



ACSJC BRIEFING

No. 64 – December 2005

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

IN THIS ISSUE

- From the Secretariat
- Current issues
- Latest publications
- December-January Notices
- November News Monitor
- December Social Justice Calendar

FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

As the Church enters the Season of Advent, we begin the new liturgical year and prepare for the great Christmas event. This is a time when we remain vigilant and prepare for the coming of the Lord. It is a time of expectation and of hope. The celebration of life as a gift from God is captured in that vivid Christmas image of the nativity.

But at the time of issuing this monthly briefing, Van Tuong Nguyen faces the death penalty in Singapore. His execution is scheduled for this Friday.

Van Nguyen's appeal for clemency was rejected by the President of Singapore in late October. He was arrested in Singapore in 2002 after police found him carrying packages of heroin. In March 2004 he was sentenced to death and the Court of Appeal rejected his appeal against the death sentence in October 2004.

Many have appealed to the Singaporean Government to reconsider granting clemency. Pope John Paul II requested clemency in February this year. Again, an appeal was made by Pope Benedict XVI in November. At their meeting in Sydney

last week, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference called on the Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong to save Van Nguyen's life.

The correspondence, which was delivered to the Singaporean High Commission in Canberra last Friday called for "a compassionate response to the dire situation of Van Tuong Nguyen. He is a young man with no prior criminal conviction, with good prospects for reform. With great respect, we appeal to you and your Government to grant clemency to this young man."

Archbishop Francis Carroll, President of the Bishops' Conference said, "The death sentence of a young man like this is heart-rending, I think. It's simply he's a young man, he had no crime record and there was a great chance of his rehabilitation." Cardinal George Pell said, "I deplore the decision of the Singapore government to proceed with this execution. Illegal drugs are a scourge, but the punishment in Van's case is completely disproportionate to the crime he has committed."

Bishop Christopher Saunders, Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council has also sent an appeal to the Prime Minister of Singapore saying, "[Van Nguyen] is a young man with no prior criminal conviction who does not deserve to lose his life for this mistake."

It must be acknowledged that drugs are an evil and that states have a duty to legislate against their use and trafficking. However, nothing can justify the use of the death penalty.

There are many people facing the death penalty around the world and many nations that continue to use it. The death penalty is an offence against the dignity and sanctity of all human life, which must be respected even in those who have done great evil. Every human being has the right to life. Use of the death penalty undermines respect for life, it is cruel and unnecessary, and it denies those who have committed crimes the chance to reform. Nothing can justify the use of such a punishment and, in the case of Van Nguyen, it is clearly disproportionate.

At the time of issuing this Briefing there appears little hope that the execution of Van Nguyen will be stopped. However, we must hold what hope there is and pray for an intervention to save this man's life.

Many Australians have been pursuing all available avenues to plead on his behalf. Organisations such as the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio have suggested letters and contact details for people wishing to send an appeal (http://www.santegidio.org/en/pdm/news/ap_van.htm). Amnesty International also has resources and suggested text (http://www.amnesty.org.au/Act_now/action_centre/singapore_urge_authorities_to_stop_the_execution_of_van_tuong_nguyen).

The fax and email details for the Office of the Prime Minister of Singapore are – fax: 0015 65 6332 8983, email: lee_hsien_loong@pmo.gov.sg

The fax and email details of the High Commissioner for Singapore in Canberra are – fax: (02) 6273 9823, email: singapore_hc@bigpond.com

Public events and vigils will be occurring around the country to pray for Van Nguyen and his family. Fr Peter Norden SJ at the Parish of St Ignatius in Richmond, (<http://www.ignatius.org.au/>) is holding a prayer vigil through the week. Fr Peter says, "during, or at the conclusion of each Mass, we will recite together the Mercy Prayer to the Madonna, that the 'right to life' of Van Nguyen will be respected by the Singaporean Government."

Let us join in that prayer for Van Tuong Nguyen, his family and loved ones.

MERCY PRAYER

*Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary,
that never was it known in any age,
that anyone who fled to your protection,
implored your help
or sought your intercession
was abandoned.*

*Inspired with this confidence,
therefore, we fly to you,
O virgin of virgins, our Mother.*

*To you do we come,
before you we stand,
sinful and sorrowful.*

*Do not, O Mother of the Word Incarnate,
despise our prayers,
but graciously hear and grant them. Amen*

CURRENT ISSUES/RESOURCES

THE DEATH PENALTY – WHY CATHOLICS SHOULD OPPOSE IT

Some resources produced over recent years about the death penalty and the Church's opposition to it are suggested. In October 2000, the ACSJC issued a Briefing Paper, "Why the ACSJC Opposes the Death Penalty" (available at: http://www.acsjc.org.au/content/publications/positionpapers/2000_10_19the_death_penalty_why_catholics_should_oppose_it.html)

In 2000, Dr Michael Costigan produced Catholic Social Justice Series paper No.40, "The Death Penalty: Why Catholics should oppose it". The excellent paper traces the development of Church teaching and action during the pontificate of Pope John Paul II and shows that the Church now places the death penalty firmly within the context of pro-life advocacy on such issues as abortion and euthanasia. Opponents of the death penalty, while fully sympathising with the sufferings of victims of violent crimes, accept the teaching, that the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. (refer: http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/social_justice_papers.html). To order call: (02) 9956 5811

The Community of Sant'Egidio is part of the world-wide effort to abolish the death penalty. The Community is a Church public lay association which began in Rome in 1968, in the period following the Second Vatican Council, and today has more than 50,000 members in more than 70 countries throughout the world. For further information visit: <http://www.santegidio.org/en/index.html>

The US Catholic Conference of Bishops have a "Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty". Visit their website for more information and a copy of the recent Pastoral Statement, "A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death":
<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/national/deathpenalty/>

ANTI-TERRORISM LEGISLATION

On 28 October the ACSJC issued a media statement calling for more time for the community to debate the Federal Government's proposed Anti-Terror laws. Bishop Christopher Saunders, ACSJC Chairman, said, "No-one would deny the Government's responsibility to ensure that Australia's security arrangements are capable of detecting and addressing potential terrorist attacks. It is essential that such arrangements adequately respect and protect the rights of all Australians. This legislation will be complex and it could have far-reaching consequences for the civil and political rights that all Australians presently enjoy. To push for the approval of the Bill before Christmas will undermine proper Parliamentary review and rule out the possibility of adequate public input... It is a concern that these powers are likely to be considered without the level of scrutiny and improvement that earlier anti-terror Bills were exposed to during 2002 and 2003." (refer: <http://www.acsjc.org.au/>)

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has issued a statement saying, "our police and intelligence agencies deserve the full support of the law and the community in their efforts to stop terrorist acts before they occur. But we must be vigilant that such laws do not undermine those very freedoms that terrorists seek to take from us. A balance is needed."
(<http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bishops/2005112514.htm>)

The ACSJC lodged a submission on the Anti-Terrorism Bill (No.2) 2005 with the Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee. The submission draws on Church teaching to: condemn terrorism in the strongest of terms; recognise the responsibility of the Government to protect its people from terrorist attacks; and to urge Government to ensure any measures it takes are balanced and do not unduly undermine civil and political rights. The submission calls for the Attorney General to reveal to the Inquiry the investigations he says show the proposed measures will not undermine Australia's obligations under International Law. The submission forwards a range of 'submissions' regarding particular provisions relating to the proposed control orders, preventative detention orders and other aspects of the Bill. The submission can be accessed at:
(http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/anti-terrorism_legislation.html)

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS CHANGES

Following the tabling of the Workplace Relations legislation in October, the Australian Catholic Commission for Employment Relations (ACCER) expressed its concerns that the Bill did not appear to address fundamental issues of fairness and balance which the Church had raised. The five major areas of concern include the minimum wage, unfair dismissals, minimum conditions, workplace bargaining, and the role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. Mr John Ryan expressed concern that new employees in workplaces, especially industrially vulnerable and young workers without bargaining power, could be particularly exposed to the offering of reduced employment arrangements.
(<http://www.accer.asn.au/news/index.html>)

At their plenary meeting in Sydney last week, the Catholic Bishops called for changes to the workplace legislation to help moderate the impact on the poor, the vulnerable and families.

The Bishops question whether the proposed national system of employment regulation includes the objectives of employment growth, fair remuneration and security of employment and whether it promotes truly cooperative workplace relations and ensures the protection of the poor and the vulnerable. "We are concerned that the proposed legislation, as it is presently drafted, does not provide a proper balance between the rights of employers and employees in several respects," their statement says. (refer:

<http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bishops/2005112512.htm>)

ACCER has prepared a Briefing Paper on the Commonwealth Government's proposed changes to Workplace Relations in Australia. This document can be accessed at: <http://www.accer.asn.au/news/index.html>

NATSICC – MESSAGE STICK

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council is planning to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Alice Springs by holding its National Assembly in the Red Centre in October 2006. NATSICC's Councillors are sending a Message Stick through Deaneries, Parishes, Schools and communities. This event is a pilgrimage that will bring all of the States together in Alice Springs for the Assembly in 2006. For more information and to see how you can be involved visit:

http://www.natsicc.org.au/message_stick_relay.htm

NATSICC is also seeking expressions of interest of those wishing to attend the "Dreaming from the Heart" event and the NATSICC National Assembly in Alice Springs, 2 – 7 October 2006. For more details visit

http://www.natsicc.org.au/alice_springs_2006.htm

UNIYA PUBLICATION – "HONESTY MATTERS"

Uniya's new book brings together papers from 2005 Jesuit Lenten Series. The 2005 series brought together people prominent in public life to talk about the fundamental qualities of truth and honesty and whether they have become disposable commodities in our poll-driven, spin-ridden society. Contributors are Morag Fraser, John Schumann, GJ O'Kelly, Julian Burnside, William Maley, John Eddy, John O'Neill, Michael Kelly, Robert Fitzgerald and Drasko Dizdar with a foreword by Patty Fawkner. Cost: \$14.95 (GST inclusive). Order form at:

http://www.uniya.org/pdf/honesty_order.pdf

EDMUND RICE CENTRE – JUST COMMENT

The Edmund Rice Centre has posted three editions of its Just Comment series on its website:

"Industrial Relations Reforms: Prosperity or Disaster?", "Debunking Myths about Muslims in Australia", and "Defending Our Way of Life: Multiculturalism is our Best Defence". These can be accessed at:

http://www.erc.org.au/just_comments/index.shtml

HR&EOC PUBLICATION – FACE THE FACTS

The Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission has launched the 2005 edition of Face the Facts: countering myths about refugees, migrants and Indigenous people. It forms part of a number of publications issued by the Commission to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. While the legislation has provided important and necessary legal safeguards for victims of racism over the past 30 years, addressing racism needs to go beyond the legal framework.

(http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/face_facts/)

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or download an order form from the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/TEMPLATE-ORDERFORM.pdf>)

COMING SOON – Catholic Social Justice Series No.56 by the Australian Young Christian Workers "From Money to Meaning: Young People and Work" and a Briefing Paper on "Stolen Wages"

ORDER NOW! - 2006 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The ACSJC's 2006 Social Justice Diary, Seasons of Social Justice, is now available.

2006 is the 20th anniversary of Pope John Paul II's visit to Alice Springs and his address to Indigenous Australians and 2007 is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. To mark these two historical events, the 2006 Social Justice Diary focuses on social justice for Indigenous Australians.

Each month, significant events for Indigenous Australians are noted and particular social justice issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are identified. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. An excellent resource for parishes, schools and social justice groups, the diary is an educational and spiritual resource for all who wish to continue the journey towards justice for, and reconciliation with our Indigenous sisters and brothers.

Cost: \$6.60 (inc. GST), plus postage. To download an order form, go to: http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/social_justice_calendar.html

SERIES PAPER: A LOVE THAT DOES JUSTICE

Catholic Social Justice Series No. 55 – Fr Neil Brown discusses the fundamental issues of charity, morality, love and justice, and considers their interconnections in a Christian life. He examines the different faces of love and sums it up as "following Christ's way of looking at and responding to the world around us". Justice he names as "the reality check of love". Charity, "the gift of Christ's own Spirit to us", is "our feeble human love, challenged and enabled to become adequate to express God's own love in the world".

(Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

2005 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT – STILL TAKING ORDERS

This year's Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Sunday Statement is entitled "Jesus, Light for the World – Living the Gospel today". The ACSJC is now taking orders of 10 or more for the Statement. An order form is available on the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

The Statement can be downloaded at:

<http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/latest.html> and

http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/documentation_js01.html

Leaflet & Prayer Card: Ten Steps Towards Living the Gospel Today
Now available. Call (02) 9956 5811

Other resources including teachers' resources and a powerpoint presentation are available on the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

ACSJC STATEMENT FOR JUBILEE SUNDAY:

ACSJC Statement for Jubilee Sunday (26 June):

http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/issues/statement_for_jubilee_sunday,_26_june_2005.html

PASTORAL LETTER: THE MINIMUM WAGE IN AN AGE OF PROSPERITY AND WEALTH

The Pastoral Letter issued on the Feast of St Joseph the Worker. Available at: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

SERIES PAPER: TRADE JUSTICE

Catholic Social Justice Series No. 54 – Sr Suzette Clark rsc and Dr Patricia Ranald. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

SERIES PAPER: ENDING HUNGER – HOW FAR CAN WE GO?

Catholic Social Justice Series No.53 – Fr Bruce Duncan CSsR. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

(Postage rates for Catholic Social Justice Series Papers: 1 copy \$1; 2-3 copies \$1.45; 4-5 copies \$2.45)

DECEMBER-JANUARY NOTICES

NOVEMBER 4 – JANUARY 29: EXHIBITIONS, "PAI NAI MA – THAI AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCES" AND "WINDOWS OF SPIRITUAL ART"

(NSW). Parramatta Heritage Centre, 346A Church Street, Parramatta. A partnership with Parramatta Heritage Centre, Thai Welfare Association, and the Migration Heritage Centre, and guest curator Zoe Pollock (refer: <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/index.shtml>)

NOVEMBER 30: PRAYER VIGIL FOR VAN NGUYEN (NSW). St Mary's Cathedral Sydney: 5.30pm Mass and all-night prayer Prayer Vigil to 6.45am Thursday.

DECEMBER 1: VIGIL, "SAVE VAN TUONG NGUYEN – STOP THE EXECUTION" (NSW). Show your support for Van Tuong Nguyen and take a stand against the death penalty. Please join us between 6.30 and 7.30pm at the Martin Place Amphitheatre (nr Pitt St). Speakers will include parliamentarians and prominent members of community groups. At this gathering you will be given the opportunity to light a candle for Van, sign a letter to the Singaporean Government, write a message to Van's family and call on the Australian Government to take a clear and unequivocal stand against the death penalty. For further information please call 9217 7670.

DECEMBER 1: VIGIL, "CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR VAN NGUYEN" (SA). A public gathering on the eve of Van Nguyen's scheduled execution. Please come and show support for Van and his family and make a strong stance against the death penalty. From 7.30pm, Victoria Square, Adelaide. (refer: <http://www.sa.greens.org.au/event.php?event=148>)

DECEMBER 1: PUBLIC LECTURE, "HIV/AIDS & SOUTH AFRICA: THROUGH A WOMAN'S EYES" (NSW). On World AIDS Day, Caritas Australia invites you to spend an evening with Mrs Mpogeng Mahlangu, Manager of Siyabhabha Trust, South Africa, as she tells of her experiences with HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa. 6.30pm for 7.00pm, Leone Ryan Auditorium, Level 4, Carroll Building, Australian Catholic University, 40 Edward St, North Sydney. (refer: <http://www.caritas.org.au/education/worldAidsDay.htm>)

DECEMBER 2: PRAYER VIGIL AND MASS FOR VAN NGUYEN (VIC) AT ST IGNATIUS PARISH, 326 Church Street, Richmond, Melbourne. The church will be open from 6.00 am for private prayer at the Pieta in the Lady Chapel at St Ignatius, and the prayer vigil will continue until the 8:30 am Mass. The congregation will be invited to remain until 9.00 am (6.00 am Singapore time) at which moment the large St Ignatius Church Bell will be rung 25 times, signifying the 25 years of Van Nguyen's life. (refer: <http://www.ignatius.org.au/>)

DECEMBER 2: SEMINAR & WORKSHOP, "ACEH: ONE YEAR AFTER THE TSUNAMI" (NSW). One year after the tsunami the situation in Aceh has changed, with a peace agreement being signed between GAM & the Indonesian Government. Meet our Acehnese speakers and discuss the reconstruction efforts, tsunami aid funds, the peace process and the changing political situation. UTS Law Faculty, Lvl 1 (Ground floor), Building 5, Room 5B112, Quay Street, Haymarket. Entry free. More information: <http://www.caritas.org.au/newsroom/2005/20051125.htm> RSVP: Caritas Australia, Philippa Beale, Ph: 9956 5799.

DECEMBER 2: PUBLIC MEETING WITH DR OWENS WIWA (QLD). Nigerian human rights activist Dr Owens Wiwa will be in Brisbane to raise awareness of the social and environmental issues surrounding the production of oil in the Niger Delta and Royal Dutch/Shell's role in the region. Central to his campaign is the economic and political marginalisation of ethnic minorities in the region and in particular the people of Ogoniland. Meeting at 1.30pm at Kurbingaibah, the centre for Indigenous awareness, near Redcliffe. Please RSVP by e-mailing karrina.nolan@foe.org.au or Ph: 0403 920 195.

DECEMBER 2: CONFERENCE, "HUMAN RIGHTS, MENTAL HEALTH AND ANTI-TERROR LAWS IN AUSTRALIA" (NSW). Hosted by SAVE, this conference focuses on the important relationship between human rights and mental health and powerful social, legal, health, justice, immigration and government institutions. Speakers include: Dr Sev Ozdowski OAM (Federal Human Rights Commissioner), John Mendoza (CEO, Mental Health Council of Australia), Dr F Ian Curtis (Consultant Psychiatrist, QLD, Rachael Wallbank (Lawyer and LGBT Rights Advocate). 8.30am – 4.30pm, Mitchell Theatre (Level 1), Sydney Mechanic's School of Arts, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney. Cost: \$80, Concession \$50. For further information call 0422 085 222 or visit: <http://www.save.org.au/>

DECEMBER 2: CONFERENCE, "HUMAN RIGHTS 2005: THE YEAR IN REVIEW" (VIC). The Castan Centre for Human Rights Law presents this review which will consider global poverty, the impact of natural disasters, reform of the UN, human rights and mental health, national reconciliation, IR reforms etc. Speakers include Dr Arjun Sengupta, Ms Kirsty Nowlan, Prof Andrew Byrnes, Prof Bernadette McSherry, Mr Martin Flynn, Mr Colin Fenwick, Dr Helen Watchirs, Dr David Wiseman. 8.45am – 4.30pm, The CUB Malthouse, 113 Sturt Street, Southbank, Melbourne. Cost: \$180, Students: \$50. For detail call (03) 9905 3327 or visit: <http://www.law.monash.edu/castancentre>

DECEMBER 3: FUNDRAISER, "SONGS ACROSS THE FAULT LINE" (NSW). A fundraiser for Pakistani Earthquake Relief featuring 'Voices from the Vacant Lot' performing live with the Solidarity Choir and guest performers. 7.30 – 10.00pm, Glebe Town Hall, 160 St Johns Road, Glebe, Sydney. Cost \$15; \$10 concession; Children under 12 free. For more information call (002) 9344 5610.

DECEMBER 3 – 6: EVENTS, "RESISTING FEAR, BUILDING PEACE: Learning to live non-violently" (NSW). Four events are being held in Sydney to explore how nonviolence can help us resist the fear building around us and build the peace we want to see in all parts of our lives. Three members of the Pace e Bene Franciscan Nonviolence Service will co-facilitate the events at: North Parramatta, Centre for Ministry, 16 Masons Drive, 2.00 – 5.30pm (3rd); St Vincent's Catholic Church, 117 Redfern St, Redfern 11.00am – 12.30pm (4th); Pitt Street Uniting Church, 264 Pitt St Sydney, 10.00am – 12.00pm (4th); Edmund Rice Centre, 9 Alexandra Ave, Croydon, Sydney, 9.00am – 4.00pm (6th). For further information and cost details call 8838 8935, email robertm@nsw.uca.org.au. (refer: <http://www.acmica.org/pace>)

DECEMBER 4: CHARITY EVENT, "NORTH SHORE, SHARE THE WEALTH!" (NSW). Many refugees and asylums seekers are now living in the community with visas which make life very difficult. Bridging Visa E, for instance, gives no income or benefits such as Medicare, and generally forbids any form of work or study. North Sydney Friends of Asylum Seekers & Refugees are having a collection at the Stanton Library from 11.00am to 3.00pm. We would like to collect as many full "Green" shopping bags as possible. We will take these to the House of Welcome at Carramar to be distributed to needy refugees/asylum seekers. If you can't come then, the Library has kindly offered to accept donations any time until 4 December.

DECEMBER 4: EVENT, "THE LONG WALK 2005" (VIC). Michael Long is embarking on "The Long Walk 2005" which will commence on December 4. Now we have the chance to walk with Michael to help bring about change. Walk with thousands of non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians to improve everyone's way of life. 10.30am, Princes Park, Carlton, Victoria. Starting and finishing at Optus Oval. Around the grounds, 3.3km (approx 60min walk). Single Ticket \$15, Family Ticket \$40. For further details or to register interest call (03) 9646 6966 or visit: <http://www.thelongwalk.com.au/>

DECEMBER 5: PUBLIC MEETING WITH DR OWENS WIWA (VIC). Nigerian human rights activist Dr Owens Wiwa will be in Melbourne to raise awareness of the social and environmental issues surrounding the production of oil in the Niger Delta and Royal Dutch/Shell's role in the region. 7.00 – 9.00pm, Downstairs lecture theatre, Storey Hall, RMIT, Swanston St, Melbourne. Event hosted by Friends of the Earth and the RMIT Globalism Institute. (refer: http://www.foe.org.au/ci/ci_05drwiwa.htm)

DECEMBER 7: CONFERENCE, "AUSTRALIAN CHILD POVERTY CONFERENCE" (VIC). After 14 successive years of economic growth around half a million children remain living in poverty in Australia. One in six children is growing up in a family where no parent is in paid work. The Brotherhood of St Laurence wants to put child poverty on the agenda in Australia. This conference will focus on taking steps to eradicate child poverty. Speakers include: Kate Green - Child Poverty Action, UK; Dr Shane Houston - Assistant Secretary, Office of Aboriginal Health, Family and Social Policy, NT; Dr Garth Alperstein - President, NSW Branch, Public Health Association of Australia. 8.30am - 5.00pm, Dallas Brookes Conference Centre, 300 Albert Street, East Melbourne. Cost: \$110 or \$77 concession. (refer: <http://www.bsl.org.au/main.asp?PageId=3338>)

DECEMBER 8 – 9: CONFERENCE, "RACISMS IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER: REALITIES OF CULTURE, COLOUR AND IDENTITY CONFERENCE" (Qld). Conference organised by the Centre for Multicultural and Community Development at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Issues to be addressed include media bias, geography, institutional racism, racism and the war on terror, racisms in the new world order, and how to respond to racism. Conference to be held at the Hyatt Regency Coolumb, Queensland. Refer: <http://www.fecca.org.au/Calendar/dec2005.html>

DECEMBER 8 – 9: CONFERENCE, "CREATING A CULTURE OF FULL EMPLOYMENT" (NSW). This conference convened by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity incorporates the 7th Path to Full Employment Conference and the 12th National Conference on Unemployment. It will be held at the University of Newcastle. The aim of the Conference is to develop approaches which will help our communities develop the necessary cultural shifts that will compel policy-makers to move our economy back to full employment. A range of expert speakers from Australia and overseas. For conference and registration details call (02) 4921 7283 or visit <http://e1.newcastle.edu.au/coffee/conferences/2005/index.cfm>

DECEMBER 10: HUMAN RIGHTS DAY ADDRESS, "HUMAN RIGHTS AND INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA" (Qld). Amnesty International Australia Qld & Northern NSW Region invites you to attend the Human Rights Day Address by Professor Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE. 7.00 for 7.30pm, Queensland Irish Club, 173 Elizabeth St, Brisbane. Cost \$55 / \$35 (includes 3 course meal). Call (07) 3210 5200 for further details.

DECEMBER 10: FUNCTION, "INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY DINNER" (SA). Amnesty International Australia (SA/NT) will host an International Human Rights Day Dinner, to raise public awareness on the issues of human rights in Australia. The formal black-tie dinner will be held at the National Wine Centre, North Terrace in Adelaide, on the 10th December, commencing at 7.00pm. The evening will feature Guest Speaker Julian Burnside QC, local musical bands, artistic showcases, auctions and a three course dinner. Tickets: Adults \$70, Concession \$55. Call (08) 82215979 or visit: http://www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org/template.php3?area=news&content=20051026_336

JANUARY 11 – 13, MARCH 25 – 26: SUMMER SCHOOL, "JUSTICE AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION" (NSW). As part of the Summer Schools program of the Catholic Institute of Sydney, Sandie Cornish will be lecturing on the importance of work for justice to the mission of the Church, examining key concepts such as evangelization, the option for the poor, social sin and integral human development. The Course introduces Catholic Social Teaching, and examines how these teachings relate to contemporary issues such as Indigenous rights, forced displacement, peace, trade justice and the environment. Registration closes on December 16. Call (02) 9752 9503 and visit http://www.cis.catholic.edu.au/five_day_summer_school.htm for course and registration details.

JANUARY 11 – 15: JUSTICE FESTIVAL, "WHAT IF ...JUSTICE IS POSSIBLE" (Vic). The Marist Young Adult Ministry is holding the 2006 National Justice Festival For Young Adults in Ballarat, Victoria. A live-in experience for young adults (17-30 years) looking to explore the links between their life, faith and how they might respond to the calls to solidarity, peace making and justice action. Guest speakers will include: Bishop Kevin Dowling CSM, Bishop of Rustenberg, South Africa; Regina Lane, Executive Officer for Australian Political Ministry Network; Mark Yettica Paulson, CEO Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre; and Fr Chris Skinner SM, Singer and Youth Ministry. For registration and other details call (03) 9347 7085 or visit: <http://www.myam.org.au>

NOVEMBER NEWS MONITOR

PRAYER VIGILS FOR VAN NGUYEN: Christians in cities across Australia were to pray on Thursday for Van Nguyen, the Australian in Singapore's Changi Prison who is scheduled to be executed on Friday.

PRIEST SAYS AUSTRALIA 'GALVANISED' AGAINST DEATH PENALTY: Van Tuong Nguyen's case galvanised Australia's opposition to capital punishment, Melbourne Jesuit anti-death penalty campaigner Fr Peter Norden said.

INDONESIAN BISHOP CONDEMNS CATHOLICS' DEATH SENTENCE: Three Catholics condemned to death for violence which hit in Poso five years are innocent and should not be executed, says Bishop Joseph Suwatan of Manado.

AWARD HONOURS INITIATIVE TO EDUCATE HOMELESS: Several Catholic organisations were in the spotlight as they received an Honourable Mention at the Business/Higher Education Round Table Awards Dinner in Sydney.

STATEMENT FROM BISHOPS URGES COMPASSION FOR NGUYEN: Australia's Catholic Bishops appealed to the Singaporean Government to grant clemency to convicted drug trafficker Van Nguyen.

ACBC PLENARY STATEMENT CALLS FOR REVISION OF IR BILL: The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) called for the Government's proposed industrial relations laws to be rewritten to provide a buffer against "undesirable consequences" on the poor.

BISHOPS URGE UNDERSTANDING OF TERROR CAUSES: Australia's Catholic Bishops urged the nation to seek to understand and address the reasons why alienated young people would seek to harm innocents.

ROME GROUP SET TO MOBILISE WORLD AGAINST DEATH PENALTY: As Australia's Van Nguyen prepared to go to the gallows in Singapore, the Rome-based Community of Sant'Egidio was planning a worldwide effort to abolish the death penalty.

POPE SAYS THIRD WORLD FARMERS NEED HELP TO BEAT POVERTY: Pope Benedict told a group of representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) that dialogue and respect between cultures must be part of the international effort to curb hunger and poverty.

MINISTER THREATENS CHRISTIAN PACIFISTS WITH SEVEN YEARS JAIL: Federal Defence Minister Robert Hill wrote a letter to a group of Christian pacifists threatening them with "a maximum penalty of imprisonment for seven years" if they enter the Pine Gap spy base near Alice Springs.

EDMUND RICE ADVOCATE DEFENDS DEPORTED DRUG OFFENDER: Director of the Edmund Rice Centre in Sydney, Phil Glendenning, spoke out on behalf of Robert Jovicic, a stateless permanent Australian resident who was recently deported to Serbia because he has a criminal record.

COMMISSION URGES CATHOLICS ACT ON DEATH PENALTY: Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission encouraged Catholics to take action to oppose the execution of Australian man, Van Tuong Nguyen.

PELL SHOCKED BY INDIGENOUS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: Cardinal George Pell of Sydney said he was shocked by statistics showing reported rates of domestic assault in the indigenous community had increased by 50% in NSW over seven years.

VINNIES REJECTS WELFARE REFORMS: The St Vincent de Paul Society told the Senate Inquiry into the Welfare to Work Legislation that the new rules place further hardship on those who have already been locked out of Australia's current prosperity.

CATHOLIC LEADERS WARN OF 'ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES' SCENARIO: A statement issued following the weekend's national climate change conference calls for ecological conversion, warning that global warming could create a new wave of dispossessed people.

JUDICIAL INQUIRY INTO PAKISTAN ANTI-CHRISTIAN ATTACKS: The governor of Punjab, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, announced the opening of an inquiry into anti-Christian violence in Sangla Hill, Pakistan, on 10 November.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REPORT 'ALARMING': Bishop Christopher Toohy and delegates at the Catholic Earthcare climate change conference in Canberra at the weekend said they are appalled by a United Nations report that showed a significant increase in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

PELL GIVES DETAILS ON PAPAL PLEA FOR NGUYEN: The Vatican appealed to the President of Singapore for clemency for Nguyen Tuong Van twice over the course of this year, Cardinal George Pell announced on Friday.

PRIEST DECLARES ALVAREZ HOMECOMING A 'MIRACLE': Fr Michael Duffin declared his Sydney meeting with wrongly deported Australian Vivian Alvarez a miracle, after first encountering her in 2001 in a Philippines hospice for the destitute and dying, where she was left to waste away.

VATICAN ARCHBISHOP SEEKS HEALING OF DIGITAL DIVIDE: The president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications told a UN summit that urgent action is required to close the divide between rich and poor that is caused by unequal access to the Internet.

CATHOLIC COUNCIL SERVICE TO MARK PALM ISLAND DEATH ANNIVERSARY: Justice to be seen to be done before any families who lost loved ones through a death in custody could really be healed, a Townsville service was told on Saturday.

COMMISSION TO TELL SENATE INQUIRY OF CONCERNS FOR VULNERABLE: The Catholic Church's employment relations body told a Senate Inquiry of its concerns about the potential impact of the government's workplace changes on the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

CARDINAL TO SPELL OUT CHALLENGES FACING ASYLUM SEEKER PASTORAL CARE: The Church faces several key challenges in delivering pastoral care to people on the move, Cardinal Stephen Hamao, President of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People told a conference in Sydney.

US BISHOPS STATEMENT CALLS FOR REJECTION OF DEATH PENALTY: A new statement on the death penalty that calls on society to "reject the tragic illusion that we can demonstrate respect for life by taking life, was approved by the US bishops on Tuesday in a nearly unanimous vote.

COMMISSION WORRIED ABOUT OUTWORKERS UNDER IR RULES:

Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission is deeply concerned about the impact of the Federal Government's workplace relations system on outworkers in the clothing industry.

VATICAN ADVISER SAYS NO MORE TOLERANCE OF NUCLEAR

DETERRENCE: The Vatican's "strictly conditioned" acceptance of US nuclear deterrence policy since the 1980s appears to be over, a Vatican adviser said at the weekend.

BISHOP CALLS FOR NEW AIDS THEOLOGY: A South African Catholic cleric who supports the use of condoms against HIV/AIDS called for a new "theology" for the pandemic.

ACU LECTURER SAYS RESILIENCE' HELPS COMBAT SCHOOL BULLYING:

Toni Noble of the Australian Catholic University said she is convinced that schools can help to break the bullying cycle by promoting resilience among students.

VINNIES SAYS WELFARE REFORMS LACK FAIRNESS: St Vincent de Paul Society's national operations manager, Dr John Falzon said that it is absurdity to maintain that, in order to work harder, the rich need large carrots while the poor need large sticks.

CATHOLIC EARTHCARE HIGHLIGHTS VATICAN CLIMATE CHANGE

INTERVENTION: The director of Catholic Earthcare Australia said that the recent statement of Vatican UN nuncio Archbishop Celestino Migliore particular relevance to Australia, given the country's unenviable record of being the world's greatest per capita emitter of greenhouse gases.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY STRENGTHENS TIES WITH

VINNIES: ACU National strengthened ties with the St Vincent de Paul Society Sydney Archdiocese with the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

BRISBANE CATHOLIC GROUP URGES GOVT TO FIX PRISONS: The Queensland Government is not doing enough to support prisoners released from the state's jails, the co-ordinator of Brisbane Catholic Prison Ministry said recently.

COMMISSION SEEKS RADICAL CHANGE IN TAX DEBATE: The Catholic Employment Relations Commission said that only a major change in direction in the current tax debate will reverse the 40 year trend in which the low paid have been the losers in tax reform.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/511>

DECEMBER SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR - VATICAN COUNCIL II

Pope John XXIII announced his intention of summoning the Council in January, 1959, within three months of his election, in order to: "Increase the fervour and energy of Catholics, and to serve the needs of Christian people". He mentioned ways of achieving this, including: "Christian social activity must increase".

In Italian, he expressed his hope for the Council in one word, "Aggiornamento", meaning that the Church must be brought up to date, adapting itself to meet the challenged conditions of modern times. Using an expressive gesture, Pope John moved to a window and threw it open, to let in a draught of fresh air.

DECEMBER 7 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF GAUDIUM ET SPES

On this day in 1965, Pope Paul VI proclaimed the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*.

4. The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.

65. Economic development must remain under the control of humankind and must not be left to the judgement of a few people or groups possessing too much economic power or of the political community alone or of certain more powerful nations. It is necessary, on the contrary, that at every level the largest possible number of people and, when it is a question of international relations, all nations have an active share in directing that development.

69. God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. ... The right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. ... One is obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of one's superfluous goods.

DECEMBER 8 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLOSE OF VATICAN COUNCIL II

The Second Vatican Council opened on October 11th, 1962. The fourth and last session of the Council opened September 14th, 1965, and closed December 8th.

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

ADVENT

Advent commenced in late November, continues during December and is a time of preparation for Christmas.

As the journey to Christmas takes place, many people, events and symbols invite us to pause and remember the ongoing presence of God in our lives. With Mary, we can give birth to Jesus and carry him into our world. With the Shepherds, we can glorify and praise God for all we have heard and seen. With the Wise Men, we can search for a deeper understanding of Jesus and follow the star that leads us to him. With the Angels, we too can be messengers of God, singing the Good News.

BUY NOTHING CHRISTMAS MOVEMENT

This Movement challenges us to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas:

Somewhere around age 16 we start collecting numbers: student numbers, driver's licence numbers, Social Insurance Numbers and it goes on. When Mary and Joseph are ordered to join a Roman census it was so they could be numbered, sorted, tracked, and taxed. It was a way of reducing their humanity, making them cattle not people. The current title "consumer," brings to mind an image of a cow "consuming" so it can be used for milk or meat. Citizens, on the other hand, are thinking, acting and powerful beings. Consumers exist to buy and produce. Who, exactly, is "milking" us for all they can get? This Christmas, be a rebel: take back your identity as a person.

The Buy Nothing Christmas Movement offers the following alternatives:

- make a gift (write a card, paint a picture, mount a photo, bake some cookies, give some jam)
- recycle an old treasure (a book, fancy fountain pen, desk lamp from the basement)
- give a voucher (for babysitting, a home-cooked meal, walk in the park, ride on a bike, go to the movies)
- reduce needless consumer spending (give a gift to charity in someone's name, draw names instead of buying for everyone)
- have a meal together, start new traditions of sharing memories or making simple handmade cards

Buy Nothing Christmas Movement:

<http://www.buynothingchristmas.org/index.html>

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