

ACSJC Monthly Briefing September 2015 No 171



From the Secretariat September 2015

Dear Friends,

Last Sunday, Refugee and Migrant Sunday, we were urged to think about and pray for all those who have left their homelands for any reason and are now building or seeking a new home in a new country. On 3 September we observe the 101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees.

Four Sundays later, on 27 September, we celebrate Social Justice Sunday, when Catholics around Australia are invited to read and reflect on the Social Justice Statement from their Bishops. This year, the title of the Statement is *for Those Who've Come Across the Seas: Justice for refugees and asylum seekers*.

The ACSJC and a sister agency, the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO), hope that Migrant and Refugee Sunday will be a month in which Catholics – and all people of good will – can focus on the challenges presented to us by the extraordinary numbers of people on the move around the world. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees described the flood of people forced to [flee](#) Iraq and Syria as ‘the worst displacement situation in the world since World War II’.

Why are these people on the move? What experiences are they undergoing? How should we respond to their plight?

The ACMRO has [released](#) a kit for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. It includes messages from Pope Francis and from Bishop Vincent Long, who happens to be Chairman of our two agencies, the ACSJC and the ACMRO.

The theme for this year’s World Day of Migrants and Refugees is *Church Without Frontiers, Mother to All*.

Pope Francis opens his message with [these](#) words:

Jesus is “the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person” (Evangeli Gaudium, 209). His solicitude, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized, invites all of us to care for the frailest and to recognize his suffering countenance, especially in the victims of new forms of poverty and slavery.

He describes the fearful journeys of people in flight from persecution and poverty:

In fact, in an age of such vast movements of migration, large numbers of people are leaving their homelands, with a suitcase full of fears and desires, to undertake a hopeful and dangerous trip in search of more humane living conditions.

Bishop Long, reminds us powerfully of the atrocities that have forced desperate people to flee somewhere – anywhere – to seek safety:

Over the past year, we have seen on our television screens, our Christian brothers and sisters in the Middle East continue to suffer the ruthless barbarity of extremism under ISIS. Many men, women and

children are being forced to flee from their homes for fear of their lives. We have constantly seen the atrocities at the hand of ISIS, which can often lead us to question human solidarity (care for our neighbour), and not to mention sometimes our faith. How can it be, that fellow human beings can inflict such acts of torture and barbarity on one another? It is precisely now that the message of the Gospels needs to be proclaimed from all corners of the world and in every state of life.

We cannot pretend that we are ignorant of these pressures – they are, as Bishop Long says, before us on our televisions. We have to ask ourselves: knowing as we do the terrors that these people are fleeing, how are we trying to help them? The answer is not a comforting one: in too many cases, Australia has responded with fear and cruelty. We have detained them in remote and inhospitable detention centres, delayed the processing of their claims, condemned them to poverty in our community by denying work rights, exported them to other countries and declared that they will never be resettled in Australia.

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) has issued a [paper](#) that confronts these issues. They illustrate the damage that our policies have done to asylum seekers and to us:

The widespread and often active perpetuation of myths and misinformation; the conflation of humanitarian issues with concerns about border security, overpopulation and criminality; the prominence of highly politicised negative portrayals of asylum seekers over more positive stories about refugees, asylum seekers and their contributions to Australia; and the lack of positive political leadership, all play a role in fuelling a highly distorted and largely negative debate which reflects a level of concern well out of proportion with the actual scale of the challenges confronting Australia.

The RCOA gives evidence that this ‘perpetuation of myths and misinformation’ is having serious effects on the lives of refugees – even some of those who have been resettled in Australia under our humanitarian intake program and did not arrive as asylum seekers. Some are being made to feel unsafe and unwelcome in the communities where they live:

African community members in Brisbane, for example, have reported that African-owned and operated shops have been defaced with graffiti urging Africans to “go back to your country”. Some former refugees have raised concerns that negative stereotypes perpetuated in the media (e.g. refugees and asylum seekers as victims, as “queue jumpers”, as reliant on welfare) present significant barriers to engagement with the broader community, particularly when seeking employment.

The decades of suspicion and rejection that Australian governments have shown towards asylum seekers have been a challenge to our consciences as a people.

The Statement reminds us how disproportionate Australia’s actions are when viewed in the context of the almost 60 million people displaced around the world. It is inspired by Pope Francis’ challenge to us to look into the human face of the refugee. At about the time he became Pope, the great exodus began of refugees across the Mediterranean from North Africa and the Middle East. Francis visited the Italian island of Lampedusa where survivors of this flood of people had been brought. For him, they were not an anonymous crowd of intruders, but human beings with hopes and [fears](#) like ours:

Has any one of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were seeking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep, how to experience compassion ...

In response to that challenge from the Holy Father, the Statement brings us the very words of asylum seekers from five perspectives: the persecution and violence they confronted; the perilous journeys they have had to take; the detention they have experienced once they reached our shores; the faces of those who are most vulnerable; and the poverty experienced by those without support in our communities.

All this is placed within the context of Catholic teaching and Scripture.

The Social Justice Statement will be available on our [website](#) from the day of the Statement's launch on 9 September. I hope that on Social Justice Sunday and over the year to come, you will find time to reflect on and work for the lost and vulnerable to whom we Australians owe protection and support.

John Ferguson
National Executive Officer

You can order the 2015–2016 Social Justice Statement, *For Those Who've Come Across the Seas: Justice for refugees and asylum seekers*, on the [ACSJC website](#) or by ringing (02) 8306 3499.



Current Issues/Resources September 2015

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Australians from refugee backgrounds have made important social, economic and civic contributions to Australia, finding success in every field of endeavour and numbering amongst our best and brightest. The success of refugee settlement in Australia is in large part due to policies which have encouraged the inclusion and participation of people from refugee backgrounds in Australian society. In recent years, however numerous concerns have been raised about policies and practices which undermine the successful settlement of people from refugee backgrounds, in turn posing significant obstacles to community cohesion. [Read the report here.](#)

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE SITUATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

The Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (CLRI) (NSW) has published a theological reflection on the situation of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in the context of recent developments in legislation pertaining to the reporting of abuse in detention centres. Download [the reflection written by Justin Glynn sj.](#)

KIT: 'CHURCH WITHOUT FRONTIERS, MOTHER TO ALL'

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has been a mother with a heart open to the whole world, and has been without borders. This mission has continued for 2000 years.' [Download the kit here.](#)

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CATHOLIC ALLIANCE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum, which aims to change hearts and minds in support of the abolition of harsh asylum seeker policies, has been officially launched at the start of World Refugee Week. CAPSA was formed in 2014 to challenge the current inflammatory national debate on asylum seekers and to promote an Australia that welcomes and respects people seeking asylum. It is supported by an advisory group of national representatives that includes the ACSJC, the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office as well as Jesuit Social Services, the Australian Catholic University, Caritas, Catholic Health Australia, Catholic Mission, Catholic Religious Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia, Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace, the National Catholic Education Commission and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. [Visit their website.](#)

SYRIAN/IRAQI REFUGEES: TIME FOR A BI-PARTISAN RESPONSE

Last Wednesday the former Howard government immigration minister Philip Ruddock and Labor's Chris Hayes called for Syrian refugees to be given safe haven visas to come temporarily to Australia, similar to the program adopted for refugees from Kosovo in 1999. This is the start of a conversation we must have at the political level that responds humanely and with compassion to the plight of people caught up in a bitter war and whose lives are being irrevocably changed. The fact is that in the past the Australian community and successive Australian governments have responded generously and with open hearts to people whose lives have been devastated by war. Read [more](#).

LETTERS TO ASYLUM SEEKERS

Refugee advocate and barrister, Julian Burnside QC, has started a letter writing campaign to let asylum seekers know we have not forgotten them and we care. Will you write to an asylum seeker on Manus Island or Nauru? [Find out how.](#)

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK: 11 – 17 OCTOBER 2015

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world, more than a billion people are desperately poor. In Anti-Poverty Week, YOU can help fight poverty and hardship! Anti-Poverty Week is a week where all Australians are encouraged to organise or take part in an activity aiming to highlight or overcome issues of poverty and hardship here in Australia or overseas. It was established in Australia as an expansion of the UN's annual International Anti-Poverty Day on October 17. The main aims are to: strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and in Australia; and, encourage research, discussion and action to

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PETITION - SOS-HOMES: SAVE OUR STRATA HOMES

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courageous dialogue 'new avenues will be opened for mutual esteem, cooperation and indeed friendship.' BBI's aim with this eConference was to explore the potential for these traditions to cultivate peace in a world that associates Religion with violence. Speakers: Emeritus Professor Terry Lovat; Rev Professor Dorothy Lee; Professor Imam Mohamad Abdalla; and Professor Amy-Jill Levine. This conference was held on 23 June, the recording is now available for purchase for \$29.95, including free postage and handling in Australia. [Buy online.](#)

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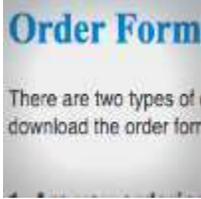
Author: Dominic Arcamone, Mission Manager in Healthcare, sessional Lecturer, Australian Catholic University. The aim of this book is to engage dialectically key symbols of religiously motivated violence through the insights of Bernard Lonergan. Lonergan's insights have helped the author arrive at a number of conclusions regarding the link between religion and violence. He argues that there is a difference between distorted religion and genuine religion, between authenticity and inauthenticity of the subject. Distorted religion has the capacity to shape traditions in ways that justify violence, while genuine religion heals persons, helps them make different moral decisions when confronted with situations of conflict, and aims to explore new ways of understanding themselves as shaping history toward progress. [Order here.](#)

HEALING THROUGH MINISTRY

Helping girls and young women overcome trauma and heal following beatings and sexual violence is the healing ministry of Sr Angelique Namaika, a woman with a passion for justice who is transforming her community. Sr Angelique received the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Nansen Refugee Award in 2013 for 'her exceptional courage and unwavering support for survivors of brutal violence in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).' Sr Angelique helps the women to overcome trauma, recuperate after rape and abuse and rebuild their lives by learning new skills and doing practical activities. 'It's possible to heal from trauma,' she said. 'It's very important to listen to the women to help them overcome the trauma. Some women choose prayer in order to heal. We also have activities to help the women gain jobs to become self-sufficient in their lives and to become independent in society.' Activities range from baking bread to sewing and culinary classes, agricultural skills to literacy classes. [Read the full story.](#)

NEW BOOK: 'POPE FRANCIS' INSPIRING VISION'

Fr Noel Connolly's new book reflects on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*. Fr Noel says, 'The *Joy of the Gospel* is an inspiring and demanding document. It is Francis' programme for the Church and will take us years of prayerful thought, action and discernment before it starts to shape our hearts and reform the Church'. The 24 page booklet contains ten reflections on what might be involved. \$7.50 including GST and postage. [Buy online.](#)



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conflict, and aims to explore new ways of understanding themselves as shaping history toward progress. [Order here.](#)

HEALING THROUGH MINISTRY

Helping girls and young women overcome trauma and heal following beatings and sexual violence is the healing ministry of Sr Angelique Namaika, a woman with a passion for justice who is transforming her community. Sr Angelique received the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Nansen Refugee Award in 2013 for 'her exceptional courage and unwavering support for survivors of brutal violence in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).' Sr Angelique helps the women to overcome trauma, recuperate after rape and abuse and rebuild their lives by learning new skills and doing practical activities. 'It's possible to heal from trauma,' she said. 'It's very important to listen to the women to help them overcome the trauma. Some women choose prayer in order to heal. We also have activities to help the women gain jobs to become self-sufficient in their lives and to become independent in society.' Activities range from baking bread to sewing and culinary classes, agricultural skills to literacy classes. [Read the full story.](#)

NEW BOOK: 'POPE FRANCIS' INSPIRING VISION'

Fr Noel Connolly's new book reflects on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*. Fr Noel says, 'The *Joy of the Gospel* is an inspiring and demanding document. It is Francis' programme for the Church and will take us years of prayerful thought, action and discernment before it starts to shape our hearts and reform the Church'. The 24 page booklet contains ten reflections on what might be involved. \$7.50 including GST and postage. [Buy online.](#)



News Monitor September 2015

[UK Catholic charities call for end to Israel's Gaza blockade](#)

The Catholic charities Pax Christi and Trócaire were among 35 international aid agencies to call for an end to Israel's blockade on the Gaza strip.

[Book launch - trafficked women in The Philippines](#)

A groundbreaking book that focuses on the lives of 40 trafficked women in the Philippines and their oppression in the sex trade was launched in Melbourne.

[Migrant and refugee advocates mark 20th birthday](#)

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office set up by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference on July 1, 1995, celebrated its 20th anniversary.

[Theologians add voice to pressure against Brazilian government](#)

Catholic theologians and commentators in Brazil added to the pressure being piled on the left-wing Workers Party (PT) Government of Dilma Rousseff by mass protests across the country.

[Fr Claude, builder of many partnerships for peace](#)

Fr Claude Mostowik msc will build on his work forging partnerships for social justice advocacy as the new Justice Network Co-ordinator of Catholic Religious Australia.

[SA Centacare reveals domestic violence against young girls](#)

Centacare social workers in South Australia warned that abuse and violent sex have become increasingly common among teenagers.

['Pope's man' in Italy stirs a row over immigration](#)

The Secretary of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Bishop Nunzio Galantino, has emerged as a strong voice for welcome and integration, as well as a stern critic of anti-immigration forces.

[Sister Angelique helps change lives](#)

A humble Catholic Sister on a bicycle is single-handedly changing the lives of former sex slaves and rape survivors in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and she was in Australia to thank donors.

[Religious leaders call for reforms to management of mining](#)

Religious groups, including Catholic Earthcare and Anglican Church leaders, signed an open letter to the NSW Premier calling for reform over coal management.

[US stock exchange monitor launches Catholic values index](#)

S&P Dow Jones Indices, which indexes the American stock exchange, has created a new index that excludes companies involved in activities that are deemed "inconsistent" with Catholic values.

[Pope says search for profit takes family life 'hostage'](#)

Pope Francis has warned the search for profit margins often "takes hostage" family life and can even view families as obstacles to better worker productivity.

[Call for 'Frontier Wars' to be taught in schools](#)

Indigenous sportsman and award-winning educator, Mark Heiss, said he would like to see Australia's Frontier Wars included in the national school curriculum.

[Philippines Church tries to shift balance to renewable energy](#)

Catholic leaders in the Philippines were pressuring their government to drop coal by working with activists and even installing solar panels on church roofs.

[Caritas: Government emissions target too little, too late](#)

Caritas Australia said the Australian Government's new target to reduce carbon pollution by 26-28% of 2005 levels by 2030 is too little, too late for many of the global poor, including our Pacific neighbours.

[Climate push prompts review of US Catholic oil investments](#)

The Archdiocese of Chicago, America's third largest by Catholic population, said it would re-examine more than US\$100 million worth of fossil fuel investments in the wake of the Pope's Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

[Peace activist was rebellious right up to the end](#)

Jerome "Jerry" Berrigan, the lesser-known of the three activist US Berrigan brothers, died aged 95. He was last arrested in 2011, aged 91, after protesting Reaper drones at an air based in New York state.

[Catholic employers say penalty rate cuts will hurt nation](#)

The peak body of Catholic employers in NSW and the ACT rejected the Productivity Commission's argument that cutting workers' penalty rates would result in increased job opportunities.

- Courtesy cathnews.com



Social Justice Diary September 2015

September 2015

1	Tue	<u>National Biodiversity Month (Australia)</u> - ACSJC Resources on the <u>Environment</u> <u>National Wattle Day</u> <u>1815: Sisters of Charity founded by Mary Aikenhead</u>
2	Wed	<u>1991: Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act passed by Parliament</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Justice for Indigenous People</u>
3	Thu	
4	Fri	
5	Sat	<u>1997: Death of Mother Teresa of Calcutta</u> <u>2013: The Convention Concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers came into force</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Workplace Justice</u>
6	Sun	Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time Father's Day <u>National Child Protection Week</u>
7	Mon	<u>National Threatened Species Day</u> - ACSJC Resources on the <u>Environment</u> <u>1936: Death in Hobart Zoo of last Tasmanian tiger in captivity</u>

8	Tue	<i>International Literacy Day</i> - ACSJC Resources on <i>World Poverty</i> READ MORE ↓
9	Wed	
10	Thu	<i>World Suicide Prevention Day</i>
11	Fri	<u>2001: Terrorist attacks on World Trade Centre, New York and Washington DC</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Peacebuilding</u>
12	Sat	<u>1977: Death of anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Confronting Racism</u>
13	Sun	Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time <u>Child Protection Sunday</u> <u>2007: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted by UN</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Justice for Indigenous People</u>
14	Mon	<i>Rosh ha-Shanah (Jewish New Year)</i> 1981: Pope John Paul II's encyclical <i>Laborem Exercens</i> ('On Human Work') - download our discussion guide on <u>Laborem Exercens</u>
15	Tue	<u>International Day of Democracy</u> READ MORE ↓
16	Wed	<i>International Day for Preservation of the Ozone Layer</i> - ACSJC Resources on the <u>Environment</u>
17	Thu	
18	Fri	<u>1961: Death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld</u>
19	Sat	
20	Sun	Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
21	Mon	<i>International Day of Peace</i> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Peacebuilding</u> READ MORE ↓
22	Tue	

23	Wed	<u>Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement)</u> <u>1959: Australian Consumers Association launched</u>
24	Thu	<i>World Maritime Day</i>
25	Fri	
26	Sat	<i>International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons</i> -ACSJC Resources on <u>Peacebuilding</u>
27	Sun	<p>Twenty-Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time Social Justice Sunday For the 2015–16 Social Justice Statement, Australia’s bishops have chosen the theme <i>Justice for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.</i></p> <p>READ MORE ↓</p> <p><u>St Vincent de Paul</u> <u>1988: Burma’s National League for Democracy formed by Aung San Suu Kyi</u></p>
28	Mon	<u>1983: Death of John Pat in Roebourne Prison, WA, prompting the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody</u>
29	Tue	
30	Wed	<u>1975: Australia’s Racial Discrimination Act proclaimed</u> - ACSJC Resources on <u>Confronting Racism</u>