

Bernard Collaery supporters Rally  
September 30 2020

**We all need a witness to our lives.  
So it seems does democracy and truth.**

Fr Richard Browning

*Four amazing speakers already, including Bernard himself. If I have any authority to speak, it might be because I have had the privilege of leading eleven student trips to Timor-Leste. There on vivid display is the strength, resilience, grace of a people who have been knocked down seven hundred times and have arisen seven hundred and one. In the face of impossible odds, they have overcome invasion, occupation, torture and deprivation on an industrial scale and have emerged with a wisdom, graciousness and generosity of spirit that the world would do well to learn from.*

We all need a witness to our lives.

There needs to be someone by whose presence and faithful witness, we can know that our lives have not gone unnoticed; that our lives matter. They who bear such witness are a precious gift and their work a sacred act.

It would seem that grand and lofty things such as justice, democracy and truth are equally vulnerable. And if there is no one to bear witness to them, they too can wither and be cast aside.

If no one were here today, to bear witness to this horror, then horror becomes normal.

And make no mistake. It is a horror.

- We may well wish to speak out against secret trials of the innocent in foreign and despotic states, but how can we, when it is happening right here in our midst?
- We may well wish to speak out against the powerful and rich as they lie and deceive and steal from the poor, but how can we, when as a nation we have done this to one of the poorest and traumatised in the world?
- We may wish to speak up for the freedom of the press, but how can we, when right this very moment, Julian Assange, an Australian, is locked in high security facing the most extraordinary legal forces, hunted for telling the truth and exposing war outrageous crimes.
- We may well wish to stand up for the rule of law, but how can we, when right now, hundreds of innocent human beings are in their 8<sup>th</sup> year of indefinite detention.

It was Behrouz Boochani who warned, if you create a mechanism that systematically dehumanises others, the ruling powers become inhumane, a criminal monster of our own making. In very much a related issue, hear this name: Alan Tudge. He has placed himself above the law, has acted criminally and yet remains in his ministerial portfolio untroubled.

In Bernard Collaery's own words\*:

“When we descend to these depths and mirror the habits of totalitarian leadership, we lower all of our values. We diminish ourselves.”

Bernard speaks to us all when he says,

“we must shame our politicians into telling the truth”.

Bernard speaks to the young, saying, you must lay claim to what is true, and

“set a bearing on the values you want our political leaders to have”.

But this is not fair

on the young,

unless ...

unless

there are some

who stand and bear witness to what is true.

K and Colleary are our first, extraordinary, courageous witnesses to the truth.

It is our turn to stand with and for them and point to what should be clear to all.

And the young watch, and will pick up and carry what you have stood alongside through your faithful witness.

Today is the fortieth pre-trial hearing for Colleary.

We must be prepared to return for the forty first, and sixty first, eighty first time and more still if necessary.

And in this not-so-quiet-bearing of witness to the truth, we honour what is under extreme pressure and keep alive what it seems would be allowed to wither, making it possible for another generation to inherit and so safeguard this fragile beauty. But only because there have been those who have born this responsibility and been witnesses to this truth.

\* <https://www.dirrumfestival.org/>