

Curriculum Vitae

Thomas McDonough CP

Current Position: Provincial Superior

Congregation: Congregation of the Passion (Passionists)

The Passionists are a medium sized congregation, located in over sixty countries. Our Province for which I have responsibility, includes Australia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. Present in Australia for 130 years, in New Zealand for 70 years, PNG for 55 years and Vietnam for 10 years

Major ministries include formation of candidates for religious life and priesthood - at present 55 young men; parishes, conference-retreat centres (2), school chaplaincy, adult education and faith formation, lay leadership formation foreign missions, spiritual direction, seminary education, English Language school, counselling and facilitation, parish renewal.

Background

- Traditional Irish Catholic origins;
- Educated by Sisters of Mercy and Marist Brothers;
- Entered Minor Seminary of the Passionists at the age of 15
- Novitiate of the Passionist Province
- Seminary training at the Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne - then a consortium of 8 religious congregations for the education of students for priesthood
- Ordained 1972 - aged 23
- Post Graduate Education at Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium - 4 years
- Lecturer at the Yarra Theological Union - 14 years
- Rector of Passionist House of Formation -8 years
- Dean of Studies Australasian Passionist Province -14 years
- Co-ordinator or member of the Province Formation Commission – 16 years
- Member of Passionist Provincial Council -18 years
- Parish Priest of two parishes, Sydney - 15 years
- Parish Priest Boroko, Port Moresby PNG - 4 years
- Provincial of the Passionist Congregation 4 years

Additional

Vice President of the Catholic Religious Australia

Member of the Supervisory Group for the Truth Justice and Healing Council
with President of CRA and appointed Bishops and Archbishops
Member for the newly created Catholic Professional Standards Ltd

Personal Comments

Schedule 8.1 Support for and Supervision of working priests and religious

#1 Ongoing Formation of working Priests and Religious

- Until relatively recently (1990's?) ongoing formation was primarily left to the initiative of the individual
- There had been a mentality that ordination or final profession meant "formation is finished"
- Thorough ongoing formation was extremely haphazard at best and totally absent was the norm
- As men age they are less interested in longer programs of renewal
- Clergy days or province gatherings for religious may have had a small formation component until recent years
- Annual gatherings of clergy may have provided some formation on currently relevant topics, but it was not systematic
- Personal reading and study was left to each individual
- Sabbaticals were infrequently taken, even when offered
- The resource of the National Professional Standards document - Integrity in Ministry- offered a good resource with some introductory education, but in my congregation was rarely consulted. I suspect our experience was typical
- Congregations since the 1990's have had Congregational days or community programs around professional standards areas - often focussed on behavioural do's and don'ts, and guidelines to prevent one acting inappropriately or being accused of inappropriate behaviour.
- Provision of material to educate for reporting child abuse, was minimal

#2 Support for and Supervision of Working Priests and Religious

- Mandatory formation in areas of professional standards has only been very recent.
- Present programs are in my experience, minimal - a day, a morning, and not compulsory
- Spiritual direction has long been encouraged and professional supervision more recently, but normally not required.
- In underdeveloped countries where Australian religious may minister on a temporary basis, there is a lack of personnel qualified for these roles.
- Mentoring and guidance in early years of ordination is very insufficient and at times has been totally absent
- Some clergy gather for a regular meal and sharing, as a personal initiative and encouraged by authority. Many do not.
- In my experience there is a reluctance to comment on the behaviour or style of another priest or religious, in the form of advice, criticism, warning.