From the President:

Last week I went to the Sydney College of Divinity Annual Lecture. The lecturer was Professor Paul Trebilco from the University of Otago, which is located in Dunedin, New Zealand. His specialisation is New Testament, and his topic for the lecture was “Early Jewish Communities in Asia Minor and the Early Christian Movement”. He gave a fascinating presentation of the communities in various cities of Asia Minor in the first few centuries of the Christian era, noting that Jewish and Christian communities held many things in common. This, of course, is hardly surprising as the early Christian communities often had large Jewish membership. In fact, he observed that there is no evidence for totally Gentile Christian communities at this time. In many areas, however, there were differences. One difference was that the Christian communities did not occupy any significant place in the cities, unlike the Jewish communities. The old idea that there was a definitive split between Judaism and the nascent Christian movement at a very early period has long been discounted. In the question period after the lecture there was an interesting question posed about literacy in the ancient world. Professor Trebilco noted that in both communities there were likely higher than normal literacy rates because of the importance of reading Torah or Scriptures in these communities.

The question of literacy in the modern world is an interesting one. We probably take it for granted; and there are fewer and fewer countries and peoples with very poor literacy rates today. If you check the UNESCO website you can see a map indicating that there are now only small pockets where the youth literacy level is not 90% or higher. Of course, the idea of universal literacy is very recent, and goes hand in hand with universal education. Being able to read has enabled people to move out of poverty; it has given them a certain freedom and autonomy; it has enabled them to enter into worlds different from their own and to imagine how their own world can change.

At the present moment in history we are probably seeing a revolution both in the way people have access to reading material and in the way they read. This, of course, brings great advantages. All of us now have access to documents and other written materials that were previously only available to specialised researchers. The challenge we face is how to manage such a huge amount of material: we can be overwhelmed by the volume of it. We might not have the skills to read particular genres of material. We might find ourselves reading large amounts of material but in a very shallow way. Another factor is that the boundary between the printed word and other images (e.g. photographs, the spoken word, or performance) is becoming blurred. Someone commented to me recently that he knows people who no longer read books, but rely solely on internet sources. Despite this, there are probably more books being published today than at any time in history.

It can be interesting to give some thought to how you read. A course of studies guides our reading and prepares us to be discerning about what we read and to make judgements about it. This is just as important in the area of religion and theology as in other areas of study. We are all responsible for developing our own theological literacy.

Fr Gerard Kelly

Next week is the non-lecturing study week. It is an important week in the semester calendar, creating the space you might need to read, reflect and write.

A reminder that Mass is celebrated in the chapel
Mondays—Thursdays at 12:40pm
From the Academic Registrar:

We are now beginning Week 8 of the semester. Many of you are likely moving onto your final pieces of assessment and the end of semester is in sight. I have no doubt that Fr. Gerard will remind you that next week is a study-week and not an extra week’s holiday. At this time, I would like to bring to your attention once more the revised CIS Policy on “Dropping or Withdrawing from Coursework Units” which was approved by the CIS Academic Board last year. It is, of course, not possible to drop a unit this semester now that Census Date has passed. We understand that occasionally, due to unforeseen circumstances, students need to apply to withdraw from a unit even after Census Date. Such Withdrawals (which are without academic penalty to one’s GPA) are only possible under extenuating circumstances, the correct procedure must be followed, and the student remains liable for tuition fees. The policy has not changed in this respect. However, a significant change has occurred under the revised policy in that students can no longer apply for a “Withdrawal” grade after Week 10 of the semester. After Week 10 of the semester, an “Extension” or an “Incomplete” grade may still be possible, though again, only under extenuating circumstances. To be eligible to apply for an E or an I grade, be aware that you MUST have successfully completed at least one item of assessment in the unit for which you are applying for the quasi-grade.

Please take the time to familiarise yourselves with the new policy as outlined below.

With all best wishes,

Dr Rohan Curnow

7 Dropping or Withdrawing from Coursework Units

7.1 Dropping or Withdrawing from Semester Length Units

7.1.1 A student may drop a course unit within the first three weeks (i.e., before census date) of the semester by notifying the Academic Registrar using the appropriate form. It may be submitted in hardcopy or by email. In such cases, the course unit does not appear on the student’s transcript. The tuition fees, if paid, are refunded.

7.1.2 After week three (i.e., after census date), for sufficient grounds, a student may apply to withdraw without academic penalty from a course unit with the approval of the CIS Academic Board upon the recommendation of the Academic Registrar. This will appear on a student’s transcript as ‘Withdrawn’ and will not affect their GPA. The student is still liable for the tuition fees of the course unit.

7.1.2.1 To be considered sufficient grounds the disruption to studies cited must meet all of the following three criteria: (a) it could not have been reasonably foreseen or avoided; (b) it was beyond the student’s control; and, (c) it caused disruption to the student’s capacity to complete the unit. The following grounds are not considered sufficient: (a) routine variation in work demands; (b) routine family problems; (c) difficulties in managing study workloads; or, (d) the demands of extra-curricular activities.

7.1.2.2 Students in Semester Length Units or in Intensives/Extensives may not apply to withdraw after the end of Week 10 of the semester. (An E or an I grade may be possible: see section 19.17 of these Regulations).

7.1.2.3 If a health reason is cited as the reason for withdrawal, a medical certificate is normally required. On application to resume studies at CIS, a student should normally produce a medical fitness certificate.

7.2 Dropping or Withdrawing from Intensives/Extensives

7.2.1 A student may drop an intensive/extensive unit before the end of the second day of class by notifying the Academic Registrar using the appropriate form. It may be submitted in hardcopy or by email. In such cases, the course unit does not appear on the student’s transcript. The tuition fees, if paid, are refunded.

7.2.2 After the second day of an intensive/extensive unit, for sufficient grounds, a student may apply to withdraw without academic penalty from a course unit with the approval of the CIS Academic Board upon the recommendation of the Academic Registrar. This will appear on a student’s transcript as ‘Withdrawn’ and will not affect their GPA. The student is still liable for the tuition fees of the course unit.

7.2.2.1 To be considered sufficient grounds the disruption to studies cited must meet all of the following three criteria: (a) it could not have been reasonably foreseen or avoided; (b) it was beyond the student’s control; and, (c) it caused disruption to the student’s capacity to complete the unit. The following grounds are not considered sufficient: (a) routine variation in work demands; (b) routine family problems; (c) difficulties in managing study workloads; or, (d) the demands of extra-curricular activities.

7.2.2.2 Students in Semester Length Units or in Intensives/Extensives may not apply to withdraw after the end of Week 10 of the semester. (An E or an I grade may be possible: see section 19.17 of these Regulations).

7.2.2.3 If a health reason is cited as the reason for withdrawal, a medical certificate is normally required. On application to resume studies at CIS, a student should normally produce a medical fitness certificate.

7.3 Notwithstanding anything contained in these regulations, in exceptional circumstances a student may be withdrawn from a unit or units at CIS at any time if the President is convinced that such a withdrawal is for good and sufficient reason.