



ACSJC BRIEFING

No. 52 – November 2004

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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FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

Anti-Poverty Week commenced on the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty - Sunday 17th October. As a national event that has grown each year in numbers and momentum, 20 national organisations involved in research and the provision of charity and welfare facilitated the week.

(<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/>)

The two aims of Anti-Poverty Week are:

- to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship around the world and in Australia; and
- to encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems, including action by individuals, communities, organisations and governments.

Worthy intentions in the best of times – and it has been in the best of times that many Australian families have continued struggling to make ends meet. Worthy *intentions* all the more following a long federal election campaign in which the issue of poverty hardly rated a mention.

A "DON'T MENTION THE POOR" CAMPAIGN

There were many initiatives in the lead up to the election, such as the ecumenical *Vote [1] No More Poverty* campaign and the pre-election statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops that sought to highlight the issue of poverty as one that should be addressed in the election period.

Beyond some robust policy debate in areas like education, health, family life and the environment, however, there was little acknowledgement of the extent of poverty in Australia or policy proposals to address the situation. The issue was lost amid massive spending promises and heightened sensitivities about interest rates.

In early October, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council underlined the need for Australians to consider issues related to justice and fairness. ACSJC Chairman Bishop Christopher Saunders noted the extent to which the election campaign had featured appeals to voters' self-interest. "The bidding war offering huge cash prizes at times looks like some bizarre 'The Price is Right' type game show. Not enough has been said about the needs of the poorer and more disadvantaged members of society. Poverty has to be an election issue.

"I note with regret that little has been said during the election campaign about overseas aid, an area where Australia falls well below the UN's recommended level for affluent countries" Bishop Saunders said.

(http://www.acsjc.org.au/Content/media_releases/2004_10_5_1096934264.html)

Fr Joe Caddy, convenor of Anti-Poverty Week in Victoria later expressed these same concerns: "Despite the fact that overseas aid or the plight of Australia's most marginalised people barely rated a mention in the recent federal election campaign there is a groundswell of concern in our community about those who are falling behind and an increasing determination to do something about it." He urged governments and policy makers to listen to those voices calling for a fairer distribution of the world's resources and for greater opportunities and protection for those suffering hardship. (<http://www.cathnews.com/news/410/89.html>)

POVERTY REMAINS

Australia has enjoyed 13 consecutive years of prosperity, yet conservative estimates reveal well over one million Australians are living in poverty. Especially for families who are most vulnerable to poverty and hardship, there is often very little choice in how they can achieve economic security. They often remain outside the labour market and subsist on income support payments or, if lucky enough to find work, they have little control over job security, the level of pay, hours or conditions of work. They are particularly vulnerable when unemployment rises, when housing costs increase and when benefits do not keep up with the costs of living.

New research by the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling shows that the Coalition Government's increases to family payments – particularly in the form of GST compensation in 2000 and the \$600 per child payment in the 2004 Budget – have been successful in increasing the average income for the poorest 20% of families by 18.5% over the period 1997 to 2004. The payment increases have ameliorated the impact of poverty and child poverty.

However, the increases have not closed the income gap between the incomes of the poorest families with children and the median income for all families with children. Hundreds of thousands of children live in families without work and

who are reliant of income support. Over 70% of the poorest 20% of families (424,000 families) are jobless and 80% rely on social security benefits as their main source on income.

(http://coss.net.au/news/acoss/1098075781_13143_acoss.jsp,
<http://www.natsem.canberra.edu.au/new/new.html>).

Once it could be said with confidence that securing a job and receiving a wage was the surest way for a family to escape poverty and stay out of poverty. However, with significant changes to the labour market over recent decades and the proliferation of low paid, casual and insecure jobs, this is no longer necessarily the case. The growth of casual employment to around 27% of the labour force (or 2.2 million people), and the low paid nature of many of these jobs has contributed to 'working poverty'. In the lead-up to the federal election, the *Vote [1] No More Poverty* campaign noted that around one million Australians experience poverty even though they live in households where one or more adults is in employment.

The minimum wage of \$450 per week is inadequate to the needs of a family, but irregular hours can result in people earning less than the minimum. Australian Bureau of Statistics data released by the ACTU in March 2004 indicated the level of financial stress experienced by 'working poor' Australians. Even after their wages were supplemented with income support payments, 60,000 people were forced to go without meals so as to make ends meet, 89,000 needed assistance from charities and welfare organisations, and over half a million were unable to pay basic household bills.

(http://www.lhmu.org.au/lhmu/campaigns/minimum_wage/news_1078878405_30599.html)

CALLED TO BRING HOPE

We don't need to rely on the statistics to tell us that poverty remains a problem in Australia or that we are a rich nation capable of finding solutions. The issues are complex and the extent of poverty and alternatives to address the needs of those in poverty need to be debated among various sectors of our society. Unfortunately the issues were hardly debated by the major political parties during the campaign.

The passing of the campaign period will reveal that poverty remains a significant issue for low-income families struggling to achieve a basic level of economic security. At a time when the Reserve Bank of Australia has warned that record highs in household debt, house prices and interest payments to income warrant close attention

(http://www.rba.gov.au/FinancialSystemStability/financial_publications.html), the possibility of interest rate increases has also raised concerns over economic security and likely hardship among many more Australians who are relatively well-off.

There remains a challenge for our community to harness the apparent concern and even 'self-interest' about economic security in a spirit of solidarity so that this concern includes those who are most in need.

The individuals and organisations involved in Anti-Poverty Week and providing support every day of the week would share the view that fostering a solidarity with those in need remains a principal challenge in addressing the causes and consequences of poverty in Australia and around the world.

The following words of Mr Terry McCarthy of the St Vincent de Paul Social Justice Committee to fellow Vincentians capture well the need for a spirit of solidarity in the broader community. For us, this call for solidarity is based in faith.

"[We] see the despair and loss of any sense of hope in the faces of the poor. Loss of hope is the third, and probably most debilitating aspect of poverty [after financial stress and lack of access to services].

"Vincentians are called on to participate in the expansion of God's Kingdom here on Earth. This requires us, as Frederic Ozanam pointed out, to walk with the poor, to understand and be sympathetic to them and to help correct any injustices which have created their poverty. Simply giving food and other emergency goods is not enough.

"We are therefore obliged to bring hope to these people. If we fail to do this then we have not changed the situation of the poor. They are Christ's poor and hold a privileged position in His heart."

(<http://www.vinnies.org.au/index.cfm?state=nswact§ion=pubs&id=516>)

- *John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)*

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>)

2005 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY/CALENDAR – "SEASONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE"

The 2005 Diary/Calendar explores the Gospel challenge to live justly in today's society. A particular social justice theme is developed each month, providing a social justice program for the full year. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. Cost: \$6.60 (inc. GST), plus postage.

http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/social_justice_calendar.html

2004 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT & RESOURCES

Australian Catholic Bishops' Statement: Peace Be With You: Cultivating a Culture of Peace.

The ACSJC is continuing to take orders for the Statement. A free electronic version of the 2004 Statement is available at:

http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/documentation_sjs01.html

ECUMENICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY KIT: SECURITY AT ALL COSTS? A CHRISTIAN REFLECTION ON WHERE TO DRAW THE LINE.

Ecumenical Kit produced by the Social Justice Network of the National Council of Churches, now available (cost: \$6.50 {plus postage: 1 copy \$1.45; 2-3 copies \$2.45})

LEAFLET & PRAYER CARD: TEN STEPS TOWARDS CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF PEACE

Now available. Call (02) 9956 5811

SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT LITURGY NOTES & TEACHERS' NOTES

(<http://www.acsjc.org.au/index.shtml>)

OCCASIONAL PAPER: THE TIMOR SEA'S OIL AND GAS: WHAT'S FAIR?

Catholic Social Justice Series No.51 – Fr Frank Brennan SJ considers the current negotiations between Australia and Timor-Leste concerning the resource sharing arrangements and maritime boundaries of the Timor Sea. (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)

CURRENT ISSUES

MEDIA RELEASE – BISHOP URGES VOTERS TO SUPPORT SOCIAL JUSTICE: "THE PRICE MUST BE RIGHT" – 5 October 2004

In line with the pre-election statement issued by the Australian Bishops last May, the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Christopher Saunders, underlined the need for Australians to remember the demands of social justice during the Federal Election. The Bishop said, "Not enough has been said about the needs of the poorer and more disadvantaged members of society. Poverty has to be an election issue."

PASTORAL STATEMENT: "THE GIFT OF WATER"

This Statement from Catholic Earthcare Australia, endorsed by the Bishops of the Murray-Darling Basin, considers the environmental, cultural, economic and social significance of the Murry-Darling Basin to many communities spanning four states and to the life of our nation. The beautifully presented statement reflects on the river system from the perspective of Christian faith – seeing its life-giving waters as a precious gift of God and seeing human beings as responsible before God for the stewardship of this gift. Cost: \$5.00 (\$4 for 7-20 copies; \$3 for 21+ copies). Visit the website of Catholic EarthCare for further details (<http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net>) or call: (02) 9956 5800

CARITAS AUSTRALIA'S SUDAN CRISIS APPEAL

Caritas is coordinating an emergency appeal and needs donations to assist people fleeing the campaign of violence in Sudan. Please phone 1800 024 413 to make a donation. For further details, refer:

<http://www.caritas.org.au/emergencies/sudan.htm>

LONG AWAITED "COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH" RELEASED

On 25 October, Cardinal Renato Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace presented the "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church" in the Holy See Press Office. The volume, over 500 pages in length, opens with a letter to the president of the pontifical council from Cardinal Angelo Sodano, secretary of State. It consists of an Introduction, "An Integral and Solidary Humanism," three parts and a Conclusion entitled "For a Civilization of Live."

Cardinal Martino explained that "Part One, composed of four chapters, deals with the fundamental presuppositions of social doctrine. ... Part Two, composed of seven chapters, deals with the contents and classical themes of social doctrine - the family, human work, economic life, the political community, the international community, the environment and peace. The third part, which is quite brief with one chapter, contains a series of recommendations for the use of social doctrine in the pastoral activity of the Church and the life of all Christians, above all the lay faithful."

The Cardinal said that the Compendium "is made available to all - Catholics, other Christians, people of good will." It is "an instrument for the moral and pastoral discernment of the complex events that mark our time, a guide to inspire, ... and an aid to the faithful concerning the Church's teaching in the area of social morality." It is also, he said, "an instrument for fostering ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue on the part of Catholics with all who sincerely seek the good of mankind." (http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/vis/dinamiche/c7_en.htm)

NOVEMBER NOTICES

NOVEMBER 3: PUBLIC LECTURE, "ST LUKE'S CALL TO BE GOOD NEWS FOR ALL THE EARTH". Fr Bruce Duncan CSsR will consider how the Gospel of St Luke calls us to fashion a more human and caring world in this Annual Peace and Justice Lecture organised by the Ballarat Diocesan Justice, Development and Peace Commission. 7.30pm – 9.00pm, Mulkearn's Theatre – Aquinas Catholic University, 1200 Mair St Ballarat. Contact: Cath McDonald, 5337 8906.

NOVEMBER 3: LECTURE, "SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE LECTURE". Alan Cameron AM, Chair of the Sydney Peace Foundation, announced on 28 May that the Sydney Peace Prize jury has chosen the Indian novelist and human rights campaigner Arundhati Roy as the recipient of the 2004 Sydney Peace Prize. Ms Roy will deliver the City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture in the Seymour Centre on 3 November and will receive the Peace Prize in a gala ceremony in Sydney on 4 November. For information contact: Marilyn Harris on (02) 9351 4468 spf@arts.usyd.edu.au (refer: <http://www.spf.arts.usyd.edu.au/news.html>)

NOVEMBER 3: FORUM, "ONE VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING IS TOO MANY". Kathleen Maltzahn, Director of Project Respect will speak about the work of Project Respect, Australia's leading anti-trafficking NGO. This forum will provide an opportunity for interested individuals and groups to network and to decide upon some local action/s that can be taken to stop this violence. Donation would be appreciated. 10.30am – 4.00pm, Australian Catholic University Strathfield Campus (Mount St Mary) 25A Barker Road, Strathfield, Sydney. (refer: http://www.acu.edu.au/acu_national/News___Events_Calendar/Events.cfm)

NOVEMBER 4: UNIYA'S MEETING PLACE: "A TITANIC STRUGGLE: The media culture and the battle for minds and hearts". Richard Leonard SJ, Director of Australian Catholic Film Office is interviewed by Channel Nine's Daniel Street. Cinema and television are increasingly the places where ideas are explored and values are formed. What are they reflecting back to us and placing on our agenda? What can we do about it? 7.30 – 9.00pm at Galante's cafe, 138 Norton Street Leichhardt, Sydney. Bookings essential: call (02) 9356 3888 or email reception@uniya.org

NOVEMBER 4: SEMINAR, "GLOBAL SPIRITUALITY: CHARGED WITH THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT". Seminar conducted by Prof. Joseph Donders of Washington Theological Union and hosted by the Montagne Institute and Catholic Mission. Seminar aims to discuss a new awareness of humanity's religious and cultural pluralism and the challenge to be faithful to one's self and one's convictions and beliefs and at the same time to the diversity of the convictions and beliefs of the students educators encounter. 5.00 – 8.30pm, Lidcombe Catholic Club, 24 John Street, Lidcombe, Sydney, NSW. Suggested donation: \$20. All details contact Br Mark O'Connor 0412 222 596.

NOVEMBER 8: PUBLIC LECTURE, "GLOBAL SPIRITUALITY: CHARGED WITH THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT". Sponsored by Catholic Mission, a public lecture by Prof. Joseph Donders, Sydney, 7.00 - 9.00pm at Lidcombe Catholic Club, 24 John St, Lidcombe. Suggested donation: \$5. Contact Br Mark O'Connor 0412 222 596

NOVEMBER 9: PUBLIC LECTURE, "GLOBAL SPIRITUALITY: CHARGED WITH THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT". 7.00 – 9.00pm at St Patrick's Cathedral Hall, Victoria Rd, Parramatta. Suggested donation: \$5. Contact Br Mark O'Connor 0412 222 596

NOVEMBER 10: PUBLIC LECTURE, "GLOBAL SPIRITUALITY: CHARGED WITH THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT". 7.30 – 9.00pm, Edmund Rice College, Mt Keira Rd, West Wollongong. Suggested donation: \$5. All details contact Br Mark O'Connor 0412 222 596.

NOVEMBER 13: PUBLIC FORUM, "MANUFACTURING FEAR: ON THE POLITICS OF ANTI-TERROR". A host of speakers will consider the broad political issues underpinning a bipartisan escalation in anti-terrorism initiatives and policies. Forum organised by the NSW Civil Rights Network and Research Initiative on International Activism, UTS. 9.30am – 4.30pm, Room 429, Building 2, Entrance from Ground floor of Broadway Tower, University of Technology, Sydney. Entry by donation. (refer: <http://www.international.activism.uts.edu.au/conferences/index.html>)

NOVEMBER 14: EVENT, "WRAP, COOK, DECORATE! SKILLS FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON". The Asylum Seekers Centre is running a skills workshop day aimed at honing vital skills for the Festive Season! Different sessions throughout the day at the Asylum Seekers Centre, 38 Nobbs St, Surry Hills, Sydney. All facilitators are providing their time and skill free of charge and all proceeds go directly to the Asylum Seekers Centre. Bookings essential. Contact: (02) 9361 5606. (refer: <http://www.asylumseekerscentre.org.au/>)

NOVEMBER 15: CONFERENCE, "THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS". This conference will bring together researchers, practitioners, community voices, artists, storytellers and film-makers to consider policy inequities between refugees and asylum seekers, and the broader community. The conference will include presentations of artwork, stories, current projects and research promoting the health and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers. 8.30am - 5.30pm, Sidney Myer Asia Centre, University of Mel-

bourne, Parkville, Victoria. (refer:
http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whathappening_events.php)

NOVEMBER 16: RALLY, "STAND UP FOR REFUGEES". A Refugee rights rally will be held in Canberra on the day the new Federal Parliament sits. The convergence calls for an end to mandatory detention; permanent protection and citizenship and an end to TPV's and Bridging Visa (E)'s; bringing detainees on Nauru to Australia immediately; and compensation and support for those who have suffered years of detention. Parliament House Canberra. (refer:
<http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

NOVEMBER 17: PUBLIC LECTURE, "RECONCILIATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS". Larissa Behrendt Professor of Law and Indigenous Studies and Director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney will deliver the Rerum Novarum Social Justice Lecture. 7:30pm at the Cardinal Knox Lecture Theatre, 383 Albert St East Melbourne (enter via Lansdowne St). No cost but please RSVP on (03) 9926 5727 or [jusstice@melbourne.catholic.org.au](mailto:jus-tice@melbourne.catholic.org.au) (refer:
<http://www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/ccjdp/>)

NOVEMBER 18 – 19: CONFERENCE, "MYANMAR/BURMAR UPDATE CONFERENCE". The Department of Political & Social Change of the ANU will consider the nature and causes of the current political, economic and social stalemate in Myanmar, and the scope for moving forward in a process of genuine national reconciliation. Speakers will include eminent Myanmar/Burma scholars and practitioners. Thursday 18 November, 8.30am-5.00pm and Friday 19 November 9.00am-1.00pm at the Coombs Theatre, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Fellows Road, Australian National University, Canberra. No cost but registration required. (refer: <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/polsoc/Myanmar/>)

NOVEMBER 19: FORUM, "REFUGEES & HUMAN SECURITY". AUSTCARE is convening a public forum on refugees and human security. Guest speakers include Fr Mark Raper, SJ AM and Michael Smith AO, CEO AUST CARE. From 9.00am, AUSTCARE Offices, 69-71 Parramatta Road, Camperdown, Sydney. For reservations, telephone (02) 9565 9152. (refer:
<http://www.erc.org.au/events/1098688437.shtml>)

NOVEMBER 22 – 25: CONFERENCE, "INDIGENOUS STUDIES – SHARING THE CULTURAL AND THEORETICAL SPACE". A major conference on issues in Indigenous Australian studies, organised by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies with the aim of encouraging and providing for discussion of intercultural approaches to research and related matters. Full cost \$260, concession \$100. To be held at the Manning Clark Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra. (refer:
<http://www.aiatsis.gov.au//rsrch/conferences/aiatsisconf2004/firstnotice.htm>)

NOVEMBER 25: FORUM, "INTERFAITH CONVERSATION BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN". Sr Trish Madigan O.P. will facilitate this event being convened by the National Council of Churches Gender Commission. 6.00-8.00pm, Level 7, 379 Kent St. Sydney in the NCCA Board Room. \$10 donation towards costs. RSVP on (02) 9299 2215 or email gmundine@ncca.org.au

NOVEMBER 26: PUBLIC FORUM, "WHO'S AFRAID IN THE 'WAR ON TERROR'?". Speakers will consider the broad political issues underpinning the 'war on terror'. Forum organised by the NSW Civil Rights Network and Research Initiative on International Activism, UTS. 9.00am – 5.00, University of Technology, Sydney. Entry by donation. (refer: <http://www.international.activism.uts.edu.au/conferences/index.html>)

NOVEMBER 26: PUBLIC FORUM, "TELL ME NO LIES: POWER AND THE CONTROL OF MEDIA IN A DEMOCRACY". John Pilger will address issues concerning corporate control of the media and the implications. 7.30pm – 9.30pm, Capitol Theatre, 113 Swanston Street, Melbourne. Cost \$15. (refer: http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/calendar/event_display_detail.php?event_id=683&day=26&month=11&year=2004)

NOVEMBER 27: FUNDRAISING EVENT, "AFRICAN EXPERIENCE". Jubilee Australia and members of the wider African community are organising an evening of cross-cultural learning, entertainment and delicious African food. 6.00pm – 10.30pm. St Patrick's Cathedral Hall, Parramatta (Cnr Victoria Rd & Marsden St). Adults \$5, Teenagers \$2, Children free. http://jubileeaustralia.org/files/_340_calendar/African_flyer_2.pdf

NOVEMBER 28: FORUM, "CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS GROWING PEACE IN FAIRFIELD CITY". A public forum open to all people from all faiths to promote non-violence as the way to grow peace and mutual understanding. Muslim and Christian speakers will discuss non-violence from their respective religious traditions. 3.00 – 4.00pm, Fairfield Community Hall, 25 Barbara St. Fairfield, Sydney. For further info call Marlene Henry (9725 0230), Anne Lanyon (9488 8844) or Nursen Ozger (9702 0782)

NOVEMBER 30: FORUM, "CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS GROWING IN PEACE IN HURSTVILLE". All welcome to this public forum where Muslims and Christians will share how their respective faiths promote peace. Forum will begin with performances by Muslim and Christian students. 6.30 – 9.30pm, Civic Theatre, MacMahon Street, Hurstville, Sydney. For further info call Sohret Hussein (9330 6069) or Anne Lanyon (9488 8844)

DECEMBER 3: CONFERENCE, "HUMAN RIGHTS 2004: THE YEAR IN REVIEW". This Castan Centre for Human Rights Law conference will focus on issues relating to sex discrimination, domestic violence and gender rights. It will also cover key issues of the year including the detention of 'enemy combatants' at Guantanamo Bay and legislation on racial vilification. 9.00am – 4.30pm, CUB Malthouse, 113 Sturt Street, Southbank, Melbourne. (Refer: <http://www.law.monash.edu.au/castancentre/index.html>)

DECEMBER 6 – 8: CONFERENCE, "EDUCATION & SOCIAL ACTION CONFERENCE". This builds upon the tradition of previous conferences organised by the Centre for Popular Education at the University of Technology Sydney. The conference aims to: bring people engaged in different fields of social action and education together; be a forum where activists, workers, policy makers, artists and scholars alike are encouraged to participate; and encourage research and enquiry to promote practice that helps people strengthen democracy. Registration in main foyer of Building 10, University of Technology Sydney, 235 Jones St.

Broadway, Sydney. For cost and registration details refer:
<http://www.cpe.uts.edu.au/forums/2004conference.html>

DECEMBER 8 – 10: CONFERENCE, "A FUTURE THAT WORKS – ECONOMICS, EMPLOYMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT". A three-day conference in Newcastle organised by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity and the Australian New Zealand Society of Ecological Economists at the University of Newcastle. The aim of the Conference is to develop the nexus between labour market issues and environmental issues to advance the debate about social and environmental sustainability. Standard cost \$395, Concession \$210. (refer:<http://e1.newcastle.edu.au/coffee/conferences/2004>)

(email news of your forthcoming social justice event by the last week of each month to: admin@acsjc.org.au)

OCTOBER NEWS MONITOR

VATICAN SPONSORS INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON STREET CHILDREN:

Cardinal Stephen Fumio Hamao, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, hosted the first International Meeting on Pastoral Care for Street Children.

ADELAIDE CENTACARE CRITICAL OF GOVT OVER REFUGEE RETURN:

Centacare director Dale West urged the Federal Government not to force or coerce asylum seekers to return to dangerous countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

VATICAN SOCIAL COMPENDIUM QUESTIONS "PREVENTIVE" WARS:

A major document from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace forcefully restated the Catholic Church's position that preventive wars are permissible only with "clear proof" of an imminent attack.

PNG ARCHBISHOP CRITICISES POLITICIAN ALLOWANCES: The head of the Catholic Bishops Conference in Papua New Guinea, Archbishop Karl Hesse, expressed the Church's shock at Government plans to increase MPs' electoral allowances, which are commonly known as "slush funds".

JESUIT SAYS POVERTY INCREASING IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA: Poverty can now be measured by location, according to the Policy Director of Jesuit Social Services, Fr Peter Norden, who was keynote speaker at the University of Ballarat Public Forum for National Anti-Poverty Week.

POPE REMINDS POLITICIANS OF THEIR DUTY TO DEFEND CHILDREN:

John Paul II stressed the duty of every person, particularly politicians, to defend children and adolescents whose dignity continues to be violated with impunity.

PRIEST LAMENTS ELECTION CAMPAIGN POVERTY BYPASS: Victorian state convener of Anti-Poverty Week, Fr Joe Caddy, expressed his disappointment that the issue of poverty rated barely a mention in the recent Federal Election campaign.

POPE HINTS AT THUMBS-DOWN FOR GM FOOD: In a message for Saturday's World Food Day, Pope John Paul II stressed the need for biodiversity, suggesting reservations about the production of genetically modified foods.

MERCY NUN SOUNDS ALARM ON DEPORTATION OF CHRISTIAN IRANIAN: A Mercy nun working at South Australia's Baxter immigration detention centre was with a man at a church service just before he was summoned to an Immigration Department office, from where he subsequently "disappeared".

BIOTECH MULTINATIONALS WORRY COLUMBANS ON WORLD FOOD DAY: The Columban Centre for Peace Ecology & Justice issued a statement for World Food Day highlighting the concern that hunger and malnutrition will claim at least 50,000 lives over the weekend.

YOUTH CENTRE WELCOMES NEW PROTECTION FOR 17 YEAR OLDS: A Melbourne Catholic agency welcomed Victorian State Legislation that will give Children's Court protection to 17 year olds who were sent to adult prisons and often looked upon seasoned criminals as role models.

PAKISTAN BISHOPS CONDEMN SUICIDE BOMBINGS: Two Catholic bishops in Pakistan condemned suicide bombings in their country in recent days and expressed solidarity with the victims of the violence.

VATICAN SAYS REFUGEE RIGHTS CAN REQUIRE HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION: The Holy See told the United Nations that wars are responsible for the suffering of millions of refugees around the world, and the problems can only be solved by eliminating the root causes of the conflicts.

BISHOPS' RIVERBOAT LAUNCH OF MURRAY-DARLING PASTORAL STATEMENT: Three bishops whose Dioceses take in the Murray-Darling basin launched a pastoral statement on the troubled great river system, dubbed Australia's 'worst ecological disaster'.

REFUGEES RETURNING TO WAR-TORN SOUTH SUDAN: Caritas Australia said that thousands of refugees are currently returning to the war-torn south of Sudan hoping to restore a way of life that was violently taken away from them.

VINNIES CAMPAIGN HITS LIBERAL RAW NERVE: A St Vincent de Paul spokesperson said the Liberal Party is "feeling sensitive about the question of poverty not being raised during the election", following its action to suppress distribution of material related to the Vinnies-led "Vote 1 No More Poverty" campaign.

VATICAN OFFICIAL SAYS REFUGEE RIGHTS "REMAIN MERE WORDS":

Holy See permanent observer at the United Nations, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, told the UN High Commission for Refugees executive committee in Geneva that refugee rights recognised by international bodies such as the UN "too often remain mere words".

BISHOP SLAMS 'PRICE IS RIGHT' ELECTION CAMPAIGN:

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council chair Bishop Christopher Saunders expressed disappointment at the Federal Election campaign's consistent appeals to voters' self-interest.

CATHOLIC WELFARE'S FINAL ELECTION PLEA FOR DISADVANTAGED:

Catholic Welfare Australia regretted that Australia's 'have nots' missed out in the major political parties' "vote buying extravaganza", but stressed that it's not too late.

COMMISSION SAYS ASYLUM SEEKERS FORGOTTEN IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN:

Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission lamented the lack of attention given during the Federal election campaign to asylum seekers still locked up.

*- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at
<http://www.cathnews.com/news/410>*

NOVEMBER SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 5 WORLD COMMUNITY DAY: In 1943, Mrs Albert Palmer, President of the Chicago Council of Church Women, moved that a day be set aside for the study of peace by churchwomen. World Community Day is now held on the first Friday in November, with the focus on responsible corporate action for justice and peace.

NOVEMBER 16 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE: Building tolerance and trust in diverse communities is not done overnight, but takes time and commitment. Building tolerance requires access to education. Intolerance is often rooted in ignorance and fear: fear of the unknown, of the "other": other cultures, religions and nations. Intolerance can also be closely linked to an exaggerated sense of self-worth and pride. While the problem of intolerance is global, manifestations of intolerance usually take local or national forms.

For 10 ideas for observing the International Day for Tolerance see:

<http://www.unesco.org/tolerance/teneng>

NOVEMBER 20 UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY: Every year more than 10 million children under the age of five die of preventable diseases; more than 13 million children under the age of 15 have lost their mothers or both parents to AIDS; more than 100 million children are not in school (60% of them girls); and an estimated 300,000 child soldiers are fighting in armies and militias around the world.

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration efforts have helped some former child soldiers return to civilian life with their families and communities. However, many child soldiers remain in armed forces and groups. Girls in particular are at risk of neglect because they often play less visible roles in conflict, or are stigmatised due to rape and sexual abuse.

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers: <http://www.child-soldiers.org>

NOVEMBER 21 CHRIST THE KING: As Christ the King, Jesus proclaims a welcoming, generous and inclusive God. He identifies leadership as service and as a readiness to lay down one's own life for others. His message is one of peace: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. (John 14:27)

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Almighty God, the source of all our good.

*You call us from oppression and conflict
to freedom and cooperation for the good of all.*

*Help people everywhere to build a world of peace
ever more solidly established on the four pillars:
truth, justice, love and freedom.*

Pope John Paul II, *Pacem in Terris: A Permanent Commitment*,
(Message for World Peace Day 2003)

NOVEMBER 27 SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE

The citation for the Sydney Peace Prize refers to 'peace with justice'. Peace with justice requires initiatives to abolish the injustices of hunger and poverty, unemployment, homelessness and illiteracy, domestic violence and infant mortality. The Prize highlights the philosophy, language and practice of non-violence, for peace with justice involves far more than the ending of overt conflict. For more information: <http://www.spf.arts.usyd.edu.au/index.html>

NOVEMBER 28 ADVENT

Advent is the name given to the beginning of the Church's year of worship, scripture reading and prayer. It signifies a four week period leading up to Christmas Day, and invites Christians to enter again into a time not unlike pregnancy - a time of watchfulness, of longing, of preparation and of waiting for that which is to be revealed, that which is to be born.

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