

TEN STEPS TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

1. REFLECT ON THE GOSPEL

The Gospel reading for Social Justice Sunday 2017 is Jesus' parable of the workers in the vineyard. Using an everyday example of economic hardship, Jesus teaches how the reign of God is open to all, generous, and especially mindful of those left behind. God provides sufficiently and fairly for each person, all the while attentive to the needs of those who experience exclusion and have little hope.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.3)

Prevailing notions of justice often have much to commend them - yet are diminished compared to God's love and justice. Our vision can be restricted if what we regard as 'fair' and 'equal' simply asks: why should someone who works one hour receive the same pay as someone who works eight hours? Or why should some receive subsidised housing, electricity, council rates? Read, and read again, Matthew 20:1-16 – then reflect on God's justice.

2. BECOME INFORMED ABOUT 'ECONOMIC EXCLUSION'

Since 1992, overall national wealth increased by 40 per cent ... Australians now have the world's second-highest average net wealth per person. The problem for those who believe in a just society is that the benefits of more recent growth have been spread so unevenly. The top 20 per cent of households received far greater increases in income than the poorest 20 per cent.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, pp.4-5)

Jesus calls us to build a just society. This includes working together to eradicate poverty and ensure all benefit from a society's common wealth. Get the facts about economic exclusion. While many live in comparative comfort, three million Australians (including over 730,000 children) live in poverty.

3. IDENTIFY THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE EXCLUSION

Consider the key areas of economic exclusion in your neighbourhood. It may be issues like homelessness, environmental degradation, youth unemployment or cuts to Sunday penalty rates.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.17)

On Social Justice Sunday, and over the year ahead, consider where the economy fails your local community. Be mindful that sometimes poverty and exclusion is hidden. Are there particularly vulnerable groups in our churches, workplaces or schools? Parish and community census profiles can help identify groups in need:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics: www.abs.gov.au

The Bishops' Pastoral Research Office: <http://pro.catholic.org.au/catholic-social-profiles>

4. JOIN THE WORK OF COMBATING POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS

As people of the Gospel, we have to be concerned about growing inequality, and especially about the situation of the more vulnerable in our community.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.5)

Information and campaigns addressing the needs of people who are **unemployed** can be found at:

Catholic Social Services Australia: www.cssa.org.au

Australian Council of Social Service: www.acoss.org.au

Welfare Rights Centre: www.welfarerightscentre.org.au

For information and campaigns supporting **vulnerable workers**:

Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations: www.accer.asn.au

Australia Institute Centre for Future Work: www.futurework.org.au

ACTU 'Change the Rules' campaign: www.australianunions.org.au/change_the_rules

Organisations addressing **housing affordability and homelessness**:

The Society of St Vincent de Paul: www.vinnies.org.au

Australian Catholic Housing Alliance: www.catholichousing.org.au

National Shelter: www.shelter.org.au & Homelessness Australia: www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au

5. STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE FIRST PEOPLES OF AUSTRALIA

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities struggle with social and economic burdens that most Australians cannot imagine. That they are overrepresented on almost every indicator of disadvantage is a national shame ...

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.8)

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience exclusion – from policy negotiations that affect their people and land, from a fair share of national prosperity, and often through being typecast as a burden on the broader community. We are called to support our Indigenous sisters and brothers in the pursuit of national recognition, reconciliation and social justice.

For cultural, Acknowledgement and liturgical resources, visit the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council: www.natsicc.org.au

Join the movement for Indigenous recognition: www.recognise.org.au

Support the 'Close the Gap' campaign at: www.antar.org.au/closethegap

6. END POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The principle of the common good calls for an economy at the service of all, promoting development that is attentive to the social and environmental impacts of the market, now and for future generations.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.13)

Global warming, environmental disasters and degradation have an increasing impact on the world's poor. For more information and helpful resources, visit Catholic Earthcare, the official ecological agency of the Catholic Church in Australia: www.catholicearthcare.org.au

Over 800 million live in extreme poverty – one in nine people go hungry, mostly in developing countries. Find out more and donate at Caritas Australia: www.caritas.org.au

We all have a role to ensure Australia is a good global citizen. Individuals can do much, such as how we purchase and consume (visit the Fair Wear Foundation: www.fairwear.org). Australian businesses should support ethical standards in developing nations (visit Jubilee Australia: www.jubileeaustralia.org). Our government needs to ensure social justice in trade agreements entered into (visit the Australia Fair Trade & Investment Network: www.aftinet.org.au)

7. INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES, GLOBAL CITIZENS: YOU, ME, US

When it comes to building an inclusive economy, we all have a vested interest and we all have a responsibility to be involved. This is not a task that can be left just to governments or the market ...

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.15)

Popes Benedict XVI and Francis have made strong calls for a more inclusive economic order. Study their Encyclicals, *Caritas in Veritate* and *Laudato Si'*. Access at the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council: www.acsjc.org.au/social-teaching/encyclicals

The United Nations is working with governments, businesses and civil society to mobilise efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. Find out about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and how individuals, organisations and communities can take action:

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/takeaction

8. CALL FOR CHANGE AS A MATTER OF FAITH

We call for a new approach that prevents exclusion from the outset and, like the owner of the vineyard in our Gospel reading, engages all people as dignified, active contributors to sustainable and inclusive growth.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.3)

In baptism, each one of us is called to share in the ministry of Jesus Christ – to bring good news to the poor and let the oppressed go free (Luke 4:18). We are asked to serve people in need – in our workplace, church or social groups, whether known or unknown to us, on the streets or in the broader community. In solidarity, we must challenge views that condemn them. We work for an economy that prevents exclusion.

Pope Francis has instituted the annual World Day of the Poor for 19 November. In his inaugural message for the day (2017), he says:

Blessed, therefore, are the open hands that embrace the poor and help them: they are the hands that bring hope. Blessed are the hands that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality, and pour the balm of consolation over the wound of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange, with no 'ifs' or 'buts' or 'maybes': they are hands that call down God's blessing upon their brothers and sisters.

9. GET ACTIVE

Work with others in your parish and local community to research the issue and to raise local awareness, including with other groups who hold similar concerns ... We are called to give voice to those who have been cast aside and, in solidarity, to call for an inclusive economy at the service of all.

(Social Justice Statement 2017-2018, p.17)

Don't leave it to others: this is everyone's business and we all have a part to play! Join your parish social justice group. Or organise a special meeting. Discuss social issues of your local community. Identify needs. Invite experts and guest speakers. Address issues that concern you. Join campaigns of like-minded groups.

Consider what your parish and community groups can do to mark Anti-Poverty Week. In 2017, it runs from 15 to 21 October: www.antipovertyweek.org.au

Don't waste the gift of living within a democracy. Meet with your local State and Federal Member of Parliament. Voice your concerns. Seek action. (Federal contact details at: www.aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Members)

Give voice to those who are excluded – email, write letters, call talk-back radio, call your MP. Submit articles to your local newspaper. Raise awareness. Challenge myths and stereotypes. Bring about change.

10. LET US PRAY

Use the accompanying Prayer Card prepared by the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council for personal prayer, in schools and parishes, and for family and group prayer time.