



ACSJC BRIEFING

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From the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, the social justice and human rights agency of the Catholic Church in Australia - www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

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Below is a short summary of the 2003 Social Justice Statement. Please feel free to circulate this information through your networks.

- John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)

FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

Social Justice Sunday will be celebrated on 28th September. This year's Social Justice Sunday Statement will deal with the issue of Racism, and is entitled "A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ: Challenging Racism in Australia Today". The Statement will be launched on Wednesday 17th September.

This year, the publication and distribution will be different to previous years, when it was done through "Australian Catholics". Free electronic copies of the statement will be available from 17th September at the websites of the ACSJC (<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>) and the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference (<http://www.catholic.org.au>). Hard copies of the document can be ordered through the ACSJC (70 cents per copy plus postage - minimum order of 10). Orders must be placed by Friday 1st August.

Background information and order forms for the Statement are now available on the ACSJC website. Included is a message from Archbishop Francis Carroll, President of the Bishops' Conference, outlining the importance of this year's Social Justice Sunday. Among the support materials for local communities are Liturgy notes and Teachers notes.

SUMMARY, 2003 SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT

A HISTORY OF WELCOME AND EXCLUSION

There have been times when the shame of racism and the unfair treatment of cultural minorities have emerged with force in the community. Sadly, the events of 11 September 2001 and the consequent military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, the tragic bombing in Bali and further terrorist attacks have caused distress and anxiety, not only among the general Australian population, but also among Arab and Muslim communities in Australia.

If the public face of Australia has been harsh and unwelcoming, however, many Australians have passionately expressed their desire for a more welcoming society. The Churches and their leaders have also been among those who have persistently called on Australians to welcome refugees and immigrant groups into the community.

JESUS AND THE STRANGER

From his earliest years, Jesus experienced what it was to be a stranger. The Gospel account of the flight into Egypt reminds us of the threats and hardship faced by many families in today's world.

In his life and teaching, Jesus stressed God's love for strangers, particularly people excluded because of their race or background. He insisted that God's Kingdom had a place for all. Jesus insisted that all were invited because God loved them and invited them to conversion.

The Gospels often praise foreigners. Today the term Good Samaritan is commonly used for a person who shows kindness to strangers in need. Samaritans were members of a despised race and religion, and to hear them held up as models shocked Jesus' hearers. In John's story of the woman by the well, we meet another Samaritan. She is surprised that Jesus would speak to her. In his stories and actions Jesus meets strangers, looks into their faces, engages them in conversation and reveals a God who loves all human beings.

In his teaching, too, Jesus addresses the anxieties that make us exclude people. Jesus' insistence on God's universal hospitality made him a stranger in his own land. He was taken outside his own city to be crucified as an outsider. But the early Christians recognised that it was by Jesus' exclusion that they had been invited to be God's people.

Right from the start Christians were challenged to embrace difference. At Pentecost, the crowds heard the Apostles in their own languages. The Spirit united them in faith in Jesus Christ, but respected their differences of culture. They remained Greek or Jew, male and female, slave and free, but were all welcomed by Christ. St. Paul later insisted that Jewish religious customs not be imposed on Gentile Christians, who were to be received with acceptance of their own cultures, languages and histories.

THE CALL TO HOSPITALITY

The Gospel urges us to welcome strangers because we are all precious in God's sight. Our worth does not depend on the colour of our skin, our customs, or our religion. We are made in God's image, each deeply loved by God, and that is finally the source of our human dignity. Because each of us is infinitely precious, no one may be treated as a thing or used to achieve some grand

goal. When we welcome the stranger, we welcome Christ:

"How can the baptised claim to welcome Christ if they close the door to the foreigner who comes knocking? 'If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brothers or sisters in need, yet closes his heart against them, how does God's love abide in him?' - 1 Jn 3:17" - Pope John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day 2000)

Respect for persons demands respect for their cultures and our differences reflect the variety and inexhaustible beauty of God. Churches can nourish the spiritual and cultural life of immigrants and help them feel at home in their adopted land.

We can all take small, effective steps to help strangers find a welcome in our neighbourhood, our parish and our schools. In public life, church groups can and must help to define acceptable political behaviour, and refuse to allow vulnerable groups, such as immigrants, Indigenous Australians and refugees to be used as political targets.

May Christians, in the love of Christ, set an example of openness and generosity towards our sisters and brothers of every race and background.

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or email: admin@acsjc.org.au)

2003 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT: A GENEROUS HEART IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST - CHALLENGING RACISM IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Order Now!

http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/a_generous_heart_in_the_love_of_christ_challenging_racism_in_australia_today.html

BRIEFING PAPER: 40th ANNIVERSARY OF PACEM IN TERRIS

Available on the ACSJC website - www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/40th_anniversary_of_pacem_in_terris.html

OCCASIONAL PAPER: WAR ON IRAQ: IS IT JUST?

Catholic Social Justice Series ('CSJ Series') no.47 - Fr Bruce Duncan (cost \$5.50 plus postage)

SUPPLEMENTARY PAPER TO CSJ Series no.47: THE STRUGGLE TO DEVELOP A JUST WAR TRADITION IN THE WEST

Supplement by Fr Bruce Duncan available free as HTML or PDF download at http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/documentation/the_struggle_to_develop_a_just_war_tradition_in_the_west.html (PDF link at bottom of page)

CURRENT ISSUES

See <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/mediareleases.html>

MEDIA RELEASE - BISHOPS SUPPORT FAMILY COURT DECLARATION THAT THE DETENTION OF CHILDREN IS ILLEGAL - 24 June 2003

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council supported the Family Court decision that the detention of children is illegal as Minister Ruddock went to the High Court to appeal the decision. Bishops Saunders and Grech expressed the hope that the Government act on the Family Court decision by releasing unaccompanied minors into the care of appropriate families and by ensuring that families with children in detention are united and released into the community.

http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/media_releases/2003_06_24_1056418212.html

MEDIA RELEASE - ASIO BILL THREATENS FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS - 12 June 2003

The ACSJC repeated calls for all Senators to oppose the ASIO Bill if fundamental freedoms enjoyed by all Australians could not be safeguarded. Bishop Christopher Saunders called on all Senators to ask if this legislation would add to current security arrangements in a fair and just manner. It was proposed that current arrangements under the criminal justice system had proved adequate in protecting Australia since September 11 and should be given the opportunity to prove itself in the current environment. http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/media_releases/2003_06_24_1056418212.html

NEW WEBSITE: Visit the new website of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Commission (NATSICC) at <http://www.natsicc.org.au>

JULY NOTICES

June 4 - July 9: Lecture Series "The Invasion of Iraq". Weekly lectures at 6.30 pm, Christ Lecture Theatre, Australian Catholic University, St Patrick's Campus, 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy. Lectures free, no bookings required. For more Information phone (03) 9953 3160 or email l.martino@patrick.acu.edu.au (refer: http://www.acu.edu.au/acu_national/News__Events_Calendar/Events.cfm)

July 3 - August 10: Exhibition "Iraq Pre-Post War 2003". An exhibition of photographs by Mathais Heng. Alliance Francaise Gallery, 17 Robe Street St Kilda. (refer: <http://www.alliancefrancaisemelb.asn.au/gallery.html>)

July 6: Aboriginal Sunday. Liturgy Notes prepared by NATSICC available at: <http://www.natsicc.org.au/publications.htm>

July 9: Helder Camara Lecture 2003
"The Future of Christianity: Truth and Dialogue in a Post Modern Era". Address delivered by Cardinal Walter Kasper, President, Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. 7pm, Sydney Adventist College, Activities Centre, 159 Albert Rd Strathfield. \$15 per ticket. For further information contact Br Mark on Ph: 0401 389 720

July 11: Solidarity Protest for Aceh.
Organised by ASAP and the Aceh-Australia Association. 4.40 - 6.30, Sydney Town Hall Square. Followed by "Asia Under Fire: Speakers for Peace from Burma", Aceh, Korea, 7pm, Trades Hall Auditorium, Goulburn St, Sydney City.

July 13: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Week commences.

July 14 - 18: Gathering "No More Radio-active Genocide". A chance for indigenous and non-indigenous groups to come together to stop the nuclear industry. Penrose Park, Silvertown (26km north of Broken Hill) (refer: <http://www.nukefreegathering.org>)

July 14 - 17: Conference "International Perspectives on Peace and Reconciliation".
University of Melbourne (refer: <http://www.conferences.unimelb.edu.au/fagship>)

July 17: A Just Australian of the Year Awards. 7.30pm at Dockside, Cockle Bay Wharf, Sydney. \$165 per head. (refer: <http://www.ajustaustralia.com/forumevents/eventsFrameSet.html>)

July 25: Catalyst for Renewal Dinner "Human Rights in a Contemporary Australia". Speakers: Chris Sidoti (former Human Rights Commissioner) & Zita Antonios (former Race Discrimination Commissioner). Villa Maria Parish Hall, 7 for 7.30pm. \$40 per head. Reservations essential by July 17 - contact: 02 9816 4262.

July 26: Course: "From Violence to Wholeness" - a course in the

spirituality and practice of non-violent living convened by PALMS Australia in Sydney. Register before July 16 - contact: (02) 9642 0558 and email animate@palms.org.au

Throughout July: Jesuit Seminar Series 2003 "Muslims and Christians... Where do we stand?".
Speakers: Fr Dan Madigan SJ, Prof Abdullah Saeed, Fr Frank Brennan SJ. Brisbane 15 July; Sydney 16 July; Canberra 17 July; Melbourne 28 July; Adelaide 29 July; Western Sydney 30 July; Perth 1 August. (refer: http://www.uniya.org/news/pdfs/jesuit_seminars.pdf)

(email news of your forthcoming social justice events to: admin@acsjc.org.au)

JUNE NEWS MONITOR

URGENT CALL TO REMOVE JUVENILES FROM ADULT PRISONS: Melbourne's Brosnan Centre insisted 17 year olds do not belong in adult prisons in its challenge of Bracks Government moves to widen the jurisdiction of adult courts.

CATHOLIC BISHOPS SUPPORT FAMILY COURT ON REFUGEE CHILDREN: Two Church agencies joined with other Church, civic and political leaders in supporting the Family Court declaration that the detention of children is illegal.

VATICAN PUSHES RIGHTS OF DISABLED AT UN: The Vatican's permanent representative at the UN spoke up for the rights of people with disabilities.

JUSTICE AGENCIES LAUD PROGRESS ON WORLD REFUGEE DAY: Two Catholic agencies said that while progress is being made, much remains to be done in the fight for justice for refugees.

FAMILY COURT CHALLENGES HARSHNESS OF GOVERNMENT REFUGEE POLICY:

Melbourne's Catholic Commission for Justice Development and Peace has hailed the Court's decision to challenge to the detention of children under Australian immigration laws.

CATHOLIC WELFARE SAYS EQUAL SHARED PARENTING DOES NOT SUIT ALL CHILDREN:

Catholic Welfare Australia encouraged the Federal Government to ensure vigorous community debate around the issue of 'rebuttable joint custody', with spokesperson Fr Joe Caddy stressing that joint custody would "not be in the child's best interests in all situations".

VATICAN OFFICIAL SAYS POVERTY 'ISN'T INEVITABLE':

Bishop Giampaolo Crepaldi, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, told the 91st International Labor Conference that we need to "abandon the mentality that considers the poor – people and nations – as a burden".

ABORIGINAL MEN DIE 20 YEARS BEFORE WHITE MEN:

An ATSI health workers' conference heard that the life expectancy for Aboriginal men is 20 years lower than it is for white men in Australia.

POPE CALLS REFUGEE SITUATIONS "A SERIOUS OFFENCE AGAINST GOD":

In a Statement for the World Day of Refugees on June 30, Pope John Paul II said every situation in which people are forced to flee their own land to seek refuge elsewhere is "a serious offence against God and all men".

VINNIES PUTS BLUNT MESSAGE TO POVERTY INQUIRY:

"21% of Australian households are living on under \$400 a week ... The poor are silenced, but we will not be silenced!" was the St Vincent de Paul Society's message to the Senate Inquiry into Poverty.

CWL SPEAKS OUT AGAINST SEXUAL SLAVERY: National Social Issues Convenor of the Catholic Women's League Maree Triffett said: "It is horrifying that one million children throughout the world are victims of sexual slavery".

ASIO BILL OPPOSED BY ACSJC:

The ACSJC repeated its call for Senators to oppose the ASIO Bill "if basic freedoms enjoyed by all Australians cannot be safeguarded".

POPE CALLS NEGLECT OF THE EARTH A 'MORAL PROBLEM':

Pope John Paul II has warned of the dire consequences for the environment "when man turns his back on the Creator's plan".

JESUIT SOCIAL SERVICES QUESTIONS LOGIC OF PRISON EXPANSION:

The head of Jesuit Social Services asked why Victoria is building extra prison cells while Victoria has the lowest crime rate in Australia.

ARCHBISHOP CARROLL WELCOMES EAST TIMOR VISA DECISION:

Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference President, Archbishop Francis Carroll, described Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock's decision to allow 379 East Timorese asylum seekers to stay in Australia as a happy outcome of a 10-year battle.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/306>

JULY SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

JULY 1 RWANDA INDEPENDENCE DAY: In Rwanda in 1995 one million people were killed in one hundred days.

JULY 2 VOLUNTARY NATIVE TITLE AGREEMENT SIGNED: One of the first voluntary native title agreements is signed between the Gunggari people and the Cowley family in the Bollon district of South Western Queensland. This voluntary agreement is registered on the title of this land for all future holders.

JULY 7 ABORIGINAL SUNDAY: The first Sunday in July has been officially designated by the Catholic Church as Aboriginal Sunday, thus encouraging Catholics locally to focus their worship on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their culture and the issues of social justice for these peoples that still need addressing.

JULY 11 WORLD POPULATION DAY: At three minutes past midnight on October 12, 1999 Fatima Nevic gave birth to a son in Bosnia - the world's 6 billionth person.

The gap between rich and poor people in the world continues to increase. 20% of the world's population consumes 80% of the planet's resources and 80% of the world's people survive on only 20% of global resources. The greatest concentrations of poverty in the world are in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

Poverty does not just happen. It is closely connected to greed and excessive wealth. The globalisation of economics and trade has entrenched a situation of extreme inequality. Poor nations are exploited for land, resources and labour and further subjugated by the burden of debt. At the same time rich countries and corporations continue to amass wealth and capital. The UNDP states that the world's wealthiest three individuals (Microsoft's Bill Gates, the Walton family of the Wal Mart chain, and American investor Warren Buffet)

possess more wealth than the combined wealth of the world's 43 least developed nations.

Websites: <http://www.undp.org> (UN Development Report),
<http://www.jubilee2000uk.org> (Jubilee 2000)

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