

## 2009 Social Justice Sunday Statement – Summary

### And You Will Be My Witnesses: Young people and justice

In July 2008, young people of the world gathered in Sydney to celebrate their faith in the presence of Pope Benedict XVI. During that week we saw how the Holy Spirit inspires a commitment to justice in young people.

In this year's Social Justice Sunday Statement, the Catholic Bishops of Australia support young people's commitment to social justice and reassert the central theme of World Youth Day:

*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses. (Acts 1:8)*

The Bishops remind all Catholics of Pope Benedict's challenge during that week:

*What will you leave to the next generation? ... What legacy will you leave to young people yet to come? What difference will you make?*

The earliest Christians were young women and men who received the Holy Spirit, then went forth to spread the Good News and to care for the most vulnerable. Many young Australians, too, witness to the Gospel as 'ambassadors of hope', as the Pope called them, using their gifts in the service of justice.

Some young people, however, face injustices that prevent them taking up the challenge, leaving them disempowered, excluded and deprived of basic dignity. Of many such issues, the Bishops discuss four: the plight of Indigenous youth, those excluded from employment, the issue of mental health and the prevention of abuse. They also discuss two international concerns: the environment and global justice and development.

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus tells us that he is sent 'to bring the good news to the poor' and 'to set the downtrodden free' (Lk 4:18–21). After his Resurrection, he offers his disciples peace and gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit – the spirit of justice, a core tenet of Christian life and faith. We seek to enhance the reign of God in our land through forging reconciliation, acting for justice and making peace. We are bound into the struggle for justice – to see, to judge and to act – and challenged to *go forth in the peace of the Holy Spirit, to love and serve the Lord.*

#### **Bulletin note**

The Bishops would welcome promotion of the Statement in the weeks leading up to Social Justice Sunday. A possible entry in your parish bulletin or newsletter could be:

*We celebrate Social Justice Sunday on 27 September. This year's Social Justice Sunday Statement is titled: 'And You Will Be My Witnesses'.*

*During World Youth Day 2008, Australia saw thousands of young Christians inspired by the Holy Spirit. Yet many young people are marginalised, excluded and deprived of dignity. The Bishops recall the challenge of Pope Benedict – 'What will you leave to the next generation? What difference will you make?' – and present it again to all Australians, young and old.*

*For further details about the Catholic Bishops' Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website ([www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au)) or call (02) 8306 3499.*

#### **Associated resources**

The ACSJC website ([www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au)) will have the following resources available for download free of charge well before Social Justice Sunday:

- Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes
- teachers' resources
- multimedia resources.

Prayer Cards and 'Ten Steps' leaflets can be ordered from the ACSJC on (02) 8306 3499 or by email: [admin@acsjc.org.au](mailto:admin@acsjc.org.au)