

Chapter 2: Kearney's Vocation

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tender-hearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. (Col 3:12)

Introduction

One of the most significant changes brought about by Vatican II was a focus on the role of 'lay people' in the Church. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* was the first Church document in 2,000 years, and through 21 Ecumenical Councils, that specifically addressed the very notion of lay people existing, let alone having a role.¹⁰⁶ And yet, based on Vatican statistics from the end of 2020, the 1.36 billion members of the Roman Catholic Church include only 464,000 ordained men and a further 669,000 vowed religious – i.e. lay people are 99.92% of the members of the Church.¹⁰⁷

But the Decree on the Laity is possible only because, a year earlier, the 'Dogmatic Constitution of the Church' set out a model for the Church which – literally – turned previous models upside down. Instead of starting with the Pope and then working down through the hierarchy, the Council Fathers chose to present the Church, first and foremost, as the People of God.

At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears God and does what is right. God, however, does not make people holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased God to bring human beings together as one people, a people which acknowledges God in truth and serves God in holiness.¹⁰⁸

This is a major shift from the Tridentine view of the Church as 'a perfect and unequal society'. Congar argues that these ecclesiological values "have not been rejected or forgotten but they are no longer regarded as the door by which we enter into the reality of the Church, nor are they the dominant values."¹⁰⁹ Congar further points that the Latin term *laicus* (used as a noun) appears 200 times in Vatican II documents whereas it was not used at all in Vatican I.¹¹⁰

Lumen Gentium goes on, in paragraph 39, to describe a 'Universal Call to Holiness'. Traditionally, this had been language reserved for people with a vocation to religious life; but Vatican II extends the word 'holy' to all the people of God (as in fact St Paul had done 1900 years earlier). What makes Kearney's response to this call especially interesting is that he spent part of his life as a member of a religious order, part as a single lay man and part as a married lay man. What I intend to show is that there is a unity in how Kearney lived out his vocation in that he is consistently responding to the 'call to holiness'.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix B explores in more detail what Vatican II says about the role of laity, the possible inconsistencies, and some developments in practice since the Council.

¹⁰⁷ "Vatican Statistics show global imbalance". *Catholic News Service*. 18 February 2022 <https://catholicnews.com/vatican-statistics-show-global-imbalance-in-ratio-of-catholics-per-priest/> (accessed 18 August 2022)

¹⁰⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 9

¹⁰⁹ Congar, Yves. "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 135

¹¹⁰ Congar, "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church", 137. Congar in fact lists a number of other words that are popular in Vatican II and absent from Vatican I: *ministerium/-strare* (148 times), *amor* (113), *servire/-vitium* (97), *fraternus/-ne/-nitas* (87), *evangelizatio/-zare* (49), *pauper* (42), *dialogus* (31).

In each chapter, in line with the ideas of McClendon, I will start and end with ‘some dominant images which will unlock this biography’.¹¹¹ Two images of Kearney, from opposite ends of his life, provide a stark contrast. The first is a photo from 1969 when he was teaching as a Marist brother at St David’s School in Johannesburg. The 27-year-old Brother Paddy is dressed in ‘clerical’ robes and surrounded by his charges, a group of Catholic school boys.¹¹²

The second is an image in my own archives from one of the first times I met Kearney. It was a ‘Hope and Joy’ workshop that I was hosting in Durban around 2011 to explore ways of reconnecting with Vatican II, in preparation for the 50th anniversary. Kearney was one of about 40 people present: most were lay men and women, some were priests, some religious sisters, one of them a Cardinal Archbishop. But all were mixed up around the room – standing, sitting or crouching on the floor – working together on some question about the role of the Church in the world.

If the word ‘vocation’ had come up in relation to the first picture, it would be assumed to apply primarily to the clerically-clad brother and possibly to one or two of the ‘select boys’ who were ‘joining the Church’. In the second picture, it was clear that everyone in the room had a vocation, and they were exploring how they could work together to develop their own and each other’s vocations. In the intervening 42 years, the word vocation had widened to embrace all Christians by virtue of their Baptism. I want to understand how Kearney grappled with and nurtured his vocation, and so I will look at his time as a Marist and his life after that.

From a personal point of view (as explained earlier in Chapter 1), this is also a question with which this author has struggled and so I cannot pretend that my comments on this subject are ones which do not also touch my own Christian vocation in very deep ways.

Kearney’s choice to become a Marist

For 10 years (1960-1969) Kearney was a member of the Marist Brothers, a Catholic male religious congregation founded in Lyons in 1817. By the definition given in *Lumen Gentium* 31 this means that he was not a lay person since it excludes ‘those in the state of religious life’. On the other hand, by the definition of Canon Law, which is focused on the presence or absence of ordination, it means that he was still a lay person even when a Marist (hence the reference in Vatican documents to ‘lay brothers’).¹¹³ I would like to show that from the style of life and the self-understanding of Marists in the 1960s, Kearney was definitely not a lay person. If the laity are those *in the world* as distinct from those who have been *separated from the world*, for 10 years Kearney was certainly separated from the world.

Kearney’s route into the Marists was quite typical – he joined them straight after attending a school (St Charles College in Pietermaritzburg) which at the time was run by the Marist Brothers and had a good number of Marists on the staff. As part of the research, it has been possible to speak to four of Kearney’s contemporaries from his time as a Marist: their memory is of how many of their cohort had also been schooled by the same order. It was very typical at the time that, after the influence of being taught by members of a religious order for five, sometimes twelve years, students were drawn

¹¹¹ McClendon, James W. *Biography as Theology: how life stories can remake today’s theology* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1974) 193

¹¹² Marist Archives, Johannesburg: *St David’s College Review* (December 1969, Page 66)

¹¹³ *Perfectae Caritatis* 10

to join the same order – young men became brothers and priests, young women became sisters.¹¹⁴ It is also typical that they joined straight from school. In many cases, in fact, they left school early and joined a ‘Juniorate’, a residential semi-monastic community where they would complete their high school studies away from the temptations of teenage life and prepare for a later vocation (as minor seminaries did for diocesan vocations). Peter Taylor had this experience and recalls that it was only much later that the Marists encouraged young men to spend a few years ‘in the world’ after school before joining.¹¹⁵

Before exploring Kearney’s life as a Marist Brother, it is worth asking about the possibility of a priestly vocation. There were a number of men who went to Marist schools and who chose to become priests and not brothers (including +Hurley himself and his Vicar-General and Kearney’s collaborator, Mgr. Paul Nadal). Even someone greatly influenced by Kearney, one of his star pupils from his years at St David’s, Graham Lindegger, left school to start training as a priest. (He joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the order that dominated large parts of South Africa, before eventually leaving). Indeed in the 1969 copy of the school magazine (which Kearney helped edit), Lindegger is one of four old boys who wrote about their experience in formation as Oblate priests.¹¹⁶

Though influenced by the Marists at school, Kearney was also very friendly with the Oblates in his parish (and had indeed travelled with some on his visit to Europe aged 16).¹¹⁷ Though we do not know that Kearney considered joining the Oblates (or even becoming a diocesan priest), it is highly likely that he would have, given his family culture, his education, his social class and his interest in the Church. It seems, then, that Kearney’s decision to become a Marist was very intentional.

The Marists were an order of brothers not priests. Could this be interpreted as a conscious decision on the part of Kearney to avoid the clericalism of priesthood? My conclusion is that it was not. Though brothers are not ordained, and so canonically are lay people, the style of life of a Marist Brother in the 1960s was so much like that of a religious priest that Kearney’s experience was that he was leaving the laity.

Mario Colussi, one year ahead of Kearney as a novice, points out that during the novitiate, which is when a candidate is especially reflecting on how God is calling them, there was no particular stress on the vocation of the brother (as distinct from a priest). But they did learn how their founder, Marcellin Champagnat (a Marist priest) wanted to extend the order to include brothers because he wanted men who were free to teach (and not be involved in parish work). As the number of brothers grew, Champagnat was unhappy that a Marist Priest still had to be their Superior and so he created the order of ‘Little Brothers of Mary’ which only contained brothers. The order was thus rejecting governance by a priest; it was not rejecting the principle of clericalism.

Tim McCrindle also stresses that, at their schools, the Marists never discouraged a boy who wanted to be a priest. The sense of being a brother and not a priest was really tied up with the identity of their institutions (the schools) not their clerical status. He also pointed out that Kearney’s link to the Marists was even stronger since his father had been taught by them and was in fact chair of the Marist Old Boys’ Association.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ My own mother, a near-contemporary of Kearney, attended a school in India run by a religious order and four of her six sisters joined that same religious order.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother with Kearney)

¹¹⁶ Marist Archives, Johannesburg: *St David’s College Review* (December 1969, Page 40)

¹¹⁷ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/C/1 “Kearney’s letters to his parents, May 1958 to June 1958”

¹¹⁸ McCrindle, Tim. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

When Kearney was later studying as a Marist in Pietermaritzburg, he met a Dominican sister Marie-Henry Keane with whom he would stay friends until his death 52 years later, and so through many phases of his life. She was living in Alexandra Road (near his parents) and the two of them were giving catechism classes together at St Mary's Church in Loop Street. She recalls Kearney being very dedicated to education and she concludes that the desire to be a teacher is "why he chose the brothers not priests."¹¹⁹

This insight is reinforced by a discussion Kearney had with a fellow Marist around the same time. When exploring the question 'what do you want to do with your life', Taylor recalls that Kearney had said: "I want to be a teacher and a brother".¹²⁰ I think it is fair to conclude that Kearney's decision to be a brother was a positive decision about wanting to be a teacher and not a negative decision about not wanting to be a priest.

Kearney's life as a Marist Novice

Religious life starts with a structured period of isolation from one's previous life, to enter into a deep and intense experience of the new life as a religious. For Marists, this comprised six months as a 'postulant' and twelve months as a 'novice'. During this time, a lot of focus was on learning about the life of the founder, the history and 'Rule' of the order. One of the key texts he read was *The Chronicles of the Little Brothers of Mary* written in the name of the order's founder (though probably supplemented by his early followers). The English version Kearney read was published in 1927 and would have offered great reassurance to an 18-year-old leaving the world and committing himself to religious life:

A brother is someone predestined for great piety, a very pure life and solid virtue, a soul for whom God's mercy has special plans.¹²¹

It would also have reminded him of the importance of the long process of formation:

A brother is a young plant that needs to be grafted...a plant that needs pruning...a flower....an unripe fruit...a child who cannot walk by himself...weak, inconstant and inexperienced.¹²²

In the case of Kearney and his contemporaries, the first stages of formation were especially isolating since they happened in Australia. Colussi, who was one year ahead of Kearney, shared vivid memories of this experience.¹²³ He explained that before the Second World War, South African novices had been sent to Europe but now, for 18 months, they joined a group of Australian and New Zealand candidates in Mittagong (halfway between Sydney and Canberra) at a remote, rural farm with cattle, pigs and an orchard. (The pigs were called Ethel and Red in honour of the Master of Novices, Br Ethelred!).

Each cohort started off usually as about 20 members (including about 4-6 South Africans); with two cohorts on site for at least part of the time, plus formators, that meant a substantial community of

¹¹⁹ Keane, Marie-Henry. Personal interview by author, 16 September 2021 via Zoom (Dominican sister and co-worker)

¹²⁰ Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother with Kearney)

¹²¹ Champagnat, Marcellin. *Chronicles of the Little Brothers of Mary: listen to the words of your father. Opinions, Conferences, Sayings and Instructions* (Lyons: Little Brothers of Mary, 1927) 15

¹²² Champagnat, *Chronicles of the Little Brothers of Mary*, 27

¹²³ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

40-50 celibate men. Much of their time was spent working on the farm: *manualia* was thought to encourage all of the religious virtues: poverty, obedience and chastity. There was daily Mass (with an Irish chaplain), practice of singing Gregorian chant, recitation of the Office, some lessons on Scripture, and long periods of silence. The saying of the Office – set prayers at set times of day in unity with thousands of other priests and religious around the world – was a key mark of ‘clerical’ life. It was an inheritance of a monastic model and the young Marists followed this by getting up at 5am and then stopping to recite the Office at the due hours, even when in the fields. Their founder had explained why this was important; one wonders how the older more open-minded Kearney felt if he recalled these words:

To say your Office well, remember that you are praying for the entire universe and for the needs of all men and women. Remember the huge number of infidels who populate Africa...the huge number of heretics and schismatics for whom you are deputed to request their return and submission to the Church.¹²⁴

McCrinkle (one year behind Kearney) recalls the spiritual life being very pre-Vatican II.¹²⁵ Although there were some prayers in English, most were in Latin as was the Office, the Mass and the readings during meals (since meals were taken in silence except on Feast Days). Whilst this was supposed to be a period of spiritual development, there was very little personal accompaniment or counselling, with a one-to-one interview with the Master of Novices only three or four times a year.

Taylor (two years behind Kearney) wonders in retrospect about the quality of the spiritual formation.

As religious brothers we went to say prayers – but not to pray. We knew the psalms off by heart but did we pray them? We were concentrating more on performance and not actually meditating on the words. And even though we were exposed to Scripture, through the Office and Mass, we never really studied it. We never shared our faith, never talked about spiritual life. We spent many hours in silence and were encouraged to isolate from each other.¹²⁶

The main change during the process was that postulants did not have to wear the habit whereas novices did; they all had to sleep in a shared dormitory but the novices at least had curtains between their beds. The religious habit was a black or white soutane (a full-length robe, buttoned down the front) with white bands around the neck (not a Roman collar).

Colussi reminisces:

The rule about wearing the habit was observed quite strictly ... even when doing manual work in the garden, or orchard, or taking part in the annual cricket match novices vs postulants ... I guess the postulants were already betting favourites before the match began because they did not have to wear habits!¹²⁷

All Kearney’s fellow Marists recall that there was very little contact with the outside world. There was no radio or television; only occasionally was a newspaper left out. Otherwise, the only news they heard was what the Master of Novices read to them.

¹²⁴ Champagnat, *Chronicles of the Little Brothers of Mary*, 125

¹²⁵ McCrinkle, Tim. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹²⁶ Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹²⁷ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

Contact with families was limited to receiving and sending letters once a month. Colussi remembers that they were handed over in an open envelope so you knew that the letters could be read by the Master of Novices (even if often they were not). The families of Australian novices could come and visit at Easter and Christmas for the day (though that clearly did not help South African novices).

They were sent out to teach in a local Marist school with other Marist Brothers; once or twice they did a little bit of teaching in a local reformatory or led religious classes in the local parish. There was a women's religious house nearby (the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary) but they never visited them. In no way, according to Colussi, were they being prepared for the apostolic life that lay ahead of them. But he does feel that it was a supportive environment. He points out that the traditional humiliating practice of the 'Chapter of Faults' (where novices would sit in a circle and accuse themselves of their failings and seek 'fraternal correction') had disappeared by the end of his time as a novice.¹²⁸ He also points out that in their time there was no use at all of the 'physical disciplines' that had been used by previous generations of religious 'to mortify the flesh'.¹²⁹

At the end of the novitiate, those who survived took their simple vows for the first time (which were then renewed every year until final vows, five years later). Earlier, at the end of the postulancy, some of them also took a new name. This was an ancient practice of religious life to mark clearly the transition from the old person to a new person; by receiving a name from the order, it also marked the individual now as a member of a religious family in contrast to their biological family. The practice finally ended for most religious orders in the 1970s. At the time when Kearney was a Marist, it was not required but was still an option. Kearney did not change his name and so became Brother Patrick (though bear in mind that 'Patrick' was his middle name and that his first name was Gerald). Colussi went from Mario to Br Bosco, though he did change back to Br Mario later. His contemporary Br Jude Pieterse did not revert to his original name.¹³⁰ Colussi recalls that the Master of Novices tended to give the most difficult names to the most difficult novices.

(The custom of taking a name in religion enables me to share a fascinating piece of Struggle history which, as far as I know, has never been reported. One of the most controversial Catholic priests at the time was the Dominican, Albert Nolan, who was often being sought by the security police and border guards. But they did not realise that the name by which they knew him 'Albert' was in fact his religious name. So when asked to present his documents, which carried his birth name, they saw instead 'Denis Nolan' and so allowed him through since they were looking for Albert Nolan. Such is the unexpected advantage of a religious name!)¹³¹

It seems clear to me that everything about Kearney's experience as a novice firmly made sure that he and his contemporaries no longer saw themselves, or were seen by others, as lay people: the separation from the world, the isolation, the marking out through dress and name, the spiritual practices, the use of Latin, the lack of involvement with secular affairs, the fact that almost all contact was just with other celibate men.

Marists in the 1960s subscribed to the idea that contact with the real world was harmful to religious life. The common rules of the Marists still warned against such temptations:

¹²⁸ Marist Brothers of the Schools. *Common Rules of the Institute* (Rome: Little Brothers of Mary, 1947) 20-22

¹²⁹ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother with Kearney)

¹³⁰ Pieterse, Jude. Personal interview by author, 13 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother with Kearney). Note that Pieterse has increasing dementia and at the time of the interview was able to recall only in part and usually assisted by the presence of Colussi.

¹³¹ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 18 Oct 2020 in Boksburg GP (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

Intercourse with outsiders is one of the great dangers of religious life; it is by too frequent communion with these that the religious spirit departs from communities and that the spirit of the world enters with its train of abuses, relaxation and vices. The brothers shall never, without real necessity, have any connection with outsiders.¹³²

Osborne gives a quotation that explains this perspective (from the 1950s in France when religious were made to withdraw from the worker priest movement): “[we must make sure] that religious would stay religious, clerics would remain clerical, and seminarians would remain as untainted as possible by the secular world.”¹³³

Kearney’s life as a vowed Marist Brother

On his return to South Africa in the middle of 1961, Kearney was now a fully-fledged Marist. However, even though he was no longer a novice, his degree of involvement with the secular world was still very limited.

In 1961-62, he taught at the Marist primary school and high school in Port Elizabeth; from 1963-65, he lived in Pietermaritzburg doing a degree at the University of Natal (with first Biblical Studies and then English as his major); then, from 1966-69, he taught at St David’s School Inanda, Johannesburg while also studying part time for a B.Ed. at Wits University. In all these towns, he lived in Marist communities with other vowed brothers; he had very little independence (always moving in pairs); he socialised mostly with other Marists or priests or other religious (at least at first); and he dressed in a Marist habit (Colussi recalls that sometimes it was a dark suit rather than a soutane, though still with a brother’s Roman collar).¹³⁴ Even in Pietermaritzburg, where his family still lived, Kearney had limited opportunity to associate with them; the Marist house, Colussi recalls with irony, was in a part of Pietermaritzburg known as ‘Worlds End’ (near Prestbury).

During the Council itself (1962-1965) Kearney would have had access to the extensive reporting about it in the Catholic weekly paper, *The Southern Cross*.¹³⁵ Henriques assesses that in total there were 450 articles over the four years of the Council and not only were there news reports and editorials by Fr Stubbs, but also 32 ‘eye-witness accounts’ from a ‘Special Correspondent’, later revealed to be +Hurley himself.¹³⁶ Reviewing these, Henriques comments:

I was struck by the phenomenal extent to which all these lay readers were being exposed to the changes taking place at the Second Vatican Council, through the medium of the articles that appeared in *The Southern Cross*. It was in effect a massive catechetical exercise.¹³⁷

He further points out that many of the articles dealt with the laity (by James O’Neil, John Cogley, Albert Ripberger) and also ecumenism (Placid Jordan – even giving the perspective of Lutherans!). A few examples give a sense of what seeds were being sown in the mind of our young teaching Marist:

¹³² Marist Brothers, *Common Rules of the Institute*, 105

¹³³ Osborne, Kenan B. *Ministry – lay ministry in the Catholic Church, its history and theology* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist 1993) 522

¹³⁴ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹³⁵ Egan, Anthony. “How Vatican II renewed South African Catholicism - as perceived by *The Southern Cross* 1962-1968” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (2013, 39:2)

¹³⁶ Henriques, Alan. “Vatican II in *The Southern Cross*”. *Bulletin for Contextual Theology* (1997, 4:1) 31

¹³⁷ Henriques, “Vatican II in *The Southern Cross*”, 31

In June 1965, Albert Ripberger describes “the oversimplified formula hierarchy-laity” and rejects “the negative explanation [of the laity] that they do not belong to the hierarchy.”¹³⁸ At the end of the Council (15 Dec 1965), the editorial states:

...the Church faces the world not as an enemy to be fought but as part of God’s household to be served with the understanding of Christ... The world indeed remains, always, to be won. But it is won not by conquest, combat, compromise but by the power of God’s love, showing itself in sympathy and service in that humble give and take that we now call dialogue.¹³⁹

What Kearney is reading about from Rome is also beginning to be experienced in his life as a Marist because, although separation was still key, slowly the hard line between religious and lay was being softened. This was partly as the implications of Vatican II for religious life started to be felt by the Marists, but mostly as Kearney was exposed to broader experiences. Colussi points out that while at the University of Natal, Kearney would have been studying alongside a mix of other students which would have put him in touch, probably for the first time, with an ecumenical and even an inter-racial dimension to South Africa life.¹⁴⁰

McCrinkle recalls that they occasionally went to St Charles for sports events (where they would have mixed not only with the boys but also their parents), that they sometimes associated with women, and that they were not expected to observe the Hours of the Office when outside the community. He saw this a part of their maturing as Marists and also the impact of Vatican II: a move from ‘what is imposed by the Rule to taking responsibility for your own prayer life’. He recalls that some people found this quite difficult and that Kearney tended to still be very obedient as a scholastic.¹⁴¹ Because of Vatican II, religious life was (in McCrinkle’s opinion) in turmoil at that stage but Kearney seemed very committed to the cause.

Taylor recalls him around 1964 producing a pamphlet about the Marists ‘to show the life of a strong brother’. (Taylor was in the centre of the brochure and this was their first close contact.) He also recalls that with the Vatican II impact of vernacular in the liturgy, Kearney was organising choir practices since the hymns were now in English. “If no one else would do it Paddy would do it,” he commented.¹⁴²

But it was still a situation of relative isolation in which no one got to know each other very well because that was the system. Taylor however recalls that it was common practice to walk around after supper and remembers a conversation (probably around 1965) in which Kearney asked him: “What do you really want to do in your life?” Taylor was surprised at the idea that he had to decide for himself what he wanted and especially that Kearney suggested: “if you want to do something different, you are not being disobedient.” It seemed to him, looking back, that Kearney was thinking outside the box and recognising that they could be members of a community but still be individuals. This was not necessarily rebellion, though it might have been seen as that. Taylor replied to Kearney that he was not sure that he wanted to be here and, in fact, left the Marists in 1967.

(Taylor remained connected with Kearney in Durban in the 1970s as he was involved in the Renew programme at Holy Trinity parish and was part of YCW with Fr Albert Danker; he later moved to

¹³⁸ Henriques, “Vatican II in *The Southern Cross*”, 32

¹³⁹ Henriques, “Vatican II in *The Southern Cross*”, 32

¹⁴⁰ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁴¹ McCrinkle, Tim. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁴² Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

Australia and lived in a *L'Arche* community for 36 years where he found the spirit of 'relationship at the heart of the community to be the complete opposite of my experience of religious life'.)

Kearney's exposure to the world grew broader still when in 1966 he moved to teach at St David's, in a wealthy part of Johannesburg which, at the time, was 100% white boys and predominately Catholic. McCrindle credits some of this broadening to the Community Superior and School Principal, a Scot called Br Tony (Anthony McDocherty).

He was a similar type to Paddy, interested in outreach to the downtrodden, even if he [Br Tony] was more of a free spirit. Br Tony could mix with the very wealthy but also the poor – something that Paddy showed later. Br Tony later went on to work with Coloured communities on the Cape Flats and near Kuruman. Paddy did things at St David's which were ahead of their time but he was permitted to by Br Tony.¹⁴³

Colussi (who was already at St David's though seemingly less influenced by Br Tony) recalls that when Kearney arrived he already gave the impression of being someone who was 'progressive in his thinking, left-wing, and aware of social oppression'. Perhaps he was already showing the influence of having taken a wider interest in university life while in Pietermaritzburg.

He used to encourage us to talk about issues at night. What should the Marist Brothers be doing for the needs of society? In this he might have been seen by some of the brothers as an irritation; all the more so because he did not coach sports teams. Paddy was not necessarily a lone voice but he was a voice ahead of others.¹⁴⁴

One example of this that Colussi particularly remembers was how in 1967 Kearney arranged a series of Lenten lectures for which he invited non-Catholic speakers: a radical enough move but even more so since one of them was the head of the controversial Christian Institute, Beyers Naudé. The *College Review* commented that "attendance was by application only and that the Chapel was almost full for every talk."¹⁴⁵ Colussi also recalls that Kearney was involved in organising the Mass for the Silver Jubilee of St David's in 1966 and asked the priest if communion could be given under both kinds: at the time a radical innovation.¹⁴⁶ The priest, Fr Albert Plesters, who was then also in charge of liturgy for the Diocese of Johannesburg replied: "Liturgically no, but pastorally yes."¹⁴⁷

Lindegger, one of his students, recalls Kearney as one of the few Marists who was interested in Social Justice and who exposed the students to it.

We used to go to the Noordgesig township to teach catechism and to help at the school. We were a volunteer group and we visited regularly. This was arranged by Paddy as a way of

¹⁴³ McCrindle, Tim. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁴⁴ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁴⁵ Marist Archives, Johannesburg: *St David's College Review* (December 1967, Page 9)

¹⁴⁶ The Bishop John Moorman, who led the Anglican delegation of observers at Vatican II points out that communion under both kinds had been the norm until the 13th century. However, it had instead become a great symbol of division: the churches of the Reformation recovered the practice (citing Scripture, Jn 6:53) and so the Council of Trent formally justified its exclusion for Roman Catholics creating the doctrine of 'concomitance'. Kearney may not have known the history but was certainly aware that communion under both kinds could be viewed as dangerously Protestant. See Moorman, John. "Observers and Guests of the Council". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 158

¹⁴⁷ It is possible that though communion under both kinds had been officially endorsed by this date, it had not yet become the norm in South Africa. The fact that this comment was made by the priest in charge of liturgy for the diocese would reinforce this.

exposing wealthy kids to the reality of South Africa. We even visited the house of a local family.¹⁴⁸

He contrasted this with the policy of St David's to make sure that old school uniforms were carefully thrown away instead of being given to poor black children in case they ruined the reputation of the school.¹⁴⁹ He recalls not just the visit to the school of Beyers Naudé but how Kearney arranged for a small group of students to meet at the Dominee's own house and spend a few hours talking with him. It seems that Kearney was being discrete in how he introduced social justice issues since Lindegger's recollection was that in the (more public) debating society, which Kearney also organised, there was 'no politics, nothing of any relevance'.

Kearney himself, in a rare interview, recalls what happened when he tried to raise social awareness at St David's:

It was the time of Martin Luther King and I began to see these movies that were being sent around by the American Embassy and they had a kind of section for the cultural, I think it was called the cultural unit and I used to borrow these films and show them to the students at the school... one of the boys said to me: 'My father wants to know why are you showing these films'. It was a bit of a threat you know but nothing happened.¹⁵⁰

Lindegger is not as complimentary as Colussi about life at St David's. In particular, he is critical of the commitment of the Marists to faith and spirituality. He points out that having been founded to serve poor French boys, the Marists had created St David's as an élite flagship. He recalls many of the brothers as having been 'such a bad influence, so sadistic, so cruel'.

They were only interested in rugby and élitism. I have no memory of a Marist with any religious interest and, though the Oblates gave them retreats, there seemed to be no religious content.¹⁵¹

He particularly remembered Br Lewis 'an old drunk in charge of the chapel'. Kearney had been trying to make the liturgy more meaningful and relevant and Br Lewis ended up having a fight with Kearney and chasing him out of the chapel.

For Lindegger, Kearney was the only Marist brother who did anything religious, leading a regular rosary, attending Mass every day and Benediction on a Sunday. Kearney was involved in the 'Sodality of Mary' which later modernised as the 'Christian Life Group' (under the influence of a Jesuit chaplain). At the same time, he recalls that Kearney was very uptight and did not have a warm relationship with the students but he stood out as being committed to his faith. A particular memory he has is that Kearney pushed for Lindegger to be a prefect, even though he was not part of the 1st XV Rugby team, because Kearney thought there should be people with an alternative perspective to bring in different qualities of leadership.

It was mentioned earlier that, when Lindegger left school, he began training as an Oblate priest and he explains that his attraction to the order was due to the OMI chaplain at school. This helped him

¹⁴⁸ Lindegger, Graham. Personal interview by author, 1 November 2020 in Pietermaritzburg (student at St David's Inanda)

¹⁴⁹ While working with Kearney at the Denis Hurley Centre around 2016, the author recalls seeing a homeless man in an old blazer from St Henry's, the sister school of St David's in Durban. Kearney was most amused by this, perhaps recalling the less inclusive policy of St David's in the 1960s.

¹⁵⁰ Houston, Gregory. "Interview with Paddy Kearney". *Unsung Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Struggle* (Cape Town: Human Science Research Council, 2013) 3

¹⁵¹ Lindegger, Graham. Personal interview by author, 1 November 2020 in Pietermaritzburg (student at St David's Inanda)

see that beyond the 'repressive religious devotions' followed by the Marists – reciting the rosary, repeating learnt prayers – there was room for meditation and reflective practice as he found later with the Jesuits and CLG.

I did not see the Marists as being in the same sort of religious life as the Oblates. There was nothing attractive about the Marists as a form of religious life.¹⁵²

As well as the witness of people inside the Marist circle, it has also been possible to interview four people who knew him at this time but were just outside the circle. They were all members of the Grail Community in Johannesburg in the late 1960s and beyond. This movement had started in the Netherlands in 1921 and had been in South Africa since 1951. The Grail was unusual in that, although it appeared to be like a community of nuns or vowed religious sisters, the women did not take formal vows, simply promises to live in community. Moreover, they were not committed to celibacy and, over time, a number of them did in fact marry (while remaining linked to the Grail).

Thus the Grail, was an interesting contrast to the religious life that Kearney lived with the Marists: they are all women, and committed to a form of religious life that was not weighed down with centuries of rules and traditions. *De jure* the status of Grail members and Marist brothers was similar – neither were ordained, both had taken vows or promises to live a certain kind of Christian life. But *de facto* there was a huge difference between them: the Marists trying to be as separated from the world as possible, the Grail trying to be as involved as they could be.

Kearney had a family link to the Grail since one of the Johannesburg members was Annami Galway, whose sister Mary had married Kearney's brother Jack in 1964. A member of the Grail, Marilyn Aitken commented: "Paddy was like a brother to us" and this was not just because of his connection through the Galway family but also, she felt, because they shared similar values.¹⁵³ It is likely though that the family connection made it more acceptable for Kearney as a young male celibate to travel on his own to visit a house full of (then) un-married women!

Another Grail member, Loek Goemans, who remained a lifelong friend of Kearney, recalls how Kearney, as a young Marist brother, used to visit the Grail house on Loch Avenue in Johannesburg.¹⁵⁴ Here, in contrast to the Marist community at St David's, he would have listened in on excited conversations about the Second Vatican Council; and he would have heard about and seen concrete examples of the ecumenical movement.

A key influence was another member, Ines Ceruti, with whom Kearney was especially friendly and who, 13 years older than him, acted as a kind of mentor, according to Aitken. Kearney and Ceruti taught together at St David's but they also taught in a very different place. 50 years after the events, and now in her late 80s and experiencing some forgetfulness, Ceruti recounted with glee the stories of how she and Kearney went to teach in Soweto around 1968:

We thought that young black children should be able to get the same quality of education we were giving at St David's. Since they could not come to us, we would have to go to them. We had to smuggle our way in to Soweto since it was illegal for white people to travel there without good reason. I put on a blue scarf and pretended I was 'Sr Agnes', a Mercy sister (since they had a permit) even though I was not. Paddy pretended to be my driver and signed the entrance book as BP Kearney ('Brother Paddy Kearney'). And we made it to

¹⁵² Lindegger, Graham. Personal interview by author, 1 November 2020 in Pietermaritzburg (student at St David's Inanda)

¹⁵³ Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

¹⁵⁴ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

Regina Mundi [the Catholic church in the heart of Soweto] and set up classes in the choir loft on a Saturday morning.^{155 156}

Ceruti commented that she felt that Kearney liked being at St David's, that he was popular with the boys because he had a sense of humour, and that he never used the cane.

But also Paddy was a bit political. I think he was supporting the Progressive Party and we went to some meetings together. He cared quite a lot about justice. It was Br Anthony [the Principal] who encouraged him; he was very fond of Paddy.

Goemans recalls 'Ines was a breath of fresh air for Paddy'.¹⁵⁷ She thought this especially important because Kearney had come from a conventionally Catholic family, had joined the Marists (which she thought was not at all surprising), and now found himself in a fairly conservative community of brothers.

During the time of the Council (1962-1965), the Grail community's house in Observatory had regularly hosted +Hurley to give feedback talks about the Council as he was travelling from Rome back to Durban. Although Kearney would not have been in Johannesburg to attend any of these himself, there were still people coming from overseas to give lectures there and Kearney would have been influenced by those. It was almost certainly through the Grail that Kearney met Beyers Naudé since he and his wife (Ilse) lived round the corner and would often meet visitors at the Grail since they knew that their own house was bugged by the security police.¹⁵⁸

So we have a picture now of Kearney in religious life in Johannesburg – still a Marist but distinctly less clericalised than his initial experience had been as a novice. This was partly because of the opportunities to which he was exposed (and which he grasped) but also the *aggiornamento* that Vatican II had promised. In this period, we see Kearney's growing interest in ecumenism, liturgy and social justice, and all are in keeping with the developments of Vatican II. He had arrived at St David's only two months after the Council had closed, and it would have continued to be part of the conversation at the Grail community at that time.

That was not, however, the case at the Marist community in Inanda. McCrindle has no recollection of the young Marists studying the documents of the Council. Lindegger corroborates this saying that he has no recollection of any mention of Vatican II while at school.¹⁵⁹ Colussi has a clear memory of where conversations were focused:

It was not that we had a conservative attitude about the changes; it was just that the conversation at the table was more about the 1st XV Rugby match than about social issues. Perhaps the Jesuits were discussing the Council, but were too busy running a school.¹⁶⁰

The failure of Kearney's Marist community at St David's to engage with Vatican II was especially surprising given that one of the documents of the Council (*Perfectae Caritatis*) was specifically about religious life. Every order was urged to spend time on:

¹⁵⁵ Ceruti, Ines. Personal interview by author, 8 April 2019 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

¹⁵⁶ A coincidental link to Vatican II is that the foundation stone of Regina Mundi had been laid in 1962 by Cardinal Montini who went on to be Pope Paul VI.

¹⁵⁷ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

¹⁵⁸ Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

¹⁵⁹ Lindegger, Graham. Personal interview by author, 1 November 2020 in Pietermaritzburg (student at St David's Inanda)

¹⁶⁰ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

... the adaptation and renewal of the religious life [which] includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.

There is no evidence of this, nor of the following:

Institutes should promote among their members an adequate knowledge of the social conditions of the times they live in and of the needs of the Church. In such a way, judging current events wisely in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to assist people more effectively.¹⁶¹

Kearney had to go outside his community to engage with 'social conditions'. But by doing so he found a way of being a Marist, being engaged in political discussions, learning about the changes in the Church and in the world, and broadening his network beyond a small group of sports-mad, Catholic, celibate male teachers. He appeared to be settled, and he took his final vows as a brother in 1967. And yet he clearly was not. And by the end of 1969, Kearney had left the Marists.

Kearney's decision to leave the Marists

Departures from the priesthood and religious life after the Second Vatican Council were very common and South Africa was no less affected by this. For example, according to Denis, the Dominicans in Stellenbosch in four years (1968-1972) lost eight priests, four students and two brothers; combined with departures to Europe and deaths this represented a shrinkage to 30% of their earlier size.¹⁶²

In fact, it was such a widespread phenomenon that we need to be reminded what a change in attitude it reflected. Before Vatican II, a vocation to the priesthood (if a man) or to religious life (as a man or a woman) was regarded as the greatest gift from God. Not to pursue that vocation was akin to rejecting God's gift. Keane recalls that in those days someone who gave up a vocation was commonly referred to disparagingly: 'a ruined priest', 'an ex one', 'he didn't make it'.¹⁶³

This was the general Catholic culture in which Kearney was brought up; it was emphasised even more strongly during his formation. The book in Marcellin Champagnat's name has a sub-title which admonished Marist novices to 'listen to the words of your father'. For Kearney or anyone else who wavered about being a Marist, these words were very severe as they threatened a graded descent into the abyss.¹⁶⁴

The first caution is for those who are not sure about taking vows:

To miss your vocation means to be unaware of God's plans for you. It means not knowing your vocation or having only a confused and incomplete notion of it.

The second warning is for those who have taken first vows:

¹⁶¹ *Perfectae Caritatis 2*

¹⁶² Denis, Philippe. *The Dominican Friars in Southern Africa (1577-1990). A Social History* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 146

¹⁶³ Keane, Marie-Henry. Personal interview by author, 16 September 2021 via Zoom (Dominican sister and co-worker)

¹⁶⁴ Champagnat, *Chronicles of the Little Brothers of Mary*, 39-41

To lose your vocation [after simple vows but before solemn profession] means...not having known at all how or what to do to cultivate, maintain, strengthen and preserve a vocation which was really given by God, or not having wanted to do so.

The wavering Marist is alerted that he might have caused God to 'withdraw that special favour' for one of the following reasons:

- Abuse of grace and contempt for little things
- Uncontrolled passion for study or some material thing
- Infidelity to the Rule
- Neglecting the exercises of piety
- Violent temptations followed by repeated grave faults
- Finally, discouragement, which is the most common cause for the loss of vocation.

Note that all of these are presented as faults of the individual. It is not contemplated that the person might simply have needed time to discover that they are not called to be a Marist. Furthermore, there is no possibility considered that the fault might lie in the community.

But the harshest remonstrance is reserved for someone, like Kearney, who left having taken final vows:

To apostatise from one's vocation means abandoning after profession. Profaning one's vocation and the holy covenant one has made with God often brings on the total ruin of one's salvation. It is like a shipwreck on the high seas; after such a disaster it will be very difficult, perhaps impossible, to reach port. It is total bankruptcy; the entire economy of one's salvation, one's whole spiritual fortune is endangered and perhaps ruined forever. There is nothing worse than an apostate religious. St Augustine's opinion of them was: "I have never seen more perverse and more deeply corrupted individuals than those who went bad in religious life."

And if this were not enough, the book offers further curses from a Dominican (St Thomas Aquinas), a Jesuit (St Robert Bellarmine) and even St Paul (especially curious since vowed religious life did not exist in the early church!).

Faced with warnings like this, it is hardly surprising that people rarely had the courage to leave. But Vatican II, through its reforms of the Church and of religious life, suddenly made it possible to contemplate ending one's vows without losing one's soul. There were clearly people who were already unhappy but now finally were able to leave in good conscience. There were also those who wanted to leave and get married and have families and now were able to do so and (after due process) still be in good standing with the Church.

There were some who left because the changes in the Church were so undermining of their identity: if you had been told all your religious life that you were a more perfect Christian by virtue of having taken vows, and now you are told that you are the same as everyone else, you might feel you no longer had a reason to stay. But there were others who left because the changes opened up a window which showed them that they could still serve their vocation and be a lay person: many women who wanted to be Catholic nurses had become nuns but now realised that they could still be Catholic nurses as lay women.

Unhappiness, a desire to get married, a loss of identity or a change in vocation – which of these were the reason for Kearney’s departure? In an unusual example of self-disclosure, Kearney seems to answer this question in his interview with Gregory Houston:

My idea of the Marist Brothers is that they had been founded to teach the poor and here they were teaching the richest kids in South Africa and they didn’t have a single school for black people and I used to complain about that and they would say “well, you know, whites have also got souls”, which was a very feeble response. So I left the Marist Brothers, you know, I wasn’t happy, you know, with the difference between what they were supposed to be doing and what they were actually doing.¹⁶⁵

This suggests that it was a principled act based on a frustration not with his own vocation but the vocation of his religious order. It is interesting, though, that Kearney did not express this view so clearly to anyone else when he was leaving. The interview with Houston was in 2013 by which point Kearney’s international reputation as a champion of justice was well established. He could be forgiven, therefore, if his interpretation of his motivation 44 years earlier seems clearer than it might have been at the time.

The most striking thing about Kearney’s leaving is that he seems to have given no hint of it to any of those closest to him (at least based on those who were interviewed for this research). At the end of the school term in November 1969, Kearney left St David’s, and was on the Marist list to return in January 1970. But he did not go to his family in Pietermaritzburg nor to another Marist community. Instead, Colussi recalls, the then bishop of Bethlehem, +Peter Kelleter CSsP, contacted his friend Jack Kearney (who was Paddy’s older brother) to tell him not to worry about Paddy because he was living with +Gerard Van Velsen OP, the Bishop of Kroonstad. We do not know why Kearney specifically went to stay with +Van Velsen; but we do know that Kearney did not return for the new term in January 1970. (I shall explore this influence later in Chapter 3).

Colussi points out that there had been others who left between 1963 and 1969 and that there was a ‘normal departure process’: you inform the Provincial and then you let your brothers know.¹⁶⁶ But when Kearney left, he just disappeared with no farewell to Colussi or anyone else. And even at the start of the next school year, there was no official statement such that Colussi recalls someone asking him “Has Br Patrick left?” and him having to reply “I don’t know.” He did not confide in his brothers nor in any of those he was close to at the Grail even though, according to Aitken, it was very much part of his support system at the time.¹⁶⁷

Even more interestingly, it does not seem to be something that he discussed with any of these people after he left, even though he stayed in touch with some of them for 48 years until his death. That is what makes the clear explanation to Houston so out of character. But those interviewed did share their thoughts in retrospect.

McCrinkle remembers other brothers who left around the same time and in particular a Spanish brother at St David’s who just went home and did not come back. He did not see Kearney as someone ‘looking to get out’ but, in retrospect, he could see why. He points out that Kearney took his final profession at the same time as himself which meant he delayed by one year (from 1966 to 1967) and that this indicates, when seen now, some sort of questioning. But given the strong family

¹⁶⁵ Houston, “Interview with Paddy Kearney”, 3

¹⁶⁶ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁶⁷ Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

spirit in Marist life and the sense of community (which Kearney shared), his unannounced departure was surprising.

However, McCrindle feels that Kearney was a visionary and that it was good that he did leave. "When I heard what Paddy was doing in Durban it seemed not at all surprising and, I guess, that is why he linked up so easily with +Hurley." McCrindle was conscious that the brothers were not moving fast enough against the Apartheid system and gives the example of the promotion of the cadet corps which he regarded as effectively a recruitment strategy for the Apartheid-era military and was made to do under obedience. (McCrindle himself left the Marists 26 years later to get married but only after having become Provincial).¹⁶⁸

Colussi does note that the rate of attrition in brothers' congregations was higher than in priestly congregations partly because of the work ethic. He recalls the Superior, Br Anthony, saying at the time "You will never know why Br Patrick left" but is not sure what this meant. Colussi's feeling is that Kearney was possibly disappointed that the Marists were not progressive enough, or aggressive enough, in their engagement with social justice. He feels now that Kearney was 'guided by the spirit' and speculated that Kearney felt he could not do with the Marists the good that he could do in another situation.¹⁶⁹

It was with Taylor that Kearney had had the conversation a few years earlier asking the question 'what do you want to do with your life' and Kearney making the point that doing something different was not necessarily being disobedient. Taylor recalls that Kearney had said: "I want to be a teacher and a brother" and that perhaps this way round of listing his desires suggested that being a brother was less important to Kearney than being a teacher. Taylor also speculates that the Marists would not have freed up Kearney to run something like Diakonia.¹⁷⁰

It would have been unlikely for Kearney to confide in any of his students, but Lindegger recalls that he was not at all puzzled at Kearney's leaving since he seemed to be so different from the other Marists. He also mentioned another brother who departed around the same time and commented sadly: "It was all the positive ones who left."¹⁷¹

As mentioned, Kearney did not discuss with his friends at the Grail why he left but, since he stayed in touch with them, and they worked together on social justice issues in Durban, some of the Grail members feel informed to comment on why he did so. Aitken surmises that it was because the Marists were not very involved in justice issues and that Kearney was very frustrated. She points out that, for example, in terms of desegregating schools the congregations of sisters were miles ahead of the brothers who seemed much more afraid of the Government.¹⁷² In fact, Pieterse (the same Br Jude mentioned above) suggests that the stance of the sisters was much more principled than that of the brothers.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ McCrindle, Tim. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁶⁹ Colussi, Mario. Personal interview by author, 13 and 16 October 2020 in Johannesburg (fellow Marist novice/ brother)

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, Peter. Personal interview by author, 1 February 2021 via Zoom (fellow Marist novice/ brother with Kearney)

¹⁷¹ Lindegger, Graham. Personal interview by author, 1 November 2020 in Pietermaritzburg (student at St David's Inanda)

¹⁷² Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

¹⁷³ Pieterse quotes this from 1975 "[The Association of Teaching Brothers] is in favour of integrated education, as far as it is in conformity with educational norms, involving as it does the admission of Black children to our White schools. The AGM agrees that the Brothers work towards this end in a manner which is within the laws of the land, at the same time taking all practicable steps to have the laws amended." And he contrasts this language to the earlier statement from the Association of Women Religious which mentions 'witness to social justice' and does not mention 'the laws of the land'. Pieterse, Jude. *The Open Schools Era (1976-1986)*. (Johannesburg: Marist Brothers, 2020) 18

Goemans does not recall him saying as such but that he certainly indicated, that he 'had to leave the Marists because their conservatism cramped his style'. He said he felt that he could do more, and that Church authorities would watch him less if he was not a Marist and could get around more. She recalls him saying that he was worried that he could have got the school into trouble and that it was 'safer to be away from the school'. She remembers him as the most political of the young Marists although there were others who were also quite socially aware.¹⁷⁴

A friend much later in his life, Berenice De la Croix, gave an explanation (though I am not sure of the basis for it) that Kearney was not happy with the racism in the Church and that even after he made a formal complaint, nothing changed and so he left.¹⁷⁵

Keane, who has herself spent almost 70 years in religious life, speculates that it would have taken Kearney great courage to say goodbye to the Marists. She had earlier seen the nurturing of Kearney's vocation as a teacher, and concludes that he left because he decided 'this is not for me' but notes that when he left he did not break with the past but continued as a teacher. "The teacher did not die in Paddy."¹⁷⁶

Sydney Duval who also knew Kearney over many years, and had also opted out of religious life, realised that he and Kearney had never talked about their respective vocations "even though I am accustomed to asking direct questions!" He made a comment about himself which he felt could also have applied to Kearney: "When I left the seminary I was heart sore – but I have come to realise that we need a Catholic journalist more than we need another priest."¹⁷⁷

Overall there is no suggestion that Kearney left because he felt his identity as a separated religious was being undermined – far from it; nor that he left in order to get married which he would not do for another 13 years. It seems to be a combination of unhappiness – not with himself but with what he perceived as the failures of the Marist Brothers to engage with social justice – and the realisation that what he wanted to do to serve the Church, he could do as a lay person. Not surprisingly, given his desire 'to be a teacher and a brother', the first settled thing he did after leaving was to get a job as a teacher. Inanda Seminary School gave him all the scope that he wanted to teach. But it was a girl's school, it was for black students, and it was run by the Congregational Church; so it was a decisive way of showing that the vocation to be a teacher could outlive his vocation to be a Marist.

Kearney's professional life after the Marists

As a Marist, Kearney had had a very clear vocation within the Church. As he emerged into his life after the Marists, it is interesting to explore what new vocation(s) he took on. A good insight comes from the aforementioned Dominican theologian, Albert Nolan, who first met him in this period.¹⁷⁸ It is interesting that in the interview with him, Nolan mistakenly recalled that Kearney had been not a Marist Brother but a Christian Brother (the other main order of Catholic brothers running schools in South Africa): that would suggest that Kearney's identity as an ex-Marist was not one that he carried forcefully.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail)

¹⁷⁵ De la Croix, Berenice. Personal interview by author, 30 September and 9 October 2020 in Durban (personal friend)

¹⁷⁶ Keane, Marie-Henry. Personal interview by author, 16 September 2021 via Zoom (Dominican sister and co-worker)

¹⁷⁷ Duval, Sydney. Personal interview by author, 5 January 2021 in Cape Town (Catholic activist and journalist)

¹⁷⁸ Nolan, Albert. Personal interview by author, 18 Oct 2020 in Boksburg GP (Dominican priest and liberation theologian)

¹⁷⁹ I make this point because, 15 years after I left the Society of Jesus, some people still mistakenly believe I am a Jesuit.

Nolan knew from the outset that Kearney was a friend of +Hurley though he could see that this was a developing relationship which would become more prominent later. Nolan felt that there was no issue for +Hurley that Kearney was not a cleric. He recalls being conscious of this because there were others in the circle of progressive Catholic thinkers who had left priesthood and/or religious life and who also continued to work for the Church such as Cosmas Desmond (an ex-Franciscan), Augustine Schutte (an ex-Dominican) and Brian Gaybba (a former priest of the Archdiocese of Cape Town). Whilst the most common reason why they left was to get married, there were other reasons as well; yet all were still continuing some kind of apostolic work. “There was no awkwardness about this among the people I mixed with,” Nolan explained “and for some of them instead of limiting their apostolic possibilities it actually multiplied them.” He specifically recalls Kearney saying that being a brother had limited him rather than giving him scope. (There were, of course, other outcomes: Schutte was not allowed to continue teaching at the seminary in Hammanskraal; and there were others who left who did not want anything to do with the church.)

Nolan recalls discussing theology with these lay people; he concludes that, even if they did not actually quote *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, they were becoming comfortable with the idea that ‘vocation’ meant more than just priesthood and religious life and that marriage was increasingly being seen as a vocation. In this, he wondered if there was some influence from his fellow Dominican, Bishop Van Velsen of Kroonstad who was, according to Nolan, convinced that the married men he was ordaining as deacons would all eventually be allowed to become priests.

Nolan’s reference to *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is the following passage:

Since the Creator of all things has established conjugal society as the beginning and basis of human society and, by His grace, has made it a great mystery in Christ and the Church (cf. Eph. 5:32), the apostolate of married persons and families is of unique importance for the Church and civil society.¹⁸⁰

Kearney was not to marry until 13 years after he left the Marists, but Vatican II’s document on the laity also recognises (for perhaps the first time in the history of the Church) that there are Christians who might choose not to marry and also not to take a vow of celibacy.

Deserving of special honour and commendation in the Church are those lay people, single or married, who devote themselves with professional experience, either permanently or temporarily, to the service of associations and their activities [of the apostolate].¹⁸¹

Whereas Kearney’s first formal jobs were with a non-Catholic institution (Inanda Seminary in 1971) and then with a secular institution (University of Natal 1972-3), he soon found himself drawn into the ambit of Catholic organisations. When a junior lecturer in the Education department at the University of Natal, Kearney first got to know Doug Irvine who remained a lifelong friend.¹⁸² Irvine had attended the first Archdiocese of Durban Synod which +Hurley called in 1968, for the first time bringing lay people into a discussion about the Church on a par with priests and religious. At that synod, +Hurley appointed a number of commissions including Justice & Peace with Irvine as member and Roy Lailvaux as the first Chair. In fact, Irvine recalls, Justice & Peace was chaired by lay people from the outset which meant that a lay person was presiding over the Vicar General (at the time Fr Charles Langlois) who was merely a member of the Commission. Justice & Peace was the vehicle for

¹⁸⁰ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 11

¹⁸¹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 22

¹⁸² Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and involved in Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace)

+Hurley to draw Kearney's talents and skills into the work of the Church. We have Kearney's own words on this which are worth quoting a length:

I was aware that the Catholic Archdiocese of Durban had just had its first synod and, in the Catholic Church, we didn't have synods, ever. But after the Vatican Council, Archbishop Hurley introduced the first synod in Southern Africa in 1968 and as a result of that synod, a number of commissions were established which lay people served and they were to promote different things like inter-church relations, justice and peace, liturgy and so on because there were a lot of changes taking place. So I thought that would quite fun to join one of those commissions [and I wrote to +Hurley].

Got a letter back straight away saying you will join the Justice and Peace Commission ...So that, that pushed me completely into a new realm and I mean I was very excited about that and was able to do quite a lot and obviously came to the attention of Archbishop Hurley ...what he said was 'I'm going to start this new organisation called Diakonia and I would like you to be the director.'

I came back to him and I said: 'No, I really don't think it's me, I'm sorry, I can't do it.' So then nothing happened. You know, I didn't hear anything about Diakonia anymore. So I kind of got a message back to him to say: 'Look, I mean, don't not do it because I'm not agreeing to do it, to help you with it. I would help you to get it started and then we'll add the tiers and we'll find somebody to do it and I'll bow out.'

So that's what I did, I organised some consultations, brought people together, helped them understand what it was all about and then we drew up a constitution and advertised the post, got some applications, interviewed the people, appointed somebody and she didn't take the job. So, nothing happened again. So then I thought, I better go and see him. I went to see him and I said: 'OK, I'll do it.'¹⁸³

This foreshortened version of the story explains how – with just a five-year gap of not formally working for the Church – Kearney went from 10 years with the Marists to 29 years (1975-2004) working as a lay man for the Catholic Archbishop, leading an ecumenical organisation.

Whether consciously or not, Kearney is beginning to live out the opening words of the Decree on the Laity:

The Apostolate of the Laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it.... Our own times require of the laity no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified. With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone.... An indication of this manifold and pressing need is the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibility and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances.¹⁸⁴

Conscious of this responsibility, Kearney created and led Diakonia, and then worked with a range of other organisations culminating in the Denis Hurley Centre, to contribute to what Vatican II calls

¹⁸³ Houston, "Interview with Paddy Kearney", 5

¹⁸⁴ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 1

'God's plan for the world ..that people should work together to renew and constantly perfect the temporal order'.¹⁸⁵ The things that are listed in this section of the document as making up 'the temporal order' can be seen as Kearney's agenda for the next forty years of his life: 'the good things of life, the prosperity of the family, culture, economic matters, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations, ...development and progress'. Moreover, I think that Kearney agreed with the Council Fathers that these 'not only aid in the attainment of a human being's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value'.

Kearney's lifestyle after the Marists

As will be discussed more in Chapter 7, Kearney does not seem to have spoken much about his life as a Marist after he left. On the other hand, the way that he lived his life now that he was no longer a Marist was spontaneously described by a number of interviewees as typical of someone living a religious life (even if not the life of a religious).

Keane recalls that he was most abstemious even when he was taken out for dinner. "It was his asceticism – the brother was not left behind."¹⁸⁶ Aitken also noticed his simple lifestyle. "The option for the poor was reflected in the way he lived."¹⁸⁷ Liz Mkame who was his first co-worker at Diakonia remembers that Kearney would sometimes forget his pay cheques. "It was almost as if he was still a monk."¹⁸⁸ She added that she felt that Kearney was conscious, in a positive way, of being a lay man among clerics.

Colleen Irvine recalls: "I went into his little flat and thought it was like a monastic cell – but the difference was that he was free to come and go as he wished."¹⁸⁹ The flat referred to is in the final years of his life when Kearney was on his own. But a similar description was given about the house in Morningside that he shared with Carmel Rickard when they were married: 'clerical, bare, not homely, food very meagre'.¹⁹⁰ This comment was made by Dina Cormick who added: "To my mind, Paddy was always a brother. He was so modest." She found it intriguing that even though she too had left an order (she had been a Carmelite), and was conducting research about former religious, Kearney never discussed this issue with her.

In choosing a simple lifestyle, Kearney would also have been inspired by +Hurley who sold the 'palatial' Lillieshall House to move into a flat behind the new chancery offices.¹⁹¹ Later, he retired to modest quarters with fellow Oblates. Dunne's comment about +Hurley could equally be about Kearney: "Simplicity of life and vigour of commitment are some of his enduring strengths."¹⁹²

One of his nieces, Sarah Kearney, also remembers the simple lifestyle of Kearney and his wife recalling an image she had of them in 1975 when she was 5 years old:

¹⁸⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7

¹⁸⁶ Keane, Marie-Henry. Personal interview by author, 16 September 2021 via Zoom (Dominican sister and co-worker)

¹⁸⁷ Aitken, Marilyn. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (member of The Grail)

¹⁸⁸ Mkame, Liz. Personal interview by author, 17 December 2020 in Pinetown (co-worker at Diakonia)

¹⁸⁹ Irvine, Colleen. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and involved in Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace)

¹⁹⁰ Cormick, Dina. Personal interview by author, 21 December 2020 in Durban (freelance designer at Diakonia)

¹⁹¹ Kearney, *Guardian of the Light*, 314

¹⁹² Dunne, Tim. "Who shall dwell on your Holy Mountain?". *Denis Hurley – a portrait by friends*. Anthony Gamley ed. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001) 182

They [Paddy and Carmel] prided themselves on eating simply. In the 1970s the mantra of the enlightened few was 'less is more'.

She added that other members of the family were less impressed. Her mother Mary (wife of Jack Kearney) was convinced he was anorexic and she would mock Paddy, according to Sarah, saying: "He's a pipecleaner in shoes; he starves himself to show his noble intentions." By contrast, Sarah felt that he denied himself because of his spiritual principles. "He was so aware of the poverty around him – how can you have excess when others have so little?" When asked if this was a problem when her uncle was living with Carmel Rickard, she replied: "Paddy was married to his work. He would wake up and go straight to do his emails. And he would do his morning prayer while walking for an hour each day."¹⁹³

Whilst this commitment is admirable, it also runs the risk of alienating lay people who do not feel they can live up to such a high standard. In trying to answer why Catholic Social Teaching remains 'the Church's best-kept secret', Hinze quotes David O'Brien:

Because it is presented either under a guise that makes it so demanding that it negates lay life, or so modest that it makes no real difference. Until a third way, at once demanding and responsible emerges with greater clarity, the rich vital body of CST would likely remain too little known.¹⁹⁴

It was not just his lifestyle but the way he conducted himself that was interpreted by others as different from an ordinary lay person. Eric Apelgren, whom Kearney first knew when he was a parish youth worker and who then went on to high office in the Municipality commented:

I was very surprised when Paddy married Carmel. I thought he was destined to be a priest and we always treated him that way. It is because he was always a person of deep reflection, very philosophical. He never got caught up in his emotions, never got angry – even during a protest march. That's how we thought a priest should have behaved. What is more Paddy never saw himself as a leader; no ambition to lead – that is why people thought he was like a priest.¹⁹⁵

The public side of Kearney's personal relationship

The comments above include reference to Carmel Rickard. The status of 'lay person' in Catholic theology covers both those who are married and those who are single (as was shown above in the quotation from *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 22). In his first years after leaving the Marists, Kearney was on his own. According to Mary de Haas (who was very friendly with the Kearney family and later was connected to them through marriage) for Kearney 'not being married was an advantage because it meant he was free to act' (in contrast to his two brothers Jack and Brian who had both settled down with families).¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Kearney, Sarah. Personal interview by author, 17 September 2020 (niece of Kearney)

¹⁹⁴ Hinze, Christine. "Straining towards Solidarity in a Suffering World – *Gaudium et Spes* after 40 Years". *Vatican II – 40 years later*. in William Madges ed. (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 2006) 185

¹⁹⁵ Apelgren, Eric. Personal interview by author, 6 October 2020 in Durban (volunteer at Diakonia and local Government official)

¹⁹⁶ de Haas, Mary. Personal interview by author, 30 September 2020 in Durban (fellow activist and mother-in-law to Kearney's niece)

But according to Kerchhoff (corroborated by the memory of Sarah Kearney quoted above) by 1974 or 1975, Kearney was living as a couple with Carmel Rickard, a well-known human rights journalist.¹⁹⁷ But they were not married, a fact that might not have been worthy of comment in the 1970s in Europe or North America, but certainly was in South Africa at that time, especially since Kearney was working in a very public way for the Church and specifically for the Catholic Archbishop.

The reason that they did not marry was confirmed by Richard Steele since he and his partner Anita Kromberg had made a similar decision (and as a couple they were closely associated with Kearney and Rickard). Conscious that the Apartheid 'Morality Laws' made it impossible for mixed race couples to marry, they decided that to get married under the same laws would be to condone them. "It was thus a public non-violent action to refuse to be married legally." Steele added – without suggesting that the same applied to Kearney and Rickard – that he and Anita had decided not to have children having so often seen the children of activists being neglected. "It did seem to me that Paddy immersed himself and his meaning and his identity in his service work."¹⁹⁸

Further insight is given by Charles Yeats who recalls that when he first knew Kearney, it was known that he and Rickard were living together:

I questioned how he could hold his Christian position while flouting it in his private life, adding that this was a view expressed by a number of more conservative Christians in Durban. He explained that his involvement in the cause for justice eclipsed those concerns. I felt that as a layperson, he had a freedom to live the way he wanted to – and respect Carmel's strong feminist beliefs. In fact I suspect it was Carmel who did not want to get married.¹⁹⁹

Cardinal Napier feels that Rickard and Kearney living together was a source of embarrassment for +Hurley and that that is why he eventually challenged them to get married, at least in church.²⁰⁰ They did so, in Emmanuel Cathedral in January 1983 with Doug Irvine as best man but with +Hurley not presiding because his presence there 'might have raised eyebrows.'²⁰¹ Bishop Nuttall confirmed that this was a Church marriage and was never registered as a Government marriage so the political principle was still honoured, adding that this also made their separation process easier later.²⁰² (Kearney and Rickard separated in 2004 though remained on good terms).²⁰³

The idea of Kearney and Rickard using their life together as a political statement is also shown in another way. Bishop Rubin Phillip recalls that he first met them, when he was posted as a young priest to the Anglican Church in Wentworth, because they used to go to the nearby Catholic Church. Wentworth was designated by Apartheid law as a coloured residential area and it was because of their consciousness about the Apartheid situation that Kearney and Rickard were committed to being part of a non-white parish. +Phillip recalls that they were warmly received and that they also

¹⁹⁷ Kerchhoff, Joan. Personal interview by author, 6 April 2022 in Pietermaritzburg (widow of head of PACSA)

¹⁹⁸ Steele, Richard. Personal interview by author, 27 October 2020 in Durban (Conscientious Objector)

¹⁹⁹ Yeats, Charles. Personal interview by the author, 18 May 2022 via Zoom (Conscientious Objector)

²⁰⁰ Napier, Wilfrid. Personal interview by author, 28 September 2020 in Durban (Cardinal Archbishop of Durban); it should however be noted that in 1983, Napier was Bishop of Kokstad and so would not necessarily have been very involved in what was happening in Durban about four hours drive away.

²⁰¹ Irvine, Doug. Personal interview by author, 12 October 2020 in Johannesburg (personal friend and involved in Archdiocese of Durban Justice & Peace)

²⁰² Nuttall, Michael. Email to the author, 8 October 2020

²⁰³ Tully, Stephen. Personal interview by author, 8 December 2020 in Durban. (Catholic priest and co-founder of the Denis Hurley Centre); Note that Carmel Rickard was approached on a number of occasions but declined to be interviewed for this research.

made a point of not participating in a leadership role in the parish “so that it did not look as if they had come there to take over.”^{204 205}

Whilst the private relationship between Kearney and Rickard is outside the scope of this research, the public dimension of this is relevant. It shows that after leaving the Marists, Kearney clearly saw himself as a lay person free to marry according to Canon Law (though choosing not to do under secular law). But it also shows that while he was with his wife, and even more so after they separated, Kearney lived a style of life which had much in common with his Marist spirituality. These words of Champagnat could still be applied to Kearney many decades after he was no longer a ‘Little Brother of Mary’:

Little before God, little before our superiors, little before the authorities, little before our brothers, little even before our students, little in our teaching, little before ourselves.²⁰⁶

Kearney’s position after he left the Marists was certainly not as easy as it would have been if he had stayed. He had to negotiate having a position of responsibility in a clerical Church but without a clerical title, and as a Catholic working with other Christians; he had to work out how he would mark his personal romantic relationship; he had to decide for himself how he would live a simple Christian life. Whilst he was no longer bound by the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, they were still important principles that guided his decisions. And though Vatican II had opened up possibilities for him, reform in the Church was at best work-in-progress. Osborne’s comment thus has some traction:

The Church’s approach to missionary activity, its approach to the ecumenical movement and its approach to lay people were all affected by the same ‘hierarchical and papal factor’.²⁰⁷

But the views of Nuttall, an Anglican bishop who understands Catholic theology but at one remove, summarise well the position that Kearney was able to adopt:

He seemed to me to thrive as a lay person, having made the difficult decision to leave the Marist Brothers after a professed membership of some ten years. This act of courage and conviction made him, surely, a convinced layman, not a nominal one. His subsequent work in important lay roles (university lecturer, director of Diakonia, founder and director of the Denis Hurley Centre) demonstrated this truth.²⁰⁸

The definition and role of lay people

Appendix B contains a more detailed account of what Vatican II prescribed as the role of lay people particularly looking at *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Lumen Gentium*.

I start by showing that there has been a process of hardening the lines of distinction from the time of the New Testament up until the dawn of Vatican II.²⁰⁹ I argue that the Council documents make

²⁰⁴ Phillip, Rubin. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

²⁰⁵ For more on this see Appendix A: “Kearney’s racial identity”

²⁰⁶ Champagnat, *Chronicles of the Little Brothers of Mary*, 10

²⁰⁷ Osborne, *Ministry*, 517

²⁰⁸ Nuttall, Michael. Email to the author, 8 October 2020

²⁰⁹ Appendix B, 361-362

significant progress in not only recognising lay people but in attributing to them their own apostolate.²¹⁰

However, I argue that Vatican II still leaves a number of questions unanswered and presents several ambiguities and contradictions.²¹¹ For example, at first it appears that there is a clear distinction drawn between two categories: clergy and lay people. But I demonstrate that this is not in fact so clear since there is ambiguity about which side of that line should be placed un-ordained vowed religious (such as Kearney was for 10 years). I also argue that for as long as 'lay person' is a negative category without any act of initiation, it will result in the contradictions of language that appear in Vatican II documents whereby sometimes a term defines a category that includes everyone and sometimes the same term defines a category that only includes lay people. I also draw on the work of Osborne and Rademacher to show how little basis there is in the New Testament Church for any kind of hard distinction between categories of Christians.²¹²

I show that in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* it also appears that there is clarity about the respective roles of the two groups: lay people in the temporal order and clergy in the ecclesial order. But then the documents themselves blur this line, giving each group a role in the other order. This has become further exacerbated by the practice of clergy and lay people since Vatican II.²¹³

The best I can conclude, with Rademacher, is that while Vatican II makes definite progress with regard to the role of the laity, it cannot in one move make up for 2,000 years of neglect:

The term 'lay person' is still weighed down, not only with an historical and cultural linguistic usage expressing contrast, but also one expressing a relative identity that seems to be negative and that *Lumen Gentium* was not able to avoid, although it reduced it to a minimum.²¹⁴

The discussion about how successful Vatican II was in addressing the laity appears in Appendix B since it does not, I believe, fatally undermine the challenge of *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. But it does mean that some apparently hard lines are a bit more blurred. Thus, though we can explore Kearney's life as a lay person in the light of Vatican II, we need to be cautious when examining what he saw as his role. I also want to try and understand where he drew his spiritual nourishment for carrying out this role.

The role of lay people in the world

It is clear from his commitment to ministry after he left the Marists, that Kearney was in no doubt that he had a role to play. Vatican II sets 'the temporal sphere' as the main focus for the apostolate of the laity. In doing this, the Council Fathers were reflecting the position of the wider Christian community at the time. The World Council of Churches when they met a decade earlier in 1954 in Evanston, Illinois stated:

The time has come to make the ministry of the laity explicit, visible and active in the world. The real battles of the faith today are being fought in shops, offices and farms; in political

²¹⁰ Appendix B, 363-366

²¹¹ Appendix B, 366-367

²¹² Appendix B, 368-371

²¹³ Appendix B, 372-379

²¹⁴ Rademacher, William. *Lay Ministry – a theological, spiritual and pastoral handbook* (New York NY: Crossroad, 1991) 81

parties and government agencies; in countless homes, in the press, radio and television; and in the relationship of nations. Very often it is said that the Church should 'go into these spheres'; but the fact is that the Church *is* already in these spheres in the persons of its laity.²¹⁵

For a lay man like Kearney facing this challenge in South Africa in the 1970s, the 'battles of faith' being fought in shops, offices and farms, in government and in media had a particular enemy because of Apartheid. In responding to this, Kearney and others had the inspiration of a leader in the Struggle who was also a Christian but not a pastor, and who saw that he had a definite apostolate as a lay person. Writing in 1962, Albert Luthuli as leader of the ANC had written:

For myself, I am in the Congress precisely because I am a Christian. My Christian belief about human society must find expression here and now, and Congress is the spearhead of the real struggle... My own urge, because I am a Christian, is to get into the thick of the struggle with other Christians, taking my Christianity with me and praying that it may be used to influence for good the character of the resistance.²¹⁶

At the beginning of his papacy, Pope John Paul II (speaking in Puebla Mexico on 25 January 1979) set a similar challenge:

Is it not the laity who are called, by reason of their vocation in the Church, to make their contribution in the political and economic dimensions, and to be effectively present in the safe-guarding and advancement of human rights?²¹⁷

One can imagine the relatively young Kearney, in charge of the newly formed Diakonia, and faced with the increasingly repressive practices of Apartheid, being fired up by those words. But this is more than just a call to Catholic Christians to join others in politics or the fight for social justice. The Church believes that people of faith bring a radically new perspective because of their belief in redemption. A pithy quotation captures this and is all the more interesting in that it is not from a theologian or a bishop or pope. In fact, it is from a lay Catholic man, albeit one who, as a member of the Kennedy clan, had an Ambassador as his father-in-law, plus brothers-in-law that included a President, an Attorney General and a Senator. Sargent Shriver, the founder of the US Peace Corps, wrote:

We believe, not only that the world can be saved but that in principle, in the person of Jesus, the world has been saved.²¹⁸

This quotation is from a series of short essays from 1980, all by American authors, who are reflecting on the 'Challenge to the Laity'. Many of the authors quoted in this chapter (Barta, Novak, Marciniak) are contributors to that book. Being 15 years after the end of the Council, and at the start of the 35 years in which John Paul II dominated the Church (directly and then indirectly through Benedict XVI), it is a good vantage point from which to examine the role of the laity. We do not know if Kearney read this book, but it gives a good insight into a time when the zeal of Vatican II was waning and the contradictions of the real world were impinging.

²¹⁵ Goldie, Rosemary. "Lay, Laity, Laicity: a bibliographical survey of three decades". *Elements for a Theology of the Laity. The Laity Today – bulletin of the Pontifical Council for the Laity* (1979, 26) 140

²¹⁶ Luthuli, Albert. *Let My People Go* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2006) 138

²¹⁷ Barta, Russell ed. *Challenge to the Laity* (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980) intro

²¹⁸ Shriver, Sargent. "Religious Values and the Good Society". *Challenge to the Laity*. Russell Barta ed. (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980) 123

In the preface to the book, William McManus, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend TX, makes it clear that the two-spheres concept (the ecclesial and the temporal) does not absolve the Church from applying *ad intra* what it fights for *ad extra*.

Whether the Church is described as a hierarchical institution or a community of faith or both, it cannot be absolved from its basic obligation to practice what it preaches about human rights, economic and social justice, affirmative action against racism, and the practical consequences of the virtue of charity in the whole realm of human behaviour.²¹⁹

Kearney's work, and in particular the activities of Diakonia, could be seen as a useful blurring of the two spheres. On the one hand, its visible enemy (the Apartheid régime and the economic, social and political oppression that it created) was firmly in the temporal order. But the whole point of Diakonia was to bring together and mobilise the ecclesial order to fight against Apartheid. And, in doing that, Kearney was clear that there was also a need to challenge the injustices within the ecclesial order itself (the Church institutions, leaders, members and traditions that made up Diakonia). I think he would have agreed with Marciniak who saw this as a way for people of faith not only to save the world but also to save the Church.

If as Christians behind a desk or on an assembly line or in the lettuce fields or in the neighbourhoods and inside government, we reflect the faith that does justice, we can keep the church (small c) from turning into the Church (capital C).²²⁰

Working with others

A key aspect of Kearney's approach was to work with others and in this he was responding to part of the challenge of the Council:

The laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. ... As citizens they must cooperate with other citizens with their own particular skill and on their own responsibility. ... The temporal order must be renewed in such a way that, without detriment to its own proper laws, it may be brought into conformity with the higher principles of the Christian life and adapted to the shifting circumstances of time, place, and peoples.²²¹

There is an important sensitivity in this statement because it recognises the value of co-operation to bring about God's justice, but in a way that is still respectful of the independence of the temporal realm (and presumably some of the temporal partners).

This destination, however, not only does not deprive the temporal order of its independence, its proper goals, laws, supports, and significance for human welfare but

²¹⁹ Barta, *Challenge to the Laity*, 3

²²⁰ Marciniak, Ed. "On the Condition of the Laity". *Challenge to the Laity*. Russell Barta ed. (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980) 33. (Marciniak characterises the 'small-c' church as the one which is at the service of the world and the 'big-C' Church as one which tries to rule the world. My use does not follow his practice but instead I have throughout used 'Church' to refer to the institution and individual denominations; 'churches' to refer to multiple denominations and 'church' to refer to the building.)

²²¹ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7

rather perfects the temporal order in its own intrinsic strength and worth and puts it on a level with humanity's whole vocation upon earth.²²²

That respect is important because the Church – through the laity – are not outsiders seeking to transform an alien realm: the Church is in the world. *Gaudium et Spes* in its subtitle stresses that it is writing about 'the Church in the Modern World' – not *outside*, not *opposite*, not *against*, not even *observing*, but *in*. So we should avoid falling into the trap of thinking that the Church can only change systems as an outsider.

Such ideas clearly depart from the mainstream of Catholic social thought which regards the advance of social justice as essentially the service performed within one's professional and occupational milieu. The almost exclusive pre-occupation with the role of the outsider as the model of social action can only distract the laity from the apostolic potential that lies at the core of their professional and occupational lives.²²³

That means not only working as individuals but also working through institutions of every sort. Sometimes they will be institutions that are faith-based; sometimes they will be secular. Commenting on Jacques Maritain's *Christianity and Democracy*, Barta stresses:

If we [un-ordained] have a special Christian vocation – and without a doubt we do – that vocation is to understand, to experiment with, and to advance the body of praxis that incarnates in social, political and economic institutions the evangelical inspiration that breathes in us. We are called upon to realise in institutions of every sort the Gospel message.²²⁴

Kearney's response was similarly to work not on his own but with institutions. Initially he worked within educational institutions (Inanda Seminary, which was Christian but not Catholic; and the University of Natal, which was secular). Then for over forty years, he created and nurtured institutions that were based in faith communities but committed to the perfection of the temporal order: Diakonia, the various KZN Christian networks, the Gandhi Development Trust and then finally the Denis Hurley Centre. By working through effective institutions, he sought to ensure that the work was wide enough in scope and able to draw on the breadth of resources needed. There is a mandate for this in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*:

In regard to the Christian renewal of the temporal order, the laity should be instructed in the true meaning and value of temporal things, both in themselves and in relation to all the aims of the human person. They should be trained in the right use of things and the organisation of institutions.²²⁵

Furthermore, this is a mandate which Kearney embraced (as will be discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 6) to work with like-minded people whatever their background:

The quasi-common heritage of the Gospel, and the common duty of Christian witness resulting from it, recommend and frequently require the cooperation of Catholics with other Christians, on the part of individuals and communities within the Church, either in activities or in associations, in the national or international field. Likewise, common human values not

²²² *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 7

²²³ Barta, *Challenge to the Laity*, 23

²²⁴ Novak, Michael. "What the Laity can Teach the Church". *Challenge to the Laity*. Russell Barta ed. (Huntington IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980) 52

²²⁵ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 31

infrequently call for cooperation between Christians pursuing apostolic aims and those who do not profess Christ's name but acknowledge these values.²²⁶

The Order of Deacon

Before moving on, I want to explore a vocation option that was open to Kearney but that he clearly chose not to explore.

Recall that he had chosen not to separate himself through ordination to the priesthood. He also later reversed his earlier decision to remove himself from the world as a celibate religious. But Vatican II opened up a third possibility for him which was to be an ordained but non-celibate deacon. But interestingly, he also chose not to exercise the option. This lacuna is especially intriguing since his friend and partner in Pietermaritzburg, Peter Kerchhoff (the head of Diakonia's sister organisation PACSA) was ordained as a deacon in the Anglican Church. Is this something that Kearney considered and why might he have rejected it?

The 'recovery' by Vatican II of the office of deacon is sometimes held up as one of the great innovations of the Council. In fact the debate about deacons, at the Council and since, has been complex and the implementation of the ministry has varied over time and geography. Nevertheless, Vatican II changed what was the norm at the time that almost the only people ordained deacon were men on their way to becoming priests. It was no longer just to be a temporary role held only by celibate men:

Since these duties, so very necessary to the life of the Church, can be fulfilled only with difficulty in many regions in accordance with the discipline of the Latin Church as it exists today, the diaconate can in the future be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy. ...With the consent of the Roman Pontiff, this diaconate can, in the future, be conferred upon men of more mature age, even upon those living in the married state. It may also be conferred upon suitable young men, for whom the law of celibacy must remain intact.²²⁷

Since for some it remained a step towards priesthood²²⁸, it was a role that was still conferred by ordination and so only admissible for men (the document's gendered language here is intentional). Moreover, *Lumen Gentium* stresses that deacons are at 'a lower level of the hierarchy' compared to bishops and priests. Thus, the permanent diaconate, rather than challenging the traditional hierarchical view of the Church, actually reinforces it by pushing the lay person down another tier. 'Hierarchology' (a term that Congar claims to have coined in 1947) is alive and well.²²⁹

Note also that, though it could be conferred 'even upon those living in the married state', this is presented as a rather reluctant exception; it is quickly balanced by the idea (more honoured in the breach than in the observance) that an unmarried man could also be ordained deacon (but must thereafter remain celibate).

Nevertheless, the order of deacons is presented with a degree of dignity:

²²⁶ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 27

²²⁷ *Lumen Gentium* 29

²²⁸ *Optatam Totius* 12

²²⁹ Congar, Yves. "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 133

For, strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests, they serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the people of God.²³⁰

Surely this is what Kearney was doing – he was involved in liturgy, the word and charity. Would he not want to be ‘strengthened by sacramental grace’? Besides, the justification for the role is presented as deeply scriptural, invoking Acts 6:1-6 in which seven men are chosen from the community and (it is claimed) are ordained as the First Deacons. Their main focus is care of the poor and that was exactly the focus of Kearney’s ministry. Moreover, he was running an organisation which had ‘deacon’ built into the title. In fact, in a talk given to the Natal Council of Churches (25 January 1974) +Hurley made just this joke:

Anyone accepting the job of director of Diakonia (or should it be ‘the Deacon of Diakonia’?) could not be expected to tackle more than a fraction of the problems referred to.²³¹

Any anxiety Kearney might have had about separation from the people of God was surely addressed through the new recognition by Vatican II that a deacon was not just a half-baked priest. Certainly, according to his widow, Peter Kerchhoff (and also his fellow Anglican activist, John Aitchison) never wanted to move on from being deacons to become priests, because they saw the focus of the deacon was on bringing the needs of the poor to the Church. (She adds that they were admitted to the diaconate without having to do any theological training purely on the recommendation of the then Dean, John Forbes.)²³²

For Anglicans, the fact that married men could be deacons was less relevant since they could also be priests. But, for a Catholic like Kearney, it should have been a significant concession that a married man could be a deacon. However, recall that between 1974/5 and 1983, Kearney was living as if married but not actually married in the eyes of the Church. Perhaps, the complexity of his married/non-married status was part of the hesitation: had he become a deacon in that period (even if he had been allowed to), he would not have been able to marry later.

We have no evidence that Kearney considered becoming a deacon but rejected the idea; nor do we know that he actually wanted to be a deacon but was refused. +Phillip has an uncertain recollection about this: “+Hurley mentioned that he thought Paddy should have been ordained. But I have no recollection that he encouraged Paddy to become a deacon.”²³³

My assessment is that Kearney would not have considered it as a serious option since there was nothing that he wanted to do in the Church for which the status of deacon would equip him. Moreover, to be ‘elevated’ to such an order (even if it is ‘a lower level of the hierarchy’) would have immediately distanced him from those who were doing the same work but did not have the title of deacon (including all women).

The main focus of the deacon, as per the Scriptural reference to Acts 6, is the care of the poor and this is clearly something that has been done for centuries by men and, even more so, by women in the Church without the need to be ‘strengthened by sacramental grace’, both lay people and

²³⁰ *Lumen Gentium* 29

²³¹ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 “Talk to Natal Council of Churches” (25 January 1974)

²³² Kerchhoff, Joan. Personal interview by author, 6 April 2022 in Pietermaritzburg (widow of head of PACSA)

²³³ Phillip, Ruben. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

religious brothers and sisters. In fact, to suggest that ordained deacons would do this better than those who are not ordained would seem unjustified by history or theology.

What of the other duties in the long list that *Lumen Gentium* 29 says can be assigned to a deacon 'by competent authority' (i.e. the bishop)?²³⁴ When looked at in more detail, many of these turn out to be 'straw men'. Many of them are tasks that were already being carried out by lay people (both men and women) or which would soon be carried out by lay people through other changes in the post-Conciliar era: distributing communion (if it has already been consecrated), reading the Sacred Scripture (except the Gospel), instructing and exhorting people (as long as you do not call it a homily), presiding over worship and prayer of the faithful (except the Eucharist), administering sacramentals, officiating at funeral services. Some are tasks (such as baptism and bringing Viaticum to the dying) which can already be administered by any Christian, at least in a case of emergency. So that only really leaves assisting at and blessing marriages in the name of the Church!

In the meantime, the two services that Catholic laity most look to clergy to provide – Mass and Confession – are ones precisely not extended to deacons, whereas strangely other sacraments (Baptism, Marriage and Viaticum) are. It is almost as if deacons are designed not to be useful! There is a danger that a move, that was supposed to expand access to ministry by admitting ordained married men, actually ends up limiting it for everyone else. If the main useful duties that can be carried out by deacons are ones that most lay people are doing anyway (reading at Mass, distributing communion, leading non-Eucharistic services, tending to the poor), deacons might intentionally or unintentionally discourage lay people from pursuing these. Barta warns:

...African bishops don't want to hear about a permanent diaconate. They say it will kill the laity in the Church. It will kill the laity in the Church because it will reinforce the conviction already existing that to work for the Church you must be ordained.²³⁵

He makes this point in relation to Africa because here, where there is a lower number of priests, the role of Catechist – a man *or woman* in the community trained to carry out many liturgical and pastoral functions – has been most developed.²³⁶ But I think this could also apply to other parts of the world as more and more lay people (men *and women*) started taking on ministries in the post-Conciliar age without the necessity of being ordained.

Since the institution of permanent deacons, in South Africa they have mostly been deployed to work in parishes and assist parish priests. This would certainly have been a distraction for Kearney from his work at Diakonia though, one assumes that +Hurley could still have assigned him as a deacon to work full time for the organisation. Instead, my belief is that Kearney, considering the function of the deacon, would have concluded that it added little to what he was already doing and would have detracted from what others were doing. (The same accusation might not necessarily apply in the Anglican Church where there are some differences in the tradition of the Deacon). But I think there is a more profound reason than this for Kearney not to be attracted to the role of deacon; and that is that the role itself is spurious.

The title 'Deacon' is clearly drawn from the Greek word *diakonia* which translates as service. That is why the organisation that Kearney set up for +Hurley – at the service of the Church and of the people of God – was called Diakonia. Osborne makes the point that *diakonia* is also the standard

²³⁴ *Lumen Gentium* 29

²³⁵ Barta, *Challenge to the Laity*, 22

²³⁶ It is noteworthy that the furthest any South African has yet proceeded on the road to canonisation is a man who was a Catechist (Bl. Benedict Daswa) and not a monastic-founder (Ven. Abbot Pfanner) or even, despite Kearney's best efforts, a world-renowned Archbishop like +Hurley!

Greek word for ministry; and not, for example, the word *kleros* which leads to the word 'clergy'.²³⁷ So anyone engaged in ministry or service could rightly be termed a Deacon.

But what of the 'Institution of the First Deacons' by the laying on hands referred to in Acts 6:1-6? Rademacher points out that the Greek text simply says that seven men were selected and commissioned in order to serve or to minister. (The word could also mean to wait at table, to supervise the meal, to manage the money table.) The text uses the verb *diakonein* to describe their function; it does not create a noun to describe their status.²³⁸ Thus, Acts 6:1-6 should not be referred to as 'The Institution of the First Deacons' but simply as the 'The Institution (or the Formalisation) of Service'.

Rademacher goes on to analyse Acts 6 and concludes that, if it sets out any model, it is not for specific ministers but rather a blueprint for ministry as follows: a) the ministry emerges in response to the community, b) the need for it precedes the formation of ministry, c) those who carry out the ministry are from the community itself, d) the ministry is broad and flexible, e) those who are commissioned to carry out the ministry have relevant qualifications, and f) they are elected by the community even if they are then confirmed by the religious leaders.²³⁹

He concludes: "Christian *diakonia* refers to any service of genuine love.... all significant activity for the building up of the community."²⁴⁰ That would seem to fit very well with a description of what Kearney did while at Diakonia and what he did throughout his life as a Christian.

Andrew Warmback, an Anglican priest who was also a co-worker at Diakonia points out that the organisation was always about strengthening the Church to do the work of service; not about building up the organisation itself:

Even if Diakonia provided the resources, they were then available for the work of the clergy and of lay people. Moreover, it provided the only space in which clergy from different traditions could come together and also where clergy and lay people could come together. In this way, it did a lot more for organic church unity than sitting down and discussing the issues. There were indeed clerics on the staff (such as myself, Mike Vorster, Mbonambi Khuzwayo, Sue Britton, Deon Snyman) but Diakonia deliberately recognised the lay stratum and treated everyone as equal with no sense of deference to the clerics. Paddy did not like clericalism – he saw it as a block to a social movement. I think he achieved a lot more by being an involved lay person. Others looked at him and said 'Here is someone like us'.²⁴¹

The title of Deacon would have blocked that. Moreover, since everyone at Diakonia was already involved in *diakonia*, all of them had been selected from their communities, all were chosen because they had relevant skills and qualifications, and all had been endorsed by religious leaders (the Diakonia Council), they were all comparable to the seven commissioned 'to serve' in Acts 6. If the title 'Deacon' mattered at all, they were all entitled to claim it, lay and cleric alike, male and female.

²³⁷ Osborne, *Ministry*, 14

²³⁸ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 35

²³⁹ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 37

²⁴⁰ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 41

²⁴¹ Warmback, Andrew. Personal interview by author, 21 Oct 2020 in Durban (Anglican priest and co-worker at Diakonia)

Kearney as crossing the temporal and ecclesial orders

I believe that one of the confusions created by the Order of Deacons is to take a role that is seemingly engaged with the 'temporal order' (if Acts 6 is to be its foundation) but then, by clericalising it, make it part of the 'ecclesial order'.

In any case, it seems that Kearney did not see such a hard line between these two 'spheres' and that would be another reason why becoming a Deacon would not have been attractive or necessary. After all the main invitation of *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is for lay people to engage in the saving mission of Christ: not just in one part of it.

Through this holy synod, the Lord renews His invitation to all the laity to come closer to Him every day, recognising that what is His is also their own, to associate themselves with Him in His saving mission.²⁴²

An insight comes from outside the Catholic world and from a pastor who was at one stage expelled from his own church. Frank Chikane describes himself as having been a 'defrocked priest' but appreciated that that meant (like Kearney) he had more freedom to participate in the Struggle as a lay person. "I feel that Paddy and I both share a similar view. We understand that there are no boundaries between the secular and the sacred – we believe in an integrated theology."²⁴³

Vatican II tries to establish the role of lay people – and redeem the role of the Church – by espousing a positive relationship to secularity. Indeed, one of the main criticisms of *Gaudium et Spes* (the document which focuses on 'the Church in the Modern World') was that it was too positive in its attitude towards the secular.²⁴⁴

This is hardly surprising given what a dramatic change there has been in what mattered for the Church. One good test, applied by Congar, was to look at the entries in the monumental *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (produced between 1903 and 1950). Whereas *Gaudium et Spes* opened by talking about 'joy' and 'suffering', neither of these terms merited an entry in the *Dictionnaire*. In fact, Congar calculates that across 15 volumes there is not a single entry at all on the following: trade, work, economy, politics, technology, science (as opposed to 'sacred science'), history, earth, world.²⁴⁵ Even the secular areas that are seen as a natural sphere for the Church have no entries: family, fatherhood, motherhood, woman, friendship, pleasure. And he adds that the only article about power is a lengthy one (103 columns long) but is all about the power of the pope in the temporal order!

The Council Fathers are now interested in what is secular but Goldie feels that the post-Conciliar Church never fully delivers on this promise. She quotes Schillebeeckx:

It has not been sufficiently understood that lay men and women (as members of God's people) precisely because they are non-clerics, have a positive relationship to secularity (even in the exercise of a purely and primarily religious apostolate). As a result the lay person's specific contribution to evangelisation is not given its full value, and where this contribution is really effective, it takes on 'clerical' forms to the detriment of its authentically lay character.²⁴⁶

²⁴² *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 32

²⁴³ Chikane, Frank. Personal interview by author, 14 September 2021 via Zoom (Secretary General of SACC 1987-94)

²⁴⁴ O'Malley, John W. *What happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge MA: Harvard, 2010) 261

²⁴⁵ Congar, Yves. "Moving towards a Pilgrim Church". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 144

²⁴⁶ Goldie, "Lay, Laity, Laicity", 119 (gendered language adjusted)

Rademacher sees evidence of this in the language used:

It is not unusual to hear Catholic laity say: 'We take care of the material things so Father can take care of the spiritual.' In Catholic parishes, the people who distribute the Eucharist in the sanctuary are called ministers, the members of the SVDP who feed the hungry are not called ministers; lectors who serve in the holy sanctuary are called ministers, members of the legion of Mary are not. Jesus on the other hand ministered in the streets, not in the Temple. He served as Lector once, but mostly ministered in the secular world of lepers, lawyers, fishermen, Samaritans, outcasts, prostitutes and tax collectors.²⁴⁷

Langefeld, by contrast, notes that the SACBC 1989 Pastoral Plan goes beyond Vatican II in using the term 'ministry' beyond ordained ministry to include the full range of roles played by lay people: 'readers, acolytes, youth ministry, ministers of the sick, funeral ministers, counsellors, leaders of small Christian communities, social justice co-ordinators, financial administrators'.²⁴⁸

In the list of official/ unofficial ministries mentioned by Rademacher above it is also noteworthy that it is only the 'sacred' and not the 'secular' ministries that typically are marked with some kind of commissioning ceremony. He questions the value of such ceremonies:

If such ministry is a way of exercising the call received at baptism, what can justify this commissioning? Why is it necessary to commission laypersons, and even to set up special canonical offices, for services that are normally theirs in virtue of their membership of the Christian community?²⁴⁹

He suspects, I think rightly, that it comes back to the desire for control by the hierarchy: there is a noticeable distinction between ecclesial activities (that the bishop/ priest feels he can and should control) and charitable ones (which seem to matter less). Even the new order of permanent deacon (re-)created by Vatican II, though ostensibly to serve the poor, is mostly exercised by deacons in the ecclesial realm where they can be controlled by the priest.

An addition to the dualities listed above could be the one of 'controlled /not-controlled', the implication that this is a binary with no positions in between. Rademacher points out that neither Vatican II nor any subsequent synods ever had on their agenda 'the discernment of the usefulness of hierarchy', perhaps because in a binary world this was too hard a question to ask.²⁵⁰ But he suggests that there are many other alternatives:

The opposite of anarchy is not necessarily hierarchy. Order can come about through democracy, through the responsible cooperation of all the ministers, through prayerful discernment, through 'little councils' and through participative management.²⁵¹

The Catholic hierarchy – neither in South Africa nor in the Vatican – has been unwilling to experiment with 'participative management'. But this is something that Kearney as a lay person was able to explore creatively in the various organisations that he created.

²⁴⁷ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 127

²⁴⁸ Langefeld, Chris. "The Reception of Vatican II in South Africa". *Bulletin for Contextual Theology* (1997, 4:1) 40 (This article was retained by Kearney in his personal archive).

²⁴⁹ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 97

²⁵⁰ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 172

²⁵¹ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 100

The dualism mentioned above is a theology that Waliggo sees should be regretted: one that separates the religious from the secular sectors of life, the soul from the body. He decries the view that:

A good Christian would be one who kept aloof from politics which are dirty, from economics which endanger salvation of the soul, from culture which contaminates pure Christian faith, from development which erodes the good virtues of Christianity.²⁵²

Kearney certainly did not keep aloof from any of those; yet people who knew him well would say that he avoided becoming dirty, endangering his soul, contaminating his pure Christian faith, and eroding the good virtues of Christianity! Bishop Phillip, as mentioned above, first knew Kearney when he was a young priest, and then worked closely with him in a range of projects over 40 years. He commented:

Paddy was not just politically motivated but he was motivated by his own faith – they both played an equally important role for him. Because of that he was able to give the Church a really necessary visibility in the public space (and in a way that was self-effacing).²⁵³

In this, +Phillip argues, Kearney was just fulfilling the vocation that we all have as baptised Christians. But, as Rademacher points out, the formal Church does not always celebrate that:

The call or vocation comes through baptism. It goes out to all people, it is not limited to those who hope to be ordained to the priesthood or hope to take solemn vows. However, the pastoral practice of the Church, in spite of Vatican II, still has a long way to go to reconnect vocation to baptism.²⁵⁴

For Kearney, this reflects an integrity of purpose – not temporal vs ecclesial but temporal *and* ecclesial. That also means there needs to be integrity in how Christians live their lives when it is so hard to practice what you preach. Rademacher gives the examples of people who are in ministry one day and the next day are selling slaves, or exercising racial discrimination, or excluding people of colour or women from the positions of leadership.

The history of ministry is a tale of glory and of frailty, of Grace accepted and of Grace rejected, of the Spirit received and of the Spirit quenched.²⁵⁵

Thus, when people comment on Kearney living ‘a monastic life’ or ‘starving himself to show his noble intentions’, what he is actually doing is living up the challenge that the Council places before all lay people:

The laity fulfil this mission of the Church in the world especially by conforming their lives to their faith so that they become the light of the world They fulfil their mission also by fraternal charity which presses them to share in the living conditions, labours, sorrows, and aspirations of their brethren with the result that the hearts of all about them are quietly prepared for the workings of saving grace. Another requisite for the accomplishment of their task is a full consciousness of their role in building up society whereby they strive to

²⁵² Waliggo, John-Mary. “Christianity and Liberation in African: Some Obstacles” *Towards African Christian Liberation*. Leonard Namwera et al (Nairobi: St Paul, 1990) 32

²⁵³ Phillip, Rubin. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

²⁵⁴ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 26

²⁵⁵ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 50

perform their domestic, social, and professional duties with such Christian generosity that their manner of acting should gradually penetrate the whole world of life and labour.²⁵⁶

A good summary of Kearney's integrity comes from a partner in mission who was not a Catholic, not in fact a Christian. A V Mahomed is the Chair of Jumma Masjid next door to Emmanuel Cathedral. He says that he connected with Kearney because they were both members of big religious institutions and both of them not priests. This led to the mutual respect with which they treated each other.

His occupational therapy was to serve God and to serve people – and the more he did this the more it fed his appetite. He never worried about how he was dressed. He was more modest than the word 'modest' could describe. I would sum him up by saying 'he was a soul concerned about other souls'.²⁵⁷

Kearney's Spirituality

As we reflect on how Kearney lived out his Baptismal calling, we need to ask what fed it: how did he grow in what *Lumen Gentium* 39 described as 'the Universal Call to Holiness'?

The laity have already been associated with priests under the rubric of 'the priesthood of all believers'; now they are being associated with the religious since historically it was those who took religious vows who were seen as 'called to holiness'. Kearney had never wanted to be an ordained priest and he also decided to be dispensed from his religious vows. But the call to holiness was no less part of his Christian journey than that of +Hurley (who was ordained deacon, priest and bishop and lived for over 70 years under religious vows).

Lumen Gentium sets it out thus:

Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness... this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others.²⁵⁸

The passage goes on to refer to those in religious life but obliquely: it does not use that term, nor indeed refer to vows, but instead uses the more open language of the 'evangelical counsels' (another traditional way of referring to poverty, chastity and obedience) but in a manner that *could* include people like Kearney who were dedicated but not vowed:

..in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called 'evangelical'. This practice of the counsels, under the impulsion of the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians, either privately or in a Church-approved condition or state

²⁵⁶ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 13

²⁵⁷ Mahomed, AV. Personal interview by author, 15 September 2020 in Durban (Chair of Jumma Masjid Trust and Patron of Denis Hurley Centre)

²⁵⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 39

of life, gives and must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness.²⁵⁹

The evangelical counsels had been seen as a mark of the 'consecrated life': the assumption behind that phrase is that consecration is a one-off act and that it applies to some people and not to others. But Rademacher warns against seeing 'consecration' as a one-off action whereby something that was not holy becomes holy. He recommends instead that we see it as an ongoing process, thus baptismal consecration is the work of a lifetime, not an event in the life of a baby.

With this truth clearly understood, we can reflect on the various principles and methods for growing in the holiness planted within us as a small seed during our baptism.²⁶⁰

He offers eight principles for someone to develop their spirituality or holiness: 1) link it to the baptismal vocation; 2) that it should be nourished by the Word; 3) that it should be centred around Jesus; 4) an ongoing disposition towards conversion; 5) compassion; 6) holiness of everyday things; 7) contact with the Spirit; 8) reverence for holy time; and 9) the movement towards holiness is a movement towards wholeness.²⁶¹ All of these would apply to Kearney.

What feeds this movement towards holiness is spirituality. But what do we mean by that? Rademacher warns us that it can become an empty, catch-all expression:

We are all for spirituality. We are also all for motherhood, apple pie and lower taxes. As long as no one defines it, it seems harmless enough. There is nothing controversial like women's ordination or capital punishment.²⁶²

Lumen Gentium does not define the term – in fact does not even use it. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* does refer to 'growth in the spiritual life', and stresses that it needs to be specific. But it then does not attempt to specify what it would look like:

This plan for the spiritual life of the laity should take its particular character from their married or family state or their single or widowed state, from their state of health, and from their professional and social activity. They should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life, and they should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit.²⁶³

So the idea of a spirituality of the laity is hinted at (to feed the Apostolate of the Laity which is stated specifically). But, just as the definition of laity is a negative one in opposition to what it is not, there is a danger that lay spirituality is defined by what it is not, as Shriver warns:

Our understanding of holiness has probably become too ecclesialised, too churchy and too ethereal. Holiness, to many Catholics today, and perhaps to many other Christians in the West, probably means withdrawing from life, praying, being uninvolved in conflictual situations in this world. Yet the task for lay Christians has much to do with all manner of

²⁵⁹ *Lumen Gentium* 39

²⁶⁰ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 192

²⁶¹ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 193-199

²⁶² Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 189

²⁶³ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4

highly conflictual, highly technical and highly politicised situations in which intelligent, decisive and perhaps even aggressive action is required.²⁶⁴

If an appropriate spirituality is not offered, lay people might mistakenly revert to an inappropriate spirituality. Osborne argues that even before Vatican II there was a growing sense of ownership of the Church and responsibility on the part of the lay person which was now communal and not private, but that this was out of step with the privatised spirituality which nourished lay people.

This form of spirituality generally reinforced the basic premise of Catholic Action, namely that lay people participated in the Apostolate of the hierarchy. Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin were atypical, rather than typical, of approved models of lay Christian life.²⁶⁵

The lack of Lay Spirituality might not only lead to a misunderstanding of the lay apostolate but could even drive lay people away from the Church. Albert Nolan described how young people were seeking liberation outside the Church because they did not find credible the person who argues from abstract ideas and they instead look to people speaking from experience. Kearney was likely to have had a similar experience since, like Nolan, he also had exposure to young people and students.²⁶⁶

Thus Marciniak fears:

The abiding hunger for a truly lay spirituality (not a spirituality for lay people) is not being satisfied. The laity are starving. They feel it. Is it any wonder many young people have turned to nibbling at fad foods served up by religious cults?²⁶⁷

Nolan's caution above against abstract ideas reminds us that *Apostolicam Actuositatem* indicates that spirituality needs to be specific. That means it will be based on the situation of the individual minister (a term which Rademacher uses in the broadest sense of every Christian, since all are called to ministry).

Ministers who truly believe in the incarnation will have a reverence for the grace of specific times and places, the actual situations, in their ministry. In the incarnate Christ, ministry occurs when Jesus actually met the leper, the tax collector. In the same way, it will be the actual pastoral situation that will be a grace-filled sacrament and that will shape the minister's spirituality. ...For this reason, we can conclude that the minister's particular situation, to some extent, gives birth to a situational spirituality.²⁶⁸

For Kearney, and many lay people like him, the spirituality that appeals is what Falkiner calls 'the Spirituality of Justice'. He sees this as emerging from Pope Paul VI's 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* which saw the need for people to develop an appropriate spirituality to achieve Justice and Peace in the world and that this was a spirituality for the laity and not just for clerics.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ Shriver, "Religious Values and the Good Society", 118

²⁶⁵ Osborne, *Ministry*, 522. (Maurin and Day are the co-founders of the Catholic Worker Movement, which is one of the lay movements embraced under the heading of 'Catholic Action'. Maurin was not a priest but was a religious brother; Day was a lay woman.)

²⁶⁶ Nolan, Albert. *God in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988) 23

²⁶⁷ Marciniak, "On the Condition of the Laity", 41

²⁶⁸ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 205

²⁶⁹ Falkiner, Joe. "Re-living the Memories of Pope Paul VI and his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*". *JustMeCatholicFaith*. <https://justmecatholicfaith.wordpress.com/2012/08/19/re-living-the-memories-of-pope-paul-vi-and-his-encyclical-populorum-progressio/> (accessed 3 May 2022)

Osborne develops a similar line arguing that a spirituality for the non-ordained ministry needs to be *centred in God* rather than just being based on *belief in God*. The description of God that he then gives is one which, I suspect, would have appealed to Kearney, even if many other lay Catholics would be baffled by it:

God is not a Roman Catholic. God is not even a Christian. God is not Jewish. God is not Islamic. Rather, God is the God of all. God is a God in whom women as well as men can believe. God is a God in whom the marginated and poor, as well as the comfortable citizens, can believe. Indeed, only that understanding of God which sees God as preferentially the God of the poor, the God of the marginated, the God of the second-rate, will stir up any embers of human faith.²⁷⁰

He then develops this further as a spirituality centred in Jesus and in particular focused on the human-ness of Jesus; he points out that often liberation theology has, as a point of departure, the historical Jesus and those influenced by such a theology look to connect the historical Jesus with their own history.²⁷¹

It is a spirituality which needs to be 'enscriptured': neighbourhood groups of men and women who gather to read the enscriptured word, to pray the enscriptured word, and to let the enscriptured word activate in their daily lives.²⁷²

Mkame has used similar words to describe Kearney's spirituality:

I see in him the image of Christ mixing with ordinary people and prostitutes; the problem with priests is that they can become too aloof, they do not want to plunge themselves into the real lives of people. Paddy understood the contextualisation of the gospel.²⁷³

Those outside the world of social justice might be surprised to see the words 'Spirituality' and 'Liberation' linked in this way. Bellagamba argues against this dichotomy ('the great fallacy of religion') which says:

Spirituality belongs to the soul, while liberation to the body; the former has to do with God, the latter with the world; spiritual people are found in places of worship; liberationists in the street and marketplaces. One excludes the other; the two are irreconcilable. The spiritualists look at the liberationists as 'extremists' 'kind of outcast'; the liberationists consider the spiritualists outside of reality, dreamers, wasting time.²⁷⁴

He offers an alternative definition as follows:

Spirituality is a way of being, relating and consequent action, with God and creatures, in keeping with the signs of the times and inspired by the teaching and example of Jesus. Liberation is a way of acting out our spirituality in situations of oppression, poverty and any other injustice to bring holiness and wholeness to all of life... Spirituality and Liberation

²⁷⁰ Osborne, *Ministry*, 601

²⁷¹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 602

²⁷² Osborne, *Ministry*, 604

²⁷³ Mkame, Liz. Personal interview by author, 17 December 2020 in Pinetown (co-worker at Diakonia)

²⁷⁴ Bellagamba, Anthony. "Spirituality and Liberation". *Towards African Christian Liberation*. L Namwera et al (Nairobi: St Paul, 1990) 248

would be the two sides of the same coin; the coin is the Mission of God on earth, the two sides make that mission possible and Christian.²⁷⁵

The authors quoted were all writing long after Kearney had started his work and was clearly already finding a way to nurture his spiritual life. A text from near the beginning of his apostolic life as a lay man, and one which we can be sure Kearney would have read several times, is Nolan's ground-breaking *Jesus before Christianity*.²⁷⁶ In this book, Nolan argues that Jesus was middle class but 'became an outcast by choice' (as indeed did Kearney);²⁷⁷ that "Christians first used the noun 'gospel' or 'good news' (*euaggelion* Mk1:1, 14) as a way of referring to the content or message which Jesus proclaimed to the poor and oppressed";²⁷⁸ and that "the values of the kingdom are different from and opposed to the values of this world."²⁷⁹ We see the result of this in the fact that Jesus' solidarity with people was not a vague abstract attitude towards humankind in general. Instead, it was relationships with specific individuals, which included people who were poor and oppressed.²⁸⁰

Nolan concludes that since we do not know what God is like, but we do know what Jesus is like, then we can say what God is because we know what Jesus is: one who serves, who takes the lowest place, who is not feared, who is recognised in suffering of the poor, who is committed to the liberation of humankind.

If this is not a true picture of God, then Jesus is not divine. If this is a true picture of God, then God is more truly human, more thoroughly humane, than any human being. God is what Schillebeeckx has called a *Deus humanissimus*, a supremely human God.²⁸¹

This suggests a depth of spirituality which would explain what nourished Kearney over many decades and also what enabled him to keep his faith and his activism ('liberation') so interconnected. Kearney's faith, it seems, was something that for others was self-evident. Thus, the comment of one Anglican bishop with whom he worked closely:

It was a profound faith even though he never uttered any passionate feelings about his faith and never flaunted his faith. His faith was a given. I do wonder if he ever had doubts.²⁸²

This lack of flaunting might have led some, even those close to him, to underestimate Kearney's spirituality. Stephen Tully, who worked closely with Kearney for many years both in the Cathedral parish and in setting up the Denis Hurley Centre, spoke of his spirituality in rather bland terms:

He was the good lay Catholic, it was nice to have him around. He did use Scripture when he gave presentations but not in an evangelical way. He was a traditional Catholic with a feeling for the faith so he lived it before he knew it. It was what he had always done.²⁸³

Others speak of Kearney's spirituality with a greater richness. Alex Campbell is a friend who had known Kearney when he had been an Oblate priest in Durban. He left the priesthood in 1977 and is

²⁷⁵ Bellagamba, "Spirituality and Liberation", 250-251

²⁷⁶ Nolan, Albert. *Jesus before Christianity* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1976)

²⁷⁷ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, 34

²⁷⁸ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, 56

²⁷⁹ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, 60

²⁸⁰ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, 79

²⁸¹ Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, 167

²⁸² Nuttall, Michael. Personal interview by author, 23 September 2020 in Howick (Emeritus Bishop of Natal)

²⁸³ Tully, Stephen. Personal interview by author, 8 December 2020 in Durban (Catholic priest and co-founder of the Denis Hurley Centre)

now married and living in Canada; he recalls a story which exemplifies Kearney's spirituality and how it was inspiring to others:

In 2013 my grand-daughter was doing a Masters in Reconciliation at St Paul's Ottawa and visited South Africa and Diakonia. I remembered Paddy and introduced her to him because I knew that Diakonia was one of the first places where I felt spirituality and activism were side by side. In North America, we separate the two. My grand-daughter told me that a few of the students would have joined that kind of religious community if it existed in Canada. They admired how people share their spirituality in their lives and in their work and combine the two.²⁸⁴

His description is a neat reply to the fear voiced above (by Nolan and Marciniak) about how the Church responds to the spiritual needs of young people (and bear in mind that at the time of this encounter Kearney would have been 71 years old). Someone else who knew him over many years also captures the importance in Kearney's spirituality of integration:

When meeting Paddy, I was aware of being in the presence of someone who was supported by his own spirituality. Paddy did not express this publicly but I knew I was in front of someone who was more than just an activist. Paddy was an example of the '*méditants-militants*'.²⁸⁵

Some of those who knew Kearney well during the Diakonia period commented on his obsession with work as what drove him:

It wasn't even a possibility for Paddy to give up; there was no way he could give up. It would be like giving up life.²⁸⁶

Paddy would have never stopped; it was his mission in life.²⁸⁷

He got a lot of joy from his work. There was endless creativity though he would not admit it.²⁸⁸

His life was his job. Paddy did not need to recreate himself. That was clear by his choice of a simple pine coffin with sisal handles – the very opposite of a modern ANC funeral.²⁸⁹

His niece Ursula de Haas, said that this dogged-ness was inherited by Kearney from his mother, Margie Walsh, and attributed it to all three of the Kearney brothers. "None of them can relax."²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ Campbell, Alex. Personal interview by author, 18 January 2022 via Zoom (former Oblate priest)

²⁸⁵ Briard, Jacques. Personal interview by author, 17 January 2022 via Zoom (manager at Entraide et Fraternité, Belgium-based donor). (He describes this term as a 'rich approach' from two theologians: a Belgian former NGO officer and later orthodox priest, Thierry Verhelst; and a Swiss sociologist, journalist and orthodox theologian, Michel Maxime Egger.)

²⁸⁶ Kerchhoff, Joan. Personal interview by author, 6 April 2022 in Pietermaritzburg (widow of head of PACSA)

²⁸⁷ Goad, Daphne. Personal interview by author, 29 October 2020 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia)

²⁸⁸ McKay, Anne. Personal interview by author, 21 October 2021 in Durban (communications officer at Diakonia)

²⁸⁹ Moran, Brendan. Personal interview by author, 16 March 2021 in Durban (member of End Conscriptio Campaign)

²⁹⁰ de Haas, Ursula. Personal interview by author, 27 October 2020 in Durban (niece of Kearney)

+Hurley's successor as Archbishop of Durban witnessed the same drive and determination: 'he was married to Diakonia'. But Napier saw it specifically as originating from a strong sense of self-sacrifice from his time in religious life.²⁹¹

The agnostic Richard Steele also used the term self-sacrifice.

Where did his drive come from? I suppose it was the Western European work ethic which sees work as holy and being lazy as sinful. It was an almost simplistic understanding of the call: you must be prepared to sacrifice, to serve God. Any focus on the self would be sinful and selfish.²⁹²

But Keane, though recognising the single-mindedness ("When he was at Diakonia the married man disappeared") also saw his spirituality as more than just activity for the sake of activity: "Paddy was always very generous; he was never the key pin. He was always interested in lifting people up."²⁹³

A Christian leader from outside Catholic circles, Frank Chikane, who knew Kearney at a distance, suffered violence because of his resistance against Apartheid. He described spirituality as a reference point which means there is an end beyond yourself; an external reference point means you are able to survive.

Some people took their spirituality more seriously than others. But Paddy was completely motivated by his spirituality. It was the thing that held him together. Everyone could see the spiritual in him; it was not pretence. Some used the Church as a strategy but their commitment was not there. I have seen what my comrades are capable of doing, even killing each other. I see that they were not committed to helping the poor or fighting for justice – they just joined the Struggle as a strategy to get rid of the racist system. Paddy had a total commitment to his God and what God required of him. It was, in some ways, a simple form of spirituality. He was confident that he was totally committed to justice and to God's justice.²⁹⁴

This was reiterated by +Phillip:

What led to his deep and fearless commitment? It was so strong that he was not afraid of imprisonment. Fundamentally it was not political but theological. We used to have so many discussions about the Bible and the poor; we were both influenced by the Latin American theologians. That is an approach in which you are not compartmentalising the Church and the world. In Paddy it became a passion for the plight of the poor.²⁹⁵

A spirituality which integrates Church and society is one which is strongly associated with the Methodist tradition. It is therefore interesting to see how a number of Methodists, who were close associates of Kearney at Diakonia, saw in him a spirituality that could bring aspects of life together. Nomabelu Mvambo-Dandala, his eventual successor, explained how, as a trade unionist, she had been involved in social issues but that these had no connection with her faith. "I was excited by the possibility of linking faith and life. Paddy has always been Paddy; always humble. It has always been

²⁹¹ Napier, Wilfrid. Personal interview by author, 28 September 2020 in Durban (Cardinal Archbishop of Durban)

²⁹² Steele, Richard. Personal interview by author, 27 October 2020 in Durban (Conscientious Objector)

²⁹³ Keane, Marie-Henry. Personal interview by author, 16 September 2021 via Zoom (Dominican sister and co-worker)

²⁹⁴ Chikane, Frank. Personal interview by author, 14 September 2021 via Zoom (Secretary General of SACC 1987-94)

²⁹⁵ Phillip, Ruben. Personal interview by author, 25 May 2022 in Durban (Emeritus Bishop of Natal; Patron and sometime Trustee of Denis Hurley Centre)

clear that this person is committed and also a Christian.”²⁹⁶ Vorster commented: “Paddy was kept going by his faith, his commitment to another better world. His was a realised eschatology.”²⁹⁷

Methodist Bishop Norman Hudson and his wife, Estelle, saw in Kearney’s spirituality something that not only nourished him but drew others to join forces with him.

He was what the Christian witness should be. Paddy enabled ordinary people to join him in social justice because he had a passion that justice should be seen to be done and that the Church was the channel through which justice would happen. This enabled him to bring together a community of people and you knew they all thought like you.²⁹⁸

A woman who became a friend in his later years, and was actually outside his usual faith circles, is in a position to draw these threads together.²⁹⁹ De la Croix said that she had the sense that his faith was very important.

He went to church every Sunday; he took praying for people very seriously. And his work ethic was the core of his life. I found it funny that in December he only stopped working because he could not get anything done because other people had stopped! So he put all his energy into making a difference in the world. In that regard, he proves Victor Frankl’s thesis that the people who survive are those with a purpose and a purpose that is never completed. Paddy never felt his work was finished, he always felt he could add more value. He was driven to fill the gaps that were there and would not rest easy until he did.

He always wanted to do his duty and stretch himself because it fitted with his bigger vision and sense of purpose. And because he had a life of prayer he knew that concrete outcomes were not linear. He would try and make a difference even if things took longer. He felt that he could influence the atmosphere of things and their motivation. So what was important to him was his work and his faith – nothing else counted.

In summary, we see in Kearney a spirituality which could be termed a lay spirituality – even if it would not be appropriate for all lay people. It is based on a profound faith which is firmly part of a particular religious tradition. It is also rooted in a specific time and place and an experience of injustice. It drives outwards towards activity but the activity is not an end in itself but a means to an end, achieving justice and bringing God’s kingdom closer to the here and now (‘a realised eschatology’). And it is a spirituality to be shared with others and to be used to draw together people of like mind.

Role of Small Christian Communities

One of the ways in which Kearney could connect with like-minded people was through the Small Christian Communities or ‘Basic Communities’ that were a feature of Catholic Christianity, and especially the progressive wing of the Church, in this period. Effectively, the first example of this that Kearney would have encountered was the Grail Community in Johannesburg when he was still a

²⁹⁶ Mvambo-Dandala, Nomabelu. Personal interview by author, 26 May 2022 in Durban (Kearney’s successor as Director of Diakonia and sometime Patron of Denis Hurley Centre)

²⁹⁷ Vorster, Mike. Personal interview by author, 16 March 2021 in Durban (co-worker at Diakonia and Methodist Bishop)

²⁹⁸ Hudson, Norman and Estelle. Personal interview by author, 18 September 2020 in Pinetown (Methodist Bishop and wife)

²⁹⁹ De la Croix, Berenice. Personal interview by author, 30 September and 9 October 2020 in Durban (personal friend)

Marist, given that the Grail extended beyond the resident community and included people who lived in their own homes with their families. He would have heard more about other Basic Communities, and seen them for himself, when as part of his Fulbright studies in Ohio he visited Mexico and met Ivan Illich in 1973.

Goemans recalls that Kearney and Carmel Rickard visited the Sant'Egidio community in Assisi Italy in 1986 and were very influenced by this.³⁰⁰ In turn, Kearney later urged Goemans to go to Rome to meet Sant'Egidio as part of her sabbatical. He started a Sant'Egidio-style community in Durban though he called it the Shalom Community. It was mostly made up of married couples (e.g. Kidian, Davies, Money, Cason, Lambert and Salmonsens; Mr Salmonsens had once been a priest). Note that this meant that they were not all white and included at least one 'coloured' couple (and thus a form of mixing that was contrary to the principles of Apartheid). They had friendly Oblates as chaplains: Fr Albert Danker, Fr Paul Decock and Fr Theo Kneifel (and also a Dominican, Fr Bernard Connor). They met usually once a week for a faith-sharing session, in different houses or in the circular chapel at St Philomena's. Although they were all Catholics, ecumenism was not an issue and the feeling was that non-Catholics would have been welcome.

The Casons described the process thus:

Paddy got a group of J&P people together and decided to start a parish that was not based in a physical area. We must have been noticed because members of the community used to get threatening telephone calls from the Security Branch.³⁰¹

Another member, Dina Cormick comments:

Since it was mostly people with children, it was like our own Sunday school. We had Mass together once a month – on other Sundays people would go to their own parish. We all decided what prayers would be said and the sermon was collaborative [in the Latin American basic community style]. But I notice that we never had a woman in a priestly role.³⁰²

Since they all lived in their own homes they regarded themselves as 'an intentional rather than a residential community'. Goemans says "They were an inspirational community; they inspired each other." They were also involved in social outreach for example she recalls that one Christmas they hosted a Festive Dinner for the homeless at St Anthony's Hall (following a Sant'Egidio tradition). The community however only lasted 2-3 years, since many members left to live abroad 'as the situation in South Africa became harder for growing families'.³⁰³

One of the reasons for such intentional communities was the frustration that the natural lay church community (the parish) did not usually offer an ideal place for spiritual growth. +Hurley talked about this in a talk he gave in 1981 to the South African Council of Catholic Social Services.³⁰⁴ He reflects on how communities are reluctant to change and often church communities have been untouched by the theological changes of the last hundred years because of the poor training of

³⁰⁰ Goemans, Loek. Personal interview by author, 15 October 2020 in Johannesburg (member of The Grail). Chapter 7 describes how +Hurley had been impressed by Sant'Egidio when he first visited a community in 1967. +Hurley in his later years is more and more drawn to the organisation as shown in some of his correspondence. See Denis, Philippe, Kearney, Paddy & Argall, Jane eds. *A Life in Letters – selected correspondence of Denis Hurley* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2018) 410, 454-7, 473

³⁰¹ Cason, Fred and Marylyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (co-workers at Diakonia)

³⁰² Cormick, Dina. Personal interview by author, 21 December 2020 in Durban (freelance designer at Diakonia)

³⁰³ Cason, Fred and Marylyn. Personal interview by author, 21 January 2022 via Zoom (co-workers at Diakonia)

³⁰⁴ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Talk to South African Council of Catholic Social Services" (16 October 1981)

clergy. He finds this all the more disappointing given the success of [Cardinal] Joseph Cardijn in revolutionising methods of training Catholic youth. +Hurley connects this need for training of laity with the inter-diocesan pastoral consultation of 1980 which identified formation within the Church as key, including formation for justice, social concern, reconciliation and peace. But he also notes the high point of the success of Catholic Social Teaching in post-war Europe (Schumann in France and Adenauer in Germany) and also in Latin America. Such change can be achieved:

..through the widespread phenomenon of basic communities by means of which hundreds of thousands of people are being helped to relate their faith to their social life.³⁰⁵

Writing from an English perspective, Worlock points out that *Apostolicam Actuositatem* sees the parish as the starting point for lay activity (and from that building to diocesan and inter-diocesan levels) but also recognises that the parish may not be the best vehicle:

The parish may well be the scene in which consciousness of what needs to be done may exist. But if the secular order is to be renewed [as per *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 13] the base from which the effort is to be launched must be more widespread. The formation needed must frequently be more profound and even specialised than can be given in and by the local community.³⁰⁶

Around the world, Small Christian Communities are adopted as a more effective vehicle for the formation of the laity and +Hurley made a significant commitment to encourage SCCs as part of the Renew process which he introduced into the Archdiocese of Durban.³⁰⁷ In fact, the Renew process was launched in July 1989 to coincide with Hurley's 50th anniversary of priestly ordination.³⁰⁸ The programme was led by his Vicar-General, Paul Nadal; though Kearney was involved in the Renew programme he was not particularly a leader in this.

For many at that time SCCs were seen as a way of rescuing the mission of the Church. For example, Küng is quoted in 1986 as seeing them as the most recent in a range of different paradigms of the Church throughout history: the house church in the 1st century, monasteries in mediaeval times, parishes in recent centuries; and 'now perhaps the parish model is no longer appropriate and the SCC is a better paradigm'. Küng gives the example of a Tanzanian diocese which shifted focus from 17 parishes (each of which had a roving priest), to 55 centres (traditionally called out-stations) and 250 small Christian communities. The diocese then becomes the Communion of Centres and each Centre a Communion of SCC's.³⁰⁹

Ngcobo (a diocesan priest who as Cathedral Administrator from 2015 to 2019 was Kearney's parish priest in his final years) points out that the establishment of lay ministries also needs to be acknowledged as these help create, maintain and advance communities.

Some of the lay ministries are concerned with visiting the sick in the community or ward, offering catechesis, liturgy, counselling, address questions of justice and peace, while there is also a maintenance team. ... To avoid monopolising and status seeking, any given tasks

³⁰⁵ SJTI Archive: BIO- 496/E/Diakonia/1 "Talk to South African Council of Catholic Social Services" (16 October 1981)

³⁰⁶ Worlock, Derek J H. "Toil in the Lord: the Laity in Vatican II". *Vatican II Revisited: by those who were there*. Alberic Stacpoole ed. (London: G Chapman, 1986) 244

³⁰⁷ Ward, Edwina "Different ways of increasing community Spirit". *Becoming a Creative Local Church - Theological Reflections on the Pastoral Plan*. Patrick Hartin, Bernard Connor and Paul Decock eds. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1991) 65-80

³⁰⁸ Abrahams, Mervyn. "Denis Hurley and the Reception of Vatican II." *Vatican II: Keeping the Dream Alive*. Denis Hurley. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2005) 249

³⁰⁹ Healey, Joseph. "Beyond Vatican II: reimagining the Catholic Church of Nairobi I". *The Church we want – African Catholics look to Vatican III*. Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016) 196-7

should be distributed among community members and when making decisions all community members should be involved. Leadership of lay associations should periodically be changed. This would not only create a profound sense of belonging among all community members, but it would also lead to well informed decisions as a result of community inputs and discussions.³¹⁰

This commitment to lay participation in decision-making is an echo of the words of Archbishop Hélder Câmara, an icon of the progressive wing of the Church, when he was talking about both secular and ecclesial institutions in a lecture to the Catholic University of Chile in 1969: “the most evident political fact of our continent is the absence of popular participation in decision-making.”³¹¹

There were earlier precedents for bringing lay people together such as the Kolbe Society (or Association) which was founded in Cape Town in the 1930s and had a branch in Durban. This had been set up to provide access to theological training and input for lay people.³¹² It catered to a group that Egan identifies in his paper exploring the impact of Vatican II on South Africa in the 1960s:

Yet one must also note that, though the Church was essentially conformist even before the Council, there were rumblings about change. A minority of white Catholics (many of them products of the excellent Catholic school system), and a tiny group of black Catholics, went to university, became professional people and academics. Though small, and often cautious, these Catholic intellectuals had already started to ask questions not only about the state they lived in, but also the Church in which they worshipped.³¹³

But in a letter to his friend Eddie Higgins, +Hurley in 1972 was already reflecting on the uncertainty of progress in developing the laity.

Our little Kolbe Association is still struggling along. A few faithful spirits keep it in existence, but I wonder if it has very much of a future ahead of it. It will be sad to see it go, if it does go, but there is the consolation that many other activities are coming into existence, and there is quite a ferment of catechetical work, justice and peace involvements and lay apostolate of all sorts. The lay apostolate is still, perhaps, more talk than action, but we are gradually getting there.³¹⁴

The key to all these initiatives is that they were rooted in their communities, a specific and direct response to what members of those communities saw as their needs. This reinforces the argument that Kearney’s spirituality was one that was focused on the specific, on reflection and action (the ‘See-Judge-Act’ mantra of Cardinal Cardijn). Writing from a different part of Africa, Chu Ilo offers an interesting gloss on 1 Corinthians 13 which captures the importance of this specificity:

If my theological formulation is of no interest or relevance to the people of Africa, I’m only a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I formulate, with great eloquence and scholastic language, inculturation theologies or Marxist theologies of liberation, feminist theology, eco-theology or theologies of transformation for fellow Africans, but they that are not relevant

³¹⁰ Ngcobo, Nkosinathi. “The Evangelisation of the Catholic Church in Southern Africa: Community Serving Humanity”. M.Th. dissertation. (Durban: University of KwaZulu Natal, 2016) 31

³¹¹ Câmara, Hélder. *Race against Time* (translated from French) (London: Sheed & Ward, 1971) 103

³¹² de Haas, Mary. Personal interview by author, 30 September 2020 in Durban (fellow activist and mother-in-law to Kearney’s niece)

³¹³ Egan, “How Vatican II renewed South African Catholicism”, 2

³¹⁴ Denis, Kearney, & Argall, *A Life in Letters*, 256

to their faith and social context, I have accomplished nothing. If I use all kinds of indigenous and foreign categories to explain the mysteries of faith that I propose could move mountains and bring down powers and principalities but that have no relevance to ordinary African Christians and their daily lives, my theology will be of no good to Africa.³¹⁵

Conclusion

The two images proposed at the beginning of this chapter provided a stark contrast between two different understandings of vocation. There is continuity between them: both start from the premise that vocation is a call from God; that it invites a free response from the individual; that whatever the vocation is it is to build God's kingdom and thus to benefit others and not just oneself; that vocation is always in the context of the vocations of other people (even if the scope of 'other' is now broader); and that vocation needs to be nurtured through spiritual practices.

Despite the continuity, there is also a marked degree in which each of these elements changes between Kearney's life as a Marist brother and his life as a lay activist. Kearney went through a significant journey – from Marist to lay man. His journey parallels the journey that the Church went through at the Council and has been continuing ever since to achieve two sometimes conflicting goals: to honour the common matrix of all the people of God (laity, religious and priests) and to honour the distinct roles within the Church that have become linked to specific categories of people. The tension here between unity and diversity is not surprising: it is one identified 1,900 years ago by St Paul in his famous image of the Church as the body of Christ.³¹⁶

Thus, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* draws on this image to distinguish between the shared vocation of all Christians and the specific vocation of each Christian:

All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of the goal [of spreading the kingdom of Christ] is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members. For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate. No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body.

Indeed, the organic union in this body and the structure of the members are so compact that the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself....In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission.³¹⁷

Kearney in having had the freedom and courage to explore his own vocation and to make dramatic changes turned out to be 'useful to the Church and to himself' – and indeed to the wider world in which he lived. *Lumen Gentium* meant that whatever his status in the Church he could pursue the call to holiness. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* gave him a validation for this which would have been much harder for him to find if a distinct Apostolate of the Laity had not been recognised.

³¹⁵ Chu Ilo, Stan. "Methods and Models of African Theology" *Theological Re-imagination – conversations on Church, Religion and Society in Africa*. Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator ed. (Nairobi: Paulines, 2014) 128

³¹⁶ 1 Cor 12: 12-31

³¹⁷ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2