Connor determined to unearth a copy and send it to me – which he kindly did, to my surprise and delight. In a covering letter he wrote: "Perhaps the time you most needed this was earlier in the year during the public reaction to the 'Stations of the Cross'. Of course, artists know that such a response to good art is inevitable, but that does not make the battle any more bearable. In those weeks I was saddened that good Catholic theology was not permitted a voice, and we resorted to reactions ... This book kept me smiling as the 'naked Jesus' of the Cathedral 'Stations' was attacked ... Not only should every artist read this book; every artist needs a copy to return to regularly and to share with others who will delight in it. So I am happy to be able to give you this copy"

I too found *'An Artist and the Pope'* a gem, a delight, and an inspiration.

So there I was in Rome, on my first day back, standing before the 'Doors of Death' in St Peter's Basilica. These huge works in bronze, years in the making, depict the Lord and his Mother, saints and sinners, mystics and murderers, Popes and plain people, as they left this world. The two most prominent panels feature the removal of Jesus from the Cross, and Mary his Mother being taken to heaven. Across the middle of the doors are cut stalks of grapevine and wheat – symbols of life. Beneath are eight smaller panels, recalling the deaths of selected people – Abel, the son of Adam, St Joseph, foster father of Jesus, St Stephen, the first martyr, and St Gregory VI in exile. Interspersed among them are abstract panels depicting death by violence, death in space, and death on earth. The panel 'Death on Earth' depicts a stricken woman in a back-tilting chair at the sudden moment of death, with a child above screaming through a window. 'Death in Space' shows a figure in free-fall, tumbling through space without a parachute. A similar panel depicting 'Death in Water' was to have been

included, but the passing of Pope John XXIII in 1963, saw the artist replace it with a personal tribute to the man who had become his friend.

Below the panels, to complete the work, there are a number of whimsical images: a dove, a dormouse, hedgehog, an owl, a turtle and snake, and a raven. Why the artist added these has since gone with him to the grave.

The 'Doors of Death,' had their beginning in a bequest, and their sombre title chose itself; these are the doors through which deceased cardinals and prelates are carried into St Peter's. Because these doors would be the first hung in the Basilica for 500 years, it was decided that an international competition should be held to determine who would create them. Among the entrants was Giacomo Manzu, son of a shoemaker and church sexton, who came from the same town as Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who would one day be Pope. And despite accusations that Manzu was a Communist sympathiser, he was eventually given the commission. He was recognised as one of the great sculptors of the time, and he himself believed these doors would be the great labour of his life. But twelve years on his faith was gone, and the likelihood of the doors becoming a reality seemed remote. His political sympathies had earned him the Lenin Peace Prize, he no longer believed in the Church, and God's existence was a matter which did not concern him. He felt there was no way he could complete the task he had been given. That is until something quite unexpected happened.

It was a personal request from Pope John XXIII that brought Manzu to Rome in 1960. His first commission was to do a portrait of the Pope in bronze. Over time, this would drive Manzu on to finally complete the bronze doors for St Peter's. But finishing the work was not without its difficulties. He had a constant battle with members of the Papal household who did not approve of the work; they demanded that Latin quotations be incorporated to explain its various parts; and they constantly refused give the project their blessing. For his part, Manzu needed the strong support of another churchman, Monsignor de Luca, to whom the doors would eventually be dedicated. He also needed the encouragement of Inge, the woman who had become the love of his life. But it was his friendship with Pope John XXIII which finally saw to it that the 'Doors of Death' would be hung one day in St Peter's Basilica.

The Pope had said: "Let me know when the doors are finished and we will have a 'fiesta'. We will invite everyone to come to St Peter's and see them." But by the time that day came, Pope John was dead, and there was a new Pope. Paul VI had played no part in the creation of the doors, and sadly when the time came for them to be dedicated it was as though the 'Doors of Death' were unwanted by the living. The hour of sunset had passed, the Basilica was closed to the public, and the doors were shrouded in canvas. By directive of those who had arranged the unveiling, only ten men, no women, were present.

And for the artist, the moment was tinged with an even greater sadness. Manzu's last commission for Pope John XXIII had been to make his death mask in bronze. On his own initiative he had also modelled the Pope's right hand, with which he had written his greatest encyclical "*Pacem in Terris*". The remarkable friendship between an artist and a Pope had ended, but at least St Peter's Basilica had its 'Doors of Death', works of art which will fascinate those who see and study them for centuries to come.

JMH

THE CATHEDRAL OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHARITABLE TRUST was established by Bishop Brian Ashby in 1975. The task of its members is to administer Cathedral Trust monies, to keep a watchful eye on the building, and continue the work of conserving and enhancing the Cathedral as funds permit.

Its present membership is Bishop John Cunneen (Chairman); Mr J. Brandts-Glesen; Fr K. Clark; Mr M.R. Carter; Fr J. Fitzmaurice; Ms A.Flett; Mons J.M. Harrington (Secretary); Mrs N. Pascoe; Mr R.D. Sullivan; and Prof H.J. Simpson.

The association of the 'FRIENDS OF THE CATHEDRAL' was established by Bishop Basil Meeking. Its purpose is to assist in the task of preserving and enhancing the Cathedral, disseminating information about it, encouraging others to take an interest in its life and ministry, and to generate income for specific purposes from time to time.