

ACSJC Monthly Briefing February 2017 No 186



From the Secretariat February 2017

Dear Friends,

Each year, the Pope issues a Message for the World Day of Peace, which is observed on January 1st, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. This year is the 50th observance since the Blessed Pope Paul VI instituted the World Day of Peace in 1967.

The theme Pope Francis has chosen for this year's Message is *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*.

The ACSJC has prepared a discussion guide, which is [on our website](#) now. You can read the whole of Pope Francis' Message [on the Vatican website](#).

Early in his Message, Pope Francis has a poignant description of the state of today's world. Unlike last century, which was racked by two world wars and the so-called Cold War, this century sees us 'engaged in a horrifying *world war fought piecemeal*'. He lists the ways in which this violence is manifested:

... wars in different countries and continents; terrorism, organised crime and unforeseen acts of violence; the abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking; and the devastation of the environment.

Against this culture of violence, fostered by many governments, radical groups and criminals, Pope Francis offers us the great model of Jesus and his preaching of God's unconditional love. Jesus shows us this in his teachings and actions: his bidding to love our enemies and turn the other cheek; his intervention when the crowd sought to stone the woman caught in adultery; his command to Peter in Gethsemane to put away his sword. In this way, Pope Francis says, Jesus 'marked out the path of nonviolence'.

He walked that path to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility. Whoever accepts the Good News of Jesus is able to acknowledge the violence within and be healed by God's mercy, becoming in turn an instrument of reconciliation. [n 3]

Jesus' life and example is the core of Pope Francis' message:

To be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence.

Nonviolence, however, is not equivalent to 'surrender, lack of involvement and passivity', the Pope says. He offers us inspiring examples, starting with St Teresa of Calcutta, who

... made her voice heard before the powers of this world, so that they might recognise their guilt for the crimes – the crimes! – of poverty they created.

She is not the only example of heroic nonviolence whom Pope Francis recalls. Some of these great figures are well known to us – Mahatma Gandhi or Dr Martin Luther King – while others should be much better known: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, another hero in the struggle for Indian liberation, and Leymah Gbowee, who led thousands of women in prayer and nonviolent protest to bring about an end to the second civil war in Liberia.

There is also the example of the campaign against the Communist regimes in Europe, one that succeeded 'by means of peaceful protest, using only the weapons of truth and justice', to quote St John Paul II, himself a seminal figure in that campaign.

A striking feature of this Message is the tribute Pope Francis pays to followers of other religions:

Such efforts on behalf of the victims of injustice and violence are not the legacy of the Catholic Church alone, but are typical of many religious traditions, for which 'compassion and nonviolence are essential elements pointing to the way of life'.

As Pope Francis emphasises:

The name of God cannot be used to justify violence. Peace alone is holy.

For Pope Francis, the roots of a culture of nonviolence are in the family, the 'indispensable crucible' in which 'frictions and even conflicts have to be resolved not by force but by dialogue, respect, concern for the good of the other, mercy and forgiveness'.

As he closes his message, Pope Francis mentions those for whom he has a special concern:

... migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalised, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture.

Pope Francis closes his Message by reflecting on Mary, God's mother and the Queen of Peace, and on the power of prayer.

Nothing is impossible if we turn to God in prayer. Everyone can be an artisan of peace.

So the Church's unswerving advocacy for peace and justice continues. Pope Francis has placed himself firmly in the tradition of his predecessors who have campaigned for peace, and he extends a hand of fraternity and reverence to members of other religions who share his commitment to the way of peace.

Reading Pope Francis' list of those in most need, the many Australians committed to social justice will recognise the areas where our governments and our society fall short. The treatment of asylum seekers and refugees, of those excluded by our economy, of those in prison and those seeking work – all these groups deserve far better from one of the largest economies in the world.

We can all pray for the strength to hear Pope Francis' call and put it into action.

David Brennan
Acting National Executive Officer
Australian Catholic Social Justice Council



Current Issues/Resources February 2017

POPE FRANCIS' WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE 2017

This year's Message for the World Day of Peace is the 50th observance since the Blessed Pope Paul VI instituted the World Day of Peace in 1967. The theme Pope Francis has chosen for this year's Message is *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*.

Pope Francis reflects on a world racked with violence of every kind, and compares our situation with Christ's vision for us when he came into the world. 'To be true followers of Jesus today', he says, 'also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence'. The ACSJC has prepared a discussion guide, which is [on our website](#) now. You can read the whole of Pope Francis' Message [on the Vatican website](#).

POPE FRANCIS' ADDRESS TO THE GLOBAL FOUNDATION

Pope Francis addressed participants of the 'Round Table' of the Global Foundation in Rome. The Global Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation launched in Melbourne in 1998 by Australians who wished to confront the challenges and opportunities presented by an emerging world. Pope Francis told the gathering: 'Before all else, I would restate my conviction that a world economic system that discards men, women and children because they are no longer considered useful or productive according to criteria drawn from the world of business or other organisations, is unacceptable, because it is inhumane. This lack of concern for persons is a sign of regression and dehumanisation in any political or economic system.' You can read the whole of Pope Francis' address [here](#).

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM BISHOP LONG

On 20 December 2016, the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen, issued a Christmas message. In it he reflected on the extraordinary gift to us of Christ's birth and his constant message of peace, contrasted with the tragedy faced by Syrians, Yemenis, Iraqis, Afghans, Copts and many others. He also reminds us of those Australians who experience injustice and inequality: people left behind by our economy; Indigenous Australians; and refugees and asylum seekers. Bishop Long prays that Christmas will 'inspire us all to be the love of Jesus to every person'. The full message is [on the ACSJC website](#).

ACOSS AND VINNIES DENOUNCE CENTRELINK DEBT RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

Following widespread reports of inaccurate and threatening assessments from Centrelink to welfare recipients, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) have called on the government to suspend the automated debt recovery campaign and review it. National CEO of the Society of St Vincent de Paul John Falzon said: 'Centrelink should not be used by the government as a blunt weapon to achieve a deficit reduction on the backs of people who already carry the greatest burden of inequality'. Acting ACOSS CEO Peter Davidson said: 'For every million dollars raised, it's likely that hundreds of people are told to repay debts they don't have and hundreds more are needlessly subjected to stress and anxiety'. See the [Vinnies](#) and [ACOSS](#) releases.

SOLIDARITY WITH INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS ON 26 JANUARY

In response to the debate about the date of Australia Day and its significance for Indigenous Australians, the Edmund Rice Centre has produced an online resource 'Five ways to stand in solidarity with Indigenous Australians this Survival Day'. The ERC's suggestions are: understand and learn the truth about Australian history; attend a Survival Day event; support Indigenous music; share the truth on

social media; and help the campaign against Indigenous incarceration. The resource is [on the Edmund Rice Centre's website](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH WORLD REPORT 2017

World Report 2017 summarises key human rights issues in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide. It reflects investigative work that Human Rights Watch staff undertook in 2016, usually in close partnership with human rights activists in the country in focus. The Report includes a [chapter on Australia's achievements and shortcomings](#). It says: 'Australia is a vibrant multicultural democracy with a strong record of protecting civil and political rights, but serious human rights issues remain'. These issues include asylum seekers and refugees, Indigenous rights, children's rights, counterterrorism laws, disability rights and foreign policy. In his [introductory essay](#), Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that a new generation of authoritarian populists seeks to overturn the concept of human rights protections, treating rights not as an essential check on official power but as an impediment to the majority will.

2016 RERUM NOVARUM ORATION BY FR SEAN MCDONAGH: 'A NEW DAY DAWNS'

As part of his tour of Australia, world-renowned ecological theologian Fr Séan McDonagh delivered the 2016 Rerum Novarum Oration with the title 'A New Day Dawns'. The Oration is a response to Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which Fr McDonagh calls 'one of the most important documents to come from a pope in the last 120 years'. A PowerPoint presentation and the PDF of Fr McDonagh's oration are on the [website of the Office for Justice and Peace](#) of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

REPORT: 'OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE 2016'

The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage report is produced by the Productivity Commission for the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians involved in its development. The 2016 report is the seventh in the series. It shows some positive trends in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, but also shows outcomes have stagnated or worsened in some areas. Two years on from the previous report there continues to be improvement in many areas of health, economic participation and aspects of education. But areas such as justice and mental health remain concerning, with increases in imprisonment rates and hospitalisations for self-harm. To download the report, [visit here](#).

LAW REFORM COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO INCARCERATION

On 27 October 2016, the Attorney-General George Brandis QC and Senator Nigel Scullion, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, announced that the Turnbull Government will ask the Australian Law Reform Commission to examine the factors leading to the over representation of Indigenous Australians in the prison system, and consider what reforms to the law could ameliorate this tragedy. 'It has been 25 years since the final report of the landmark Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, but Indigenous Australians are still overrepresented in Australia's prisons. In 1991, Indigenous Australians made up 14 per cent of our nation's prison population; by 2015, this had increased to 27 per cent,' they said. ([Click here](#)). While welcoming the announcement of the Inquiry, the Change the Record Coalition of Indigenous representative groups have called for the Inquiry to focus on identifying tangible solutions that address the underlying causes of imprisonment. The Coalition's Co-Chair Shane Duffy said, 'This year marks 25 years since the landmark Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, but our people continue to experience imprisonment and violence at crisis rates. The new ALRC inquiry offers an important opportunity to shine a comprehensive light on these issues at a national level, and identify tangible actions for all levels of government.' To find out more [click here](#).

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS: ON PROPOSAL FOR PERMANENT BAN ON ASYLUM SEEKERS

‘The announcement by Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and Minister for Immigration, Peter Dutton that the Government will introduce proposed legislation banning those who have arrived to Australia by boat from 19 July 2013 onwards from ever being able to apply for a visa to Australia is deeply disappointing,’ says Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen. ‘Seeking asylum even by boat is not illegal. It is a basic human right. Yet not content with demeaning them, the Australian government now want to introduce laws that will ban them from ever coming here. The motives for these measures, in light of the current situation on Manus Island and Nauru, and in light of the bigger challenges facing Australia, are questionable at best and sinister at worst. Domestic advocates and international agencies have been appalled by the conditions under which asylum seekers live and the effects on their health, spirits and self-respect. To single out and punish further a small number of people who came by boat, even if they are found to meet the refugee definition is deliberately cruel and un-Australian.’ [Visit here to read more.](#)

FUNDRAISING: CATHOLIC ALLIANCE FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ASYLUM

The Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum (CAPSA) is a national initiative to influence hearts and minds in the Catholic community towards a more just, compassionate and humane welcome of people seeking asylum. CAPSA recognises that our current Australian government policy towards people seeking safety on our shores is in stark contrast to the core Gospel-teachings and recent messages of Pope Francis. The group envisages a community that values the fair and humane treatment of people seeking asylum and for a society where our government welcomes and supports people seeking asylum into our community. CAPSA is currently seeking donations to help expand their work across Australia. Your donation will help us run events in schools, facilitate meetings with politicians, create useful resources and videos, and run workshops with community members. All donations to CAPSA are tax deductible through Jesuit Social Services. To help continue this important work, please donate via this [website](#).

ACOSS REPORT: ‘POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA 2016’

In October 2016, ACOSS released a new report revealing that poverty is growing in Australia, with an estimated 2.9 million people or 13.3 per cent of all people living below the internationally accepted poverty line. The report provides the most up to date picture of poverty in the nation drawing on new data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Income and Expenditure surveys for 2013–14 and previous years. It found that 731,300 or 17.4 per cent of all children were living in poverty in Australia. To download the report, [visit here](#).

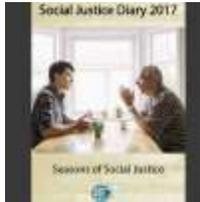
REPORT: THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN OCEANIA

Caritas Australia has joined with Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand and Caritas Tonga to produce the publication *Hungry for Justice, Thirsty for Change: Caritas State of the Environment Report for Oceania 2016*. The report details the significant impacts of climate change across the Pacific region in the past year. Some of the issues the report addresses include widespread thirst and hunger and rising sea levels. The Caritas Australia is asking people to stand in solidarity with our Pacific neighbours and send a letter to their MPs and Senators. To download the report and take further action, go to the [webpage](#).

PALMS AUSTRALIA: SEEKING VOLUNTEERS

Palms Australia is a lay Catholic organisation that, for six decades, has been sending Australian volunteers overseas and to assist communities who request Australian volunteers to help foster

peaceful development and poverty reduction. Palms Australia is recruiting volunteers to assist the development of communities during 2017 in Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and Samoa. Professions and skills sought include teachers, finance and admin officers, medics and tradies. For details on these placements please call (02) 9560 5333 or enquire [here](#). Palms is also offering its *Encounters* short-term immersion tours to Timor Leste from 2–14 April, 2–14 July and 24 September – 6 October 2017. Find out more [here](#).



ACSJC Publications February 2017

ORDER NOW! – 2017 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The 2017 Social Justice Diary includes the dates of significant events, anniversaries and special days which celebrate particular aspects of social justice. The Diary provides a social justice resource for the full year. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. This is an essential resource for teachers and parishes. Cost: \$7.50 (including postage). To download an order form, [click here](#).

DISCUSSION GUIDE: WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE 2017

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council has issued a discussion guide for the annual Message for the World Day of Peace from Pope Francis. The theme of this year's Message is *Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace*. In it Pope Francis confronts the global violence that amounts to 'a horrifying world war fought piecemeal'. He holds up the example of Jesus himself, who walked the path of nonviolence 'to the very end, to the cross, whereby he became our peace and put an end to hostility'. The Pope also reminds us of the many triumphs of nonviolent activism, including St Teresa of Calcutta and St John Paul II's heroic involvement in the downfall of European Communist regimes. The discussion guide is available in print and online [here](#).

SERIES PAPER 79 – 'HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY: A RESPONSE FROM AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS'

This paper is written by Christine Carolan, Executive Officer of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) and Sr Noelene Simmons SM, NSW Regional Co-ordinator for ACRATH. It describes the forms that slavery and related crimes take in the modern world, the Church's teaching on and response to slavery and other forms of exploitation, and the international and Australian laws that deal with slavery. It also describes the work of organisations committed to combating slavery and helping its victims – in particular, ACRATH's efforts to educate Australians, to advocate on behalf of victims, and to work with similar organisations here and overseas to shut down human trafficking and help its victims. The paper discusses particular problems faced by those who experience trafficking and exploitation, including people who may be subject to forced marriage. It also gives suggestions for people interested in supporting the work of ACRATH and similar organisations. ([click here](#))

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2016–2017

This year's Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement is entitled 'A Place at the Table: Social justice in an ageing society'. PDF and Word versions of the Statement as well as a range of print and multimedia resources – [Click here](#).

DISCUSSION GUIDES: DIGNITY AND WORK 2016

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council has issued three short discussion guides that address

critical issues concerning justice for Australia's most vulnerable workers or for those who confront the reality of unemployment. These vital aspects of work and dignity in our country address: the inadequate levels of income support offered to people who are unemployed; the risk that penalty rates will be cut for vulnerable workers; and the increasing intrusion of work demands into family time and weekends. We encourage you to promote these documents in your networks and publications. We hope that they will be a valuable resource for anyone who wants to be informed about the Church's commitment to justice and fulfilment in the workplace. The discussion guides can be accessed [here](#).

SERIES PAPER 78 – 'PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST: PASTORAL LETTERS FOR THE FEAST OF ST JOSEPH THE WORKER 2010-2015.'

In this series paper, the ACSJC has brought together a collection of the Pastoral Letters issued by Bishop Christopher Saunders. *Putting People First: Pastoral Letters for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker 2010-2015*, provides an invaluable record of the significant issues relating to work and justice in that five-year period: the global financial crisis; the Northern Territory 'intervention' and the future of remote communities; the Insecure Work inquiry of the ACTU; and the public outcry at the inadequacy of allowances for the unemployed and sole parents. The letters include succinct and accurate summaries of the arguments with sufficient, reliable statistics. Professor Paul Smyth provides an extensive introduction to the series paper. ([Click here.](#))

BUILDING BRIDGES

The book, *Building Bridges: Social Justice Statements from Australia's Bishops 1988 to 2013*, brings the Statements together in an attractive and readable format. The publication is fully indexed, making this an exceptional resource for education and research. It offers an invaluable insight into Catholic social teaching brought to life in an Australian context over the past 26 years. This collection is a vital resource for anyone interested in the Church's teaching on justice. It is of special interest to schools and universities and to parish and diocesan groups.

Building Bridges is available from the ACSJC for \$35.00 per copy including postage anywhere in Australia. Order forms are available [here](#).

(Catholic Social Justice Series papers: \$7.50 a copy, including postage)



News Monitor February 2017

[US bishops: Trump border moves will 'tear families apart'](#)

27-Jan-2017

The chairman of the US Bishops' Committee on Migration has criticised President Donald Trump's executive memorandum to construct a wall along the US-Mexico border, saying it would "put immigrant lives needlessly in harm's way".

[US bishops hopeful on immigration in Trump era](#)

20-Jan-2017

The upcoming inauguration of President-elect Donald Trump has raised questions about the future of immigration reform, but the nation's bishops remain hopeful

[Bishops call for end of 'scandal' of occupied territories](#)

20-Jan-2017

An international delegation of bishops visiting the Holy land has called Israel's occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem "a scandal" to which "we must never become accustomed".

[US bishops urge Congress to preserve health care](#)

19-Jan-2017

The US Bishops' Conference has warned Congress not to overturn Obama healthcare legislation without providing an immediate replacement for the millions who have been insured under the Act.

[Pope stresses need for stability in anxious times](#)

18-Jan-2017

Francis struck a sombre tone in his recent annual address to ambassadors. As if detecting the signs of the coming of war, the heart of his message was the need to make peace in a time of turbulence

[Pope demands maximum protection for young refugees](#)

17-Jan-2017

Pope Francis has demanded that "every possible measure" be taken to protect young refugees, as search and rescue efforts continued off Libya's coast following the latest deadly Mediterranean migrant shipwreck

[Pope praises Australian-based group for advocacy on the poor](#)

16-Jan-2017

Pope Francis has praised an Australian business-based advocacy group for its work in promoting and achieving "co-operative" globalisation to help the world's poor.



Social Justice Diary February 2017

February 2017

1	Wed	World Interfaith Harmony Week begins - ACSJC resources on Confronting Racism
2	Thu	Presentation of Jesus World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life
3	Fri	
4	Sat	Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time 1996: Signing of the Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People
5	Sun	
6	Mon	International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation Waitangi Day, Aotearoa New Zealand
7	Tue	
8	Wed	St Josephine Bakhita Chinese New Year
9	Thu	
10	Fri	
11	Sat	International Day of Women and Girls in Science World Day of Prayer for the Sick 1990: Nelson Mandela released from prison

12	Sun	<p>Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time</p> <p>1965: Commencement of the Freedom Ride in Australia - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People</p> <p>2005: Murder of Sr Dorothy Stang in Brazil</p>
13	Mon	<p>2008: Apology to Stolen Generations by Australian Government - ACSJC resources on Justice for Indigenous People</p> <p>READ MORE ↓</p>
14	Tue	
15	Wed	
16	Thu	
17	Fri	
18	Sat	
19	Sun	<p>Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time</p>
20	Mon	<p>World Day of Social Justice - ACSJC resources on Social Justice Teaching</p> <p>READ MORE ↓</p>
21	Tue	<p>International Mother Language Day</p>
22	Wed	
23	Thu	
24	Fri	
25	Sat	
26	Sun	<p>Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time</p> <p>Project Compassion begins</p>

27	Mon	
28	Tue	