**Excursus: Public Engagement**

·        If I asked you to identify who you thought in Australian history consistently sought to change the type of society we have – who comes to mind?

·        implicit in this question is a distinction, an overlapping than antithetical one, not necessarily contradictory and maybe even complementary

·        A distinction between who has sought to change the type of our society we have (like Martha?) and those who seek to make our society better (like Mary?)

·        let me illustrate with reference to gender issues though could do the same with indigenous issues or homelessness - the distinction works along these lines

·        on the one hand some advocate that unless we change the nature of our society women will remain by definition disadvantaged – like equal pay – spirit of Mary

·        on the other hand some advocate changing aspects of how we treat women so it will make us a better society – like the provision of more childcare – spirit of Martha

·        perhaps this is not the place to have a political philosophy discussion just to say that aspects of our political philosophy will shape our view of the Christian life

·        are you Martha or Mary  in your politics so to speak - so who do I think have been the engines in Australia’s history providing a social critique to change society

·        I would suggest two primary sources: the academy and the labour movement

·        otherwise as a primarily middle class society the Australian the social landscape has been predominantly conservative – socially, politically and in its religious mindset

·        we have been conservative in the main when asking ourselves how do we make what we have as society better let alone how do we get a different society

·        May I would suggest that there has been one significant exception to academy and labour movement as the engine room for better and different Australian society

·        This was when the middle classes of Australia actively dressed in a radical garb and sought to change and make our society better – not that one should overstate this

·        during the late 1960’s and the arrival of the Whitlam government, built on baby boomer youthful idealism and enabled by the advent of free university education

·        for the first and only time in Australian history changing society became a middle class concern

·        That short period of the chardonnay socialist set leading the social change charge has been and now faded – present company excluded!

·        also today it is fair to say that both the labour movement and academy have been neutered – to put it kindly – from their historical role

·        as a by-product of post-Whitlamite & a card carrying post-Woodstockian progressive lefty this leaves me and maybe you somewhat off kilter from the spirit of our times

·        not surprisingly I think historically the church in Australia has sought mainly not to change our society but has been part of making us a better society – spirit of Martha

·        the exception has been the period following the 1960’s – the church added its voice to changing Australian society – the spirit of Mary seeking transforming change