



ACSJC BRIEFING

No. 66 – March 2006

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/Resources
- Latest Publications
- March Notices
- February News Monitor
- March Justice Calendar

FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

Pope Benedict XVI's World Day of Peace message, entitled *In Truth, Peace*, addresses major themes of the search for peace through truth, the rejection of terrorism and the condemnation of worldwide proliferation of arms.

Truth, the Holy Father says, shows us the path to peace, and we find truth by being faithful to God's design for the world. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict; it is "the result of an order planned and willed by the love of God."

"Who and what, then, can prevent the coming of peace?" Lying and falsehood have had "devastating effects on the lives of individuals and nations." False ideology and political systems have "wilfully twisted the truth and brought about the exploitation and murder of an appalling number of men and women."

Everybody yearns for peace, and finding peace means repairing relationships that have been harmed by untruth.

We are all members of the same family and share a common destiny.

We must seek peace even amid the tragedy of war. The Holy Father says that one vital way of doing this is through international law - "one of the finest and most effective expressions of ... the truth of peace." That law must be respected and updated to keep pace with changing circumstances and new military technology.

Terrorism is one of many threats to peace in today's world. Quoting Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict says that trying to impose belief on others through violence "is an offence against the dignity of the human being, and ultimately an offence against God".

In addition, conflicts, often incited by governments, "still continue to sow tears and death in vast parts of the world." Nuclear arms, too, are a continuing menace, and to depend on them for national security is completely wrong. So is the pursuit of so-called conventional arms, on which countries spend so much money.

The first to benefit from disarmament will be the poor countries, who have been promised development for so long and now rightly demand it.

Finally, Pope Benedict brings us back to the Gospel, which teaches us "to build peace on the truth of a daily life inspired by the commandment of love." He urges us to seek the intercession of the Mother of God to strive for peace now and for the future.

As individuals, in our communities and among nations, we are all members of the same family and share a common destiny. We are all called to "cultivate productive and sincere relationships" - to follow the paths of forgiveness and reconciliation, to be transparent in our dealings, and faithful to our word.

At midday Angelus in St Peter's Square on 26 February, the Pope called for intense prayer and penance during the Season of Lent for peace and for freedom from sectarian conflict in many parts of the world including Iraq and Nigeria.

He said, "The fruit of faith in God is not devastating antagonisms, but the spirit of fraternity and collaboration in favor of the common good. God, Creator and Father of all, will call to an even more severe account all those who shed their brother's blood in his name. May all, through the intercession of the Holy Virgin, again encounter him, who is authentic peace!"

The ACSJC has prepared a brief Discussion Guide that considers the Holy Father's World Day of Peace message.

John Ferguson
National Executive Officer

CURRENT ISSUES/RESOURCES

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER WANTED

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council is seeking an experienced administrative officer to provide a range of secretarial and administrative services, including word processing, tracking sales, maintaining databases and liaising with customers, to support the effective operations of the Council. This is a full-time position based in North Sydney. Applications close Friday 10 March. For further info, including position description, call (02) 9965 5811 or visit <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/>

MEDIA RELEASE – MORE ACTION NEEDED ON STOLEN WAGES – 23

January 2006

In the lead-up to Australia Day, the ACSJC Chairman urged all Australians to acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. "Over many generations people from a range of cultural backgrounds have helped

to build the nation. Sadly the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers is yet to be fully acknowledged" Bishop Christopher Saunders said. "There has been some movement by governments to recognise the wages that were not paid and to address this important issue. But much more remains to be done in order to meet the demands of justice."

(refer:

http://www.acsjc.org.au/Content/media_releases/2005_01_23_1137974095.html)

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SOCIAL JUSTICE REPORT

Mr Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner has released the Social Justice Report for 2005. The Report considers issues relating to Indigenous health, new arrangements for the administration of Indigenous Affairs, guidelines for Shared Responsibility Agreements and access to 'mainstreamed services'. The full report can be accessed at: http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/sjreport05/index.html This webpage also contains helpful Fact Sheets relating to key aspects of the report.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA – PROJECT COMPASSION

For its 2006 Lenten Project Compassion appeal, Caritas Australia has produced educational materials for Catholic schools and parishes. The theme for Project Compassion in 2006 is "Compassion in Action". The Project Compassion Kit includes ideas on how to take action and case studies for each of the six weeks of Lent. Ideas for liturgy, prayer and reflection, stories, activities and worksheets are included. (refer: <http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion/index.htm>)

HR&EOC – "VOICES OF AUSTRALIA"

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission recently released a range of print, audio and website resources titled "Voices of Australia", that features a collection of real-life stories about diversity and living together in contemporary Australia, as well as information about the Racial Discrimination Act. These resources can be found at <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/voices/index.html>

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS – "CHALLENGING RACISM IN AUSTRALIA TODAY"

In September 2003, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference launched the Social Justice Sunday Statement, "A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ; Challenging racism in Australia Today". The Statement celebrates the cultural diversity of Australian society and considered the ways we can all address issues of cultural or racial intolerance and help create a culture of welcome in our communities and nation. The Statement is available on the ACSJC website at <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/documentation/A%20Generous%20Heart%20in%20the%20Love%20of%20Christ.pdf>

The associated "Ten Steps Towards Challenging Racism in Australia Today" Leaflet and Prayer Card can be ordered from the ACSJC Secretariat.

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>)

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

ACSJC DISCUSSION GUIDE: WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE

The Holy Father delivers a message on New Year's Day each year for the World Day of Peace. This tradition was begun by Pope Paul VI in 1968. His intention was to deliver a message that would be a source of hope for Christians and all people of the world. 2006 is the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI's first World Day of Peace message. The theme he chose is In Truth, Peace.

This discussion guide consists of: an overview of the Pope's message; some points for reflection and discussion; a prayer; and a guide to additional resources. It is available on the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

The full text of the Holy Father's message can be found on the Vatican's website: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20051213_xxxix-world-day-peace_en.html.

ACSJC BACKGROUND PAPER: STOLEN WAGES - AN OPPORTUNITY FOR JUSTICE?

Tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people worked for government and non government employers during the 20th century. Many of these workers received only a portion of the wage to which they were entitled. The cycle of poverty experienced by a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be partly attributed to wages not being paid. A large amount of money earned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers remains in the hands of the state. Some measures taken so far to remedy this past injustice have not been adequate.

The issue of "stolen wages" needs to be examined in depth by all Australian governments. It is an opportunity for symbolic and practical reconciliation firmly grounded in the basic principle of justice.

This Background paper provides basic information on the circumstances facing many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and families seeking

wages they were not paid for years of work. The Paper is available on the ACSJC's website:
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/pdf/2006_1_23stolen_wages_-_an_opportunity_for_justice.pdf

SERIES PAPER: FROM MONEY TO MEANING: YOUNG PEOPLE AND WORK

Catholic Social Justice Series No.56 by the Australian Young Christian Workers
The paper addresses the issue of young people and casual work. It looks at young people's experiences and attitudes to work. Some of the concerns raised include the working conditions, wages, study, security and protection of casual employees. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below)

SERIES PAPER: A LOVE THAT DOES JUSTICE

Catholic Social Justice Series No. 55 - Fr Neil Brown
Father 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

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 still 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_sjs01.html

LEAFLET & PRAYER CARD: TEN STEPS TOWARDS LIVING THE GOSPEL TODAY

To order 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>

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

MARCH NOTICES

MARCH 1: PUBLIC MEETING, WAR ON TERROR OR REIGN OF TERROR? (VIC). Prisoner abuse and injustice will be discussed by former Guantanamo Bay detainee Moazzam Begg (via video link). He endured over three hundred interrogations and the physical conditions of detention in Guantanamo Bay before being released without charge in 2005, without apology or explanation. Also speaking: Terry Hicks and Rob Stary. Chaired by Julian Burnside, QC. 7.00pm, Kaleide Theatre RMIT. Entry by donation. Organised by Civil Rights Defence. For more information, call 0407856628 or <http://www.civilrightsdefence.org/> (refer: http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/calendar/event_display_detail.php?event_id=1540&day=1&month=3&year=2006)

MARCH 3: RALLY, 69TH JUSTICE & PEACE CANDLE LIGHT WALK (SA). The Candle Light Walk will commence at dusk around Government House in Adelaide. Gathering from 7.45pm for an 8.15pm walk.

MARCH 3 - 4: PASTORAL THEOLOGY & PRACTICE (NSW). Waterloo. Further information: Broken Bay Institute: Ph: 02 9473 4570; Email: amcmanis@brokenbay.catholic.org.au

MARCH 3 - 5: WORKSHOP, SEARCHING FOR A BIGGER GOD (NSW). A weekend workshop focusing on how you 'see' God. You will be invited to participate by sharing your thoughts and feelings. There will be plenty of time for reflection and relaxation. Commences 6:30 pm Friday 3 March, Maria Tal Cottages, Wentworth Falls. Cost \$150.00. Further information/RSVP: Margherita McCaughey 02 9763 2819 or email: margherita.m@optusnet.com.au

MARCH 6: PUBLIC LECTURE BY ROBERT FISK (NSW). One of the world's most decorated foreign correspondents, Robert Fisk is currently the Middle East correspondent for the London Independent newspaper based in Beirut. Fisk will detail his experiences as a reporter for over 30 years in the Middle East and his new book 'The Great War for Civilisation: the Conquest of the Middle East'. This lecture is at the Seymour Centre and is part of the Sydney Ideas series. For bookings call the Seymour Centre Box Office on (02) 9351 7940. (refer: http://www.seymour.usyd.edu.au/ideas/program_fisk.shtml)

MARCH 7: EVENT, INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY LUNCHEON 2006 (SA). Luncheon event in Adelaide with Governor of SA, Her Excellency Marjorie Jackson-Nelson AC CVO MBE; and the Hon. Stephanie Key M.P., Minister for the Status of Women; Mistress of ceremonies: Dominique Schwartz. Featuring presentation of the inaugural 2005-06 Women's Art and Literature Awards. \$39 waged, \$27 unwaged. 12.00 - 2:30pm Adelaide Convention Centre, North Terrace, Adelaide. For bookings call (08) 8338 3163 or email helenbp@bigpond.net.au (refer: <http://www.unaa.org.au/praxis.php/category/view/4>)

MARCH 7: LECTURE, LISTENING WITH THE EAR OF THE HEART (NSW).

Rosebank College presents a Benedictine Conversation. Dr David Tacey, Associate Professor in the School of Critical Enquiry, La Trobe University, Melbourne, will address this event and Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO will respond. 7.45pm, Rosebank College, 1A Harris Rd, Five Dock. For more information: Phone: Virginia Ryan (02) 9713 3127

MARCH 7: PUBLIC MEETING, SLAVERY TODAY - HUMAN TRAFFICKING

(VIC). The Religious Congregations' Anti-trafficking Working Group is holding a meeting to address human trafficking, the borderless crime of slavery, outcomes of the NGO Shadow Report on Trafficking, and future collaborative action. Speakers Jennifer Burn, UTS Anti-slavery project and Georgina Costello, Melbourne barrister. 7.30pm, Room 101 B&C, Archdiocesan Building, 383 Albert St, Melbourne. For further info call (03) 9421 6873 or c.carolan@goodshep.com.au

MARCH 8: PUBLIC EVENT, WOMEN SAY YES TO PEACE (NSW). An

International Women's Day peaceful gathering in the Martin Place Sydney. For further info visit <http://twenty-o-three.info/> or call (02) 9280 1578 or annabel_ant@hotmail.com

MARCH 8: PUBLIC LECTURE, HANDS UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS! (VIC). A

discussion on a Human Rights Act in Australia. Special Guest Spencer Zifcak, Associate Professor of Law at La Trobe University and President of the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists. 6:30pm, Treacy Centre, 126 The Avenue, Parkville. Gold coin donation appreciated. RSVP to PolMin at rlane@polmin.com.au or call (03) 8359 0128 (refer: <http://.polmin.com.au>)

MARCH 8: PUBLIC LECTURE, WOMEN, RELIGION AND THE REGION: CELEBRATION INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (VIC). Panel members

include Coleen Clare from the International Women's Development Agency, author Perle Besserman speaking on mysticism and Islam, Nobel Peace Prize nominee Dr Zohl dé Ishtar, and Muriel Porter speaking about the Anglican Church. 6.30pm - 8.00pm, Carrillo Gantner Theatre, Sidney Myer Asia Centre. For further info call (03) 8344 4800 or email events@asialink.unimelb.edu.au (refer: http://events.unimelb.edu.au/eventid_2434.html)

MARCH 9: INSERVICE, DARE TO DREAM (NSW). A collaborative project

involving Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia, NSW Vocations Network and Youth Ministry and Vocations Networks in the dioceses of Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay. Issues discussed: vocation as God's call; current theology and understanding of vocation; young people, their aspirations and how we, as Church, can respond to their needs; Religious Life and priesthood in terms of Charism/Spirituality, community living, vows, and the world today. \$40 per person, 9.00am - 3.00pm, Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia, 6 Victoria Road, Parramatta. RSVP required by March 3rd. Call (02) 8838 3419.

MARCH 11 - 14: EXHIBITION, SOUTH AFRICA/AUSTRALIA ALIVE (QLD).

Based on a social justice and solidarity immersion program for students, Edmund Rice Education and Griffith University have embarked on a joint project, an Exhibition of "South Africa/Australia Alive!" to be blessed and opened by Bishop Brian Finnegan on 11 March, 4.00-6.00pm at the Francis Rush Centre, St Stephen's Cathedral, Elizabeth Street, Brisbane. The Exhibition continues 12-14 March 10.00am-3.00pm.

MARCH 14: LECTURE, BUILDING A CULTURE OF HOSPITALITY: THE JOURNEY FROM FEAR TO LOVE (NSW).

Rosebank College presents a Benedictine Conversation. David Ranson, a priest lecturing in Spirituality and Pastoral Theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney, will speak at this event and Dr Andrew Refshauge will respond. 7.45pm, Rosebank College, 1A Harris Rd, Five Dock. For more information: Phone: Virginia Ryan (02) 9713 3127

MARCH 14: PUBLIC MEETING, SLAVERY TODAY - HUMAN TRAFFICKING (NSW).

The Religious Congregations' Anti-trafficking Working Group is holding a meeting to address human trafficking, the borderless crime of slavery, outcomes of the NGO Shadow Report on Trafficking, and future collaborative action. Speakers Jennifer Burn, UTS Anti-slavery project and Georgina Costello, Melbourne barrister. 7.00pm, Gleeson Theatre, ACU, 25A Barkers Road, Strathfield. For further info call (02) 9878 6383 or Pauline@brisnet.org.au

MARCH 14: INSERVICE, DARE TO DREAM (NSW).

A collaborative project involving Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia, NSW Vocations Network and Youth Ministry and Vocations Networks in the dioceses of Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay. \$40 per person, 9.00am - 3.00pm, St Joachim's Parish Hall, John Street, Lidcombe. RSVP required by March 3rd. Call (02) 8838 3419.

MARCH 15: CONFERENCE, WHERE TO FOR REFUGEE POLICY? (QLD).

George Newhouse, lawyer for Vivian Solon, will address the unfinished business of Federal Government refugee policy in the day of workshops and discussions organised by the Refugee Action Collective (Qld). 10.00am to 5.00pm, CEPU conference rooms, Cnr Peel & Merivale Sts, South Brisbane. For more details contact admin@rac-qld.org or call 0409 877528. (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whathappening_events.php)

MARCH 18 - 19: CONFERENCE, DOVE ON FIRE (WA).

An ecumenical conference in tune with the Decade to Overcome Violence, featuring Larissa Behrendt and Christine Vertucci among other speakers. At the mid-point of the Decade to Overcome Violence, a project of the World Council of Churches, this conference is being organised by the social justice bodies of the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches and the Council of Churches of WA. Key themes will be reconciliation, overcoming violence, prison reform and mental health. The Perth conference will commence on Saturday 18 March and conclude on Sunday afternoon 19 March. Registration and programme details: <http://www.anglicansrcwa.org/>

MARCH 19: WOMEN'S PEACE WALK (QLD).

To commemorate International Women's Day and Harmony Day, Believing Women for a Culture of Peace will hold a Women's Peace Walk starting at 10.00am at the Roma Street Forum, Brisbane. The walk will be via George Street, the City Botanic Gardens, the

Goodwill Bridge and South Bank to Musgrave Park and will feature peace-related resources from different faiths and spiritual traditions along the way. It will conclude with a BYO picnic lunch at Musgrave Park. (refer: <http://www.believingwomen.org.au/>)

MARCH 21: LECTURE, A NEW PERSPECTIVE: THE IRONY OF HUMILITY (NSW). Rosebank College presents a Benedictine Conversation. Sr Patty Fawkner SGS, will speak on the irony of humility - if we have it, we know we are made for greatness, we are made for God.. 7.45pm, Rosebank College, 1A Harris Rd, Five Dock. For more information: Phone: Virginia Ryan (02) 9713 3127

MARCH 21: EVENT, HARMONY DAY (National). The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission is an official supporter of Harmony Day - a Federal Government initiative which brings together Australians and encourages them to say "no" to discrimination and racism. The day coincides with the UN International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and provides an opportunity for the community to celebrate our successes as a culturally diverse society and re-commit ourselves to living in harmony. For more information visit <http://www.harmony.gov.au> or call 1800 33 1100 or email harmonyday@immi.gov.au

MARCH 23: BENEFIT CONCERT, BUILDING BRIDGES (NSW). Julie McCrossin will interview Julian Burnside QC. Didjeridu Dingo, Pat Drummond and Mick Hamilton will perform. Cheikh Kone will speak on behalf of refugees. John Doyle will conduct a charity Auction. Other guests to be confirmed. 7.00pm at Sydney Town Hall. Tickets: \$20 adults / \$10 concession. Book by calling 9810 5826 or send email to building.bridges@hotmail.com (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/#events>)

MARCH 25: EVENT, VISION YOUTH LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST (NSW). An invitation to youth leaders, coordinators, youth teams, movements, teachers, and all involved in ministry with young people. Breakfast event to be addressed by Bishop Kevin Manning. An opportunity to explore the unfolding VISION for youth ministry in the Parramatta Diocese. 8.30am-10.30am, St Patrick's Cathedral Hall. RSVP: 15 March on (02) 8838 3419 or youth@parra.catholic.org.au

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

FEBRUARY NEWS MONITOR

ARCHBISHOP SPEAKS UP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF SEAFARERS:

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi CS, Holy See permanent observer to the United Nations at Geneva, called on States to ratify a Maritime Labour Convention that will protect the rights of millions of workers.

BRISBANE ARCHDIOCESE WELCOMES MESSAGE STICK: The Pass It On Message Stick was officially welcomed to the Archdiocese of Brisbane at a Eucharist led by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Oudemans at St Stephen's Cathedral.

SYDNEY BISHOP OUTRAGED AT SLAYING OF REFUGEE: Bishop David Cremin, former episcopal vicar for immigration in the Archdiocese of Sydney, expressed "shock and outrage" over the death in Sydney of Sudanese refugee and father of four, Ruol Deng Atem Agang.

CARITAS RESPONDS TO THE PHILIPPINES MUDSLIDE TRAGEDY: Caritas Australia was quick to act following the Philippines mudslide, which claimed hundreds and possibly thousands of lives.

VATICAN OBSERVER URGES FOOD SECURITY FOR ALL: Every person has the right to an adequate standard of food security, said the Holy See's permanent observer to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation.

CARITAS FUNDS ELECTION BOOKLET TO SUPPORT SOLOMONS DEMOCRACY: The Catholic Church in the Solomon Islands commenced distribution of an election awareness booklet funded by Caritas Australia.

HUNDREDS SING BLUES AFTER COUNTRY MUSIC FESTIVAL: The St Vincent de Paul Society said that hundreds of people are left stranded in Tamworth every year after attending the country music festival at the end of January.

ADELAIDE SERVICE FOCUSES ON GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS: More than 1000 people flocked to an historic Catholic service in Adelaide's St Francis Xavier's Cathedral on Saturday marking the 14th World Day of the Sick.

VINNIES SAYS COMPLEX HOMELESS PROBLEM DEMANDS NEW STRATEGIES: NSW/ACT President of the St Vincent de Paul Society, John O'Neill, announced a major shift in the Society's caring for homeless people.

CATHOLIC PEACEMAKER RECEIVES ASIO TREATMENT: Ciaran O'Reilly, who been associated with the Catholic Worker peace movement for many years, accused Australia's spy agency of heavy-handed tactics after he was pulled aside and interviewed at Brisbane Airport.

NZ CATHOLIC STATEMENT SPELLS OUT LIMITS TO FREE SPEECH: In the wake of protests sparked by the decision of local media outlets to publish cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, the Church said that democratic freedoms "must observe boundaries of decency, good taste and fairness".

CARITAS HEAD SAYS ENCYCLICAL OBLIGES CHARITY: Caritas Australia director Jack De Groot said that the second half of Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* makes it clear that charitable activity for Catholics is not an optional extra.

'REPEAT OF TIMOR' FEAR FOR WEST PAPUA: The atrocities committed by Indonesia against East Timor will be repeated in West Papua if the international community does not take action, according to Sr Susan Connelly of the Mary MacKillop East Timor Institute.

POPE SAYS SPIRITUALITY FUNDAMENTAL TO FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY: In his message for Lent released , Pope Benedict XVI said that the primary contribution the Church can make to the eradication of the scandal of poverty is not material or technical, but spiritual, through the "proclamation of the truth of Christ".

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/602>

MARCH SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

MARCH 1 ASH WEDNESDAY: Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, a time during which we are invited to prepare for Easter and the coming of the risen Jesus into our life and our world. It is a time for personal conversion. Traditionally, there are three ways we can participate in this season of preparation and conversion: through prayer, fasting and giving alms.

PROJECT COMPASSION: Through Project Compassion, we can prepare ourselves by going without some activity or thing (fasting), and giving the money we save (alms giving) to the appeal. Through our prayer, we will come to a deeper awareness of our own need for conversion and a readiness to share what we have with those in need.

Caritas Australia uses the money raised through Project Compassion for its main work of long-term community development which encourages self reliance, for working in partnership with communities at the grass roots level to promote peace and justice, and to respond to emergencies, such as the tsunami in January, 2005.

2006 THEME: COMPASSION IN ACTION: Building a just world involves standing in solidarity with the oppressed. To do this we must act, we must challenge and change unjust structures, we must promote the human dignity of all. We are called to put Compassion into Action. - Project Compassion Letter, Archbishop A. Doyle, Chairman, Caritas Australia

Through Project Compassion, Caritas Australia is promoting the Millennium Development Goals, eight goals aiming to halve world poverty by 2015. In particular, Caritas would like to:

- help the people of Tanzania to access safe drinking water (MDG 7)
- empower Indigenous Australian women in remote communities (MDG 3)
- provide trauma support for the people of the Solomon Islands

- improve human rights and access to education for children in Bolivia (MDG 2)
- help the people of PNG fight against HIV/AIDS (MDG 6)
- assist the people of Aceh to rebuild their lives following the tsunami (MDG 1)

The international community, at the beginning of the new millennium, set the priority of halving the number [of people living in extreme poverty] by the year 2015. The Church supports and encourages this commitment and invites all who believe in Christ to show, practically and in every sector, a preferential love for the poor.

Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message 2005

CARITAS AUSTRALIA'S AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS PROGRAM: The primary aim of Caritas' Australian Indigenous Program is to work in solidarity with Indigenous organisations. Caritas Australia does this by supporting sustainable development projects that are developed and implemented by Indigenous Australians and which therefore faithfully reflect their needs.

MARCH 8 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: Millennium Development Goal 3 aims to promote gender equality and empower women. Here, Caritas Australia is seeking to empower Indigenous Australian women in remote communities. Funding has been provided for Indigenous Women's Councils to come together to share their knowledge, experience, ideas and culture with other Aboriginal women. Elders hold the knowledge of traditional ceremonies and coming together allows them to develop and assert their crucial role in guiding their communities as they deal with contemporary issues and work to maintain traditional life and culture.

Traditional Aboriginal women have a ceremonial life that is secret from men. Women's Law with its attendant rituals, ceremonies, songs and dances must be performed and passed on for the maintenance of traditional life. Coming together for meetings entitles women to influence, direct and maintain the social, political and cultural life of their own communities and indirectly that of the wider Australian community. Meetings provide the opportunity to discuss issues affecting contemporary life such as domestic violence, substance abuse, youth suicide, childcare, and care of the elderly and disabled. They promote the position and status of senior Aboriginal women and expose younger women, including non-traditional women, to the Law so that they can gain an understanding of their heritage and learn what Aboriginal women in other parts of Australia are doing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Caritas Australia: <http://.caritas.org.au>

Millennium Development Goals: <http://.un.org/millenniumgoals>

LENTEN PRAYER

Loving and gracious God,
 be with us during this season of Lent,
 as we respond to your call for conversion of heart and life.
 Deepen our awareness of your presence
 even in those whom we cannot see.
 May our imitation of you in word and deed
 inspire us to be generous in our prayer, fasting and alms giving.
 We make this prayer in the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL Leo XIII House, 19 MacKenzie Street, PO Box 1615, North Sydney NSW 2059. Tel: (02) 9956 5811, Fax: (02) 9954 0056, Email: admin@acsjc.org.au Website: <http://socialjustice.catholic.org.au> ** ACSJC Briefing is sent by email at the beginning of each month (except January). To subscribe or unsubscribe, go to the front page of the website Comments and contributions are also welcome.