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*From the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council,
the social justice and human rights agency of the Catholic Church in Australia*

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

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FROM THE SECRETARIAT

Dear Friends,

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and its Secretariat would like to extend to you their best wishes for 2009. At this time of year, and with a greater sense of urgency than in previous years, we hope the year ahead will bring justice and peace to those people around the world whose dignity is shattered by violence and deprivation.

The awful tragedy that unfolded in the Gaza Strip over the past month has defied description and challenged the very values of peace and goodwill we hold dear through the Christmas Season.

On 8 January, as the offensive intensified and Israeli forces moved closer to the densely populated areas of Gaza, Pope Benedict XVI addressed members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See.

'The birth of Christ in the lowly stable of Bethlehem leads us naturally to think of the situation in the Middle East and, in the first place, in the Holy Land, where, in these days, we have witnessed a renewed outbreak of violence provoking immense damage and suffering for the civilian population,' he said.

'Once again I would repeat that military options are no solution and that violence, wherever it comes from and whatever form it takes, must be firmly condemned. I express my hope that, with the decisive commitment of the international community, the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip will be re-established - an indispensable condition for restoring acceptable living conditions to the population - and that negotiations for peace will resume, with the rejection of hatred, acts of provocation and the use of arms.' (refer: <http://www.zenit.org/article-24723?l=english>)

As the conflict unfolded, Vatican representations to the United Nations emphasised the importance of concerted international action to protect the population in Gaza. Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, permanent observer in the U.N. in Geneva said,

'It is evident that the warring parties are not able to exit from this vicious circle of violence without the help of the international community that should therefore fulfill its responsibilities, intervene actively to stop the bloodshed, provide access for emergency humanitarian assistance, and end all forms of confrontation. At the same time, the international community should remain engaged in removing the root causes of the conflict that can only be resolved within the framework of a lasting solution of the greater Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on the international resolutions adopted during the years.' (refer: <http://www.zenit.org/article-24756?l=english>)

Addressing a U.N. Security Council debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Archbishop Celestino Migliore said,

‘Protection of civilians must be based on a widespread responsible exercise of leadership. This requires leaders to exercise the right to defend their own citizens or the right to self-determination by resorting only to legitimate means; and it requires them to fully recognise their responsibility toward the international community and respect other states and communities’ right to exist and coexist in peace.’ (refer: <http://www.zenit.org/article-24797?l=english>)

An expression of the experience of innocent civilians caught up in the violence came from the Parish Priest of Gaza, Father Manuel Masallam:

‘My brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, what you see and hear on your television screens is not the complete painful truth about what our people in Gaza are going through. Their suffering is so widespread over our land that no television or radio could report the whole truth about it...

‘The children of Gaza have been sleeping with their families in the hallways of their homes (if they have them) or in bathrooms, for protection. They tremble with fear at every sound, every movement, and every violent F-16 attack. While it is true that so far the F-16 jets have for the most part targeted the headquarters of the government and Hamas, they are located in residential areas no more than six meters away from people’s homes, the minimum distance required by construction law. That’s why people’s houses are severely affected by the violence, and it leads to the death of many children. Our children are suffering from trauma, anxiety, undernourishment, malnutrition, poverty, and lack of heating.’ (refer: <http://www.zenit.org/article-24842?l=english>)

With 1.5 million people living in one of the most densely populated areas on earth, it was inevitable that civilian casualties would be high - particularly given the force used in the attacks. At the time a ceasefire was

established, it was estimated that 1,300 Palestinians were dead - many of them defenceless women and children.

As a fragile ceasefire holds, what have the warring parties of Hamas and Israel achieved? Israeli families in Sderot, Ashkelon and other centres in southern Israel continue to live in fear of rocket attacks. In addition to burying the dead and tending to the injured, tens of thousands of Palestinians are homeless and vital infrastructure including hospitals, schools, charities and U.N. facilities have been damaged or destroyed. This has exacerbated a humanitarian crisis resulting from the blockade of supplies into Gaza over the past year or more. The World Health Organisation has warned of disease outbreaks in Gaza due to lack of drinking water, broken sewage lines and garbage piling up. (refer: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2009/Gaza-health-20090107/en/>)

There have been growing calls for independent investigations of the bombing of U.N. facilities, the use of white phosphorus and other alleged violations by either side. (refer <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2009/sgsm12058.doc.htm>; <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/israeloccupied-palestinian-territories-israel-must-disclose-weapons-it-u>; <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/01/27/israelgaza-international-investigation-essential>)

The current negotiations in Cairo provide hope for lasting ceasefire that could be the basis of renewed peace talks, but the ceasefire is fragile. Commenting on the situation from Australia, ACSJC Chairman Bishop Christopher Saunders said, ‘It is obvious that a durable ceasefire is required before the humanitarian crisis is addressed, violations of international law on both sides are investigated and dialogue can resume.’

Quoting for the 2007 Social Justice Sunday Statement, the Bishop said, ‘The rights and dignity of all parties to the conflict must be recognised. Australia as a global citizen should do everything possible to support the United Nations and other agents of mediation to bring about a just peace in the Holy Land.’

He called for prayers for peace and for the political leaders of Australia who share a global responsibility to find a pathway to peace. He said: 'First and foremost, let us pray for the innocent civilians who have been caught up yet again in this horrific Middle Eastern conflict.'

'Amid the complexities and competing claims of this conflict, the first responsibility of the international community is to prevent the killing of innocent civilians and to redress the humanitarian crisis',

Bishop Saunders said. (refer: http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/media_releases/2009_01_19_12567891210.html)

The ACSJC urged the Australian Government to step up its international efforts to ensure the ceasefire among Israelis and Palestinians is lasting.

*John Ferguson
National Executive Officer*



Current Issues / Resources

ACSJC RELEASE - 'BISHOP CALLS ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO STEP UP INTERNATIONAL PEACE EFFORT.'

ACSJC Chairman, Bishop Christopher Saunders said, 'Amid the complexities and competing claims of this conflict, the first responsibility of the international community is to prevent the killing of innocent civilians and to redress the humanitarian crisis.' Web: http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/media_releases/2009_01_19_12567891210.html

CARITAS AUSTRALIA - MIDDLE EAST EMERGENCY APPEAL

The Israeli military offensive against Gaza has led to a humanitarian crisis with many innocent people killed and wounded, hospitals are at breaking point. The 1.5 million people living in Gaza are deprived of food, medicine, electricity and they are bearing the devastating consequences of the aerial and ground attacks. Caritas Australia is supporting Caritas Jerusalem on the ground to meet the immediate needs of affected communities through the provision of primary health care services. It is also providing out-patient care to the people of Gaza, food parcels, hygiene kits and other material support. To learn more and make a donation, visit: http://www.caritas.org.au/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Gaza_emergency or call 1800 024 413

VATICAN RATIFIES CONVENTION BANNING CLUSTER BOMBS

The Vatican has signed and ratified a new treaty to end the production and use of cluster bombs. It has appealed to the international community to ban 'this inhumane type of weapon.' In a speech during the signing ceremony on 3 December, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Vatican secretary for relations with states, said the Vatican chose to sign and ratify the convention the same day in order to send 'a strong political signal' to the rest of the world. The United States and other major countries that produce cluster weapons - including Russia, China, Israel, India and Pakistan - have not signed the convention which will come into effect in mid-2009. The Archbishop urged those nations who continue to produce, export or use these deadly munitions to heed the numerous civilian victims' call for disarmament and to sign the convention. Web: <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0806085.htm>

ICAN ALERT - NUCLEAR TREATIES REVIEW

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons is encouraging ICAN supporters, individuals and groups, to make submissions to the Federal Government's Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament. The Prime Minister has asked the federal

parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCT) to investigate all of Australia's nuclear-related treaties, including Australia's uranium export treaties. The Committee is to inquire into and report on: the international treaties involving Australia which relate to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament; how these treaties advance Australia's objectives; how the treaties might be made more effective; how inter-parliamentary action can assist in strengthening treaty-based aspects of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime; how the Committee and the Parliament can contribute to the work of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament. Submissions due by 30 January with extensions to mid-February. For further details and background information, visit the Inquiry and ICAN websites: http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/nuclearnon_proliferation/index.htm; http://www.icanw.org/JSCOT_submission

ACSJC RELEASE - 'HUMAN RIGHTS DAY: BISHOP JOINS INDIGENOUS LEADER IN CALL FOR JUSTICE.'

On Human Rights Day (10 December 2008), the Chairs of the ACSJC and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council called for the provisions of the Racial Discrimination Act to be restored in the Northern Territory Intervention. Bishop Christopher Saunders and Mrs Elsie Heiss said, 'We acknowledge the efforts that have gone towards bridging the gap. Too often, though, those efforts are made without consulting the people they are supposed to help or allowing them to participate... measures such as welfare quarantining have imposed bureaucratic restrictions on Indigenous people that would not be tolerated in any other section of the community', they said. Web: http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/media_releases/2008_12_19_12567891209.html

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS - NATIONAL INDIGENOUS LAW AND JUSTICE ADVISORY BODY

The Federal Government is establishing a new national Indigenous law and justice advisory body to provide high level policy advice to government as part of its commitment to *Closing the Gap* on Indigenous disadvantage.

The role of the advisory body is to: provide expert advice on a range of Indigenous law and justice issues; facilitate government, business and community linkages; consider government policies affecting Indigenous law and justice outcomes; and advocate for policies that promote good practice. The Government is calling for nominations from Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders for appointment to the new advisory body. Nominations close on 27 February 2009. For further info and to make a nomination, visit the [Attorney General's website](#).

CSSA - CHURCH PROVIDERS WELCOME MEETING WITH DEPUTY PM

Major church providers met with Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard on 27 January to discuss measures to limit the impact of the global financial crisis on vulnerable Australians. The meeting considered the recommendations from the major church providers Summit in Canberra late last year, which found that 80,000 people were turned away last year from unemployment programs, crisis accommodation and financial assistance because of a lack of funding. That Summit recommended: the establishment of a Crisis Response and Recovery Taskforce; additional financial resources to meet existing unmet need; measures to prevent those experiencing hardship for the first time becoming chronically engaged in the social services system; and, a seat for the community sector on the Infrastructure Australia Board. (<http://www.catholicsocialservices.org.au/node/14881>)

The providers maintain that the economy needs more than just a cash injection from Government if Australia is to survive the economic crisis. Other measures include: increasing the minimum wage; better investment in social and employment services; and protection from bank foreclosures for mortgage holders experiencing temporary hardship. (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/01/27/2475285.htm?section=justin>)

PUBLICATION - 'PEOPLE OF COMPASSION' TEAR Australia's national educator Dave Andrews, explores the lives of 40 Christians who have left their mark on the world. Ranging

from the generous St Nicholas to the brave Helen Keller, *People of Compassion* unpacks the meaning of love, peace and justice - prompting readers to reflect on their own lives. There are 'suggestions for meditation' at the end of each biography, as well as Gospel quotes to help people consider how they can be the good news. 'When I think of people making a difference in the world, I think of John Wesley and Caroline Chisholm. These great Christian figures were people just like you and me, but they saw a need and they did something about it,' says Andrews. Cost: \$20.00 from TEAR Australia's National Office on 1800 244 986. (refer: <http://www.tear.org.au/resources/items/people-of-compassion/>)

EDMUND RICE CENTRE - ONLINE PETITION

Following the screening of *A Well-Founded Fear* on SBS, Edmund Rice Centre director, Phil Glendenning has called for Australians to make known to the Federal Government their support for the process of reform of the Howard Government's immigration regime and its inhuman treatment of asylum seekers. Three ways people can help are: to sign the online petition on the Edmund Rice Centre's website; to write to your Federal MP and to Senator Evans, calling for an urgent reopening of the cases of the asylum seekers removed to danger from Nauru; and/or to make a donation via the Edmund Rice Centre website www.erc.org.au/donate Phone: (02) 8762 4200. Web: www.erc.org.au

PHD RESEARCH - 'SPEAKING RIGHTLY OF GOD IN A WORLD OF SUFFERING'

Elaine Ledgerwood is a PhD student in theology at Murdoch University. She is interested in listening to Christians who have supported refugees in detention or on temporary protection visas reflect on how their experiences have shaped their faith. Elaine will be in Sydney from 12 - 22 February to undertake research interviews. If you are interested in participating, know someone who might be interested or would like further information on this research, please contact 0412 143 498 or e.ledgerwood@ecu.edu.au

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION - 2008 IMMIGRATION DETENTION REPORT

Releasing the 2008 report on conditions in

immigration detention in mid-January, Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes called on Government to translate its 'new directions' for Australia's immigration detention system into policy, practice and legislative change as soon as possible. 'Our report shows we are still seeing children being held in detention facilities, people being detained for prolonged and indefinite periods and dilapidated detention centres being used for accommodation, and now we also have the disturbing reality that the massive prison-like Christmas Island facility is open for business.' The Report recommends: the legislation of minimum standards in immigration detention; the amending of the Migration Act to ensure detention is the exception rather than the norm; putting an end to the detention of people on Christmas Island; and, the implementation of the recommendations of the national inquiry into children in immigration detention. The report can be accessed at: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/media_releases/2009/2_09.html

BACKGROUND PAPER ON DETENTION AND VISA CANCELLATIONS.

The background paper, 'Immigration detention and visa cancellation under section 501 of the Migration Act' is another resource issued recently by the Human Rights Commission. The paper outlines why there are section 501 detainees in immigration detention, explains the process of visa cancellation under section 501, and raises some human rights concerns about the visa cancellation process and its potential consequences. The paper is available at: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/immigration/501_migration_2009.html

WEBSITE 'SETTLEMENT SERVICE LOCATOR'.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship has released the Settlement Service Locator on the its website. This tool will tangibly improve how individuals can locate services in their area, and assist Departmental settlement service providers to refer clients onto other local services. Web: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/find-help/where-to-help/index.htm>.

Latest Publications

(Orders: phone (02) 8306 3499 or download an order form from the ACSJC website [that can be faxed to (02) 8306 3498]: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/TEMPLATE-ORDERFORM.pdf>)

2009 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT DISCUSSION SERIES

The ACSJC is launching a new and additional resource for the Social Justice Sunday Statement. This Discussion Guide is based on the current Social Justice Sunday Statement and is designed to be used with the Statement. The 2009 Social Justice Sunday Statement Discussion Guide Series can be used for 3 sessions and is suitable for small group discussion in parishes, schools, communities and other organisations or gatherings. The 2009 Social Justice Sunday Statement Discussion Guide Series could be used for Lent, or for any time in the Church Year.

The 2009 Social Justice Sunday Statement Discussion Guide Series will be available on the ACSJC website this month. Hard copies may be ordered.

Subscribers will receive a hard copy by post in mid-February.

DISCUSSION GUIDE - WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE 2009

On 1 January, the Holy Father delivered his World Day of Peace message. The theme of his message is *Fighting Poverty to Build Peace*. The ACSJC discussion guide consists of a brief overview of the Pope's message, some points for reflection and prayer. This is an ideal resource for schools and social justice discussion groups. It can be downloaded in pdf or word formats from the ACSJC homepage: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/>

ORDER NOW! - 2009 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The 2009 Social Justice Diary includes the dates of significant events, anniversaries and special days which celebrate particular aspects of social justice. It highlights the theme of young people and justice today. The Diary provides a social justice program for the full

year. Information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. This is an essential resource for teachers and parishes. 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 GOD MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS'.

In Catholic Social Justice Series No.64, Old Testament scholar Mark O'Brien invites readers to consider the roots of our modern concepts of justice and mercy. The Old Testament's account of justice is often regarded as full of God's anger and vengeance. Fr O'Brien considers the challenges and obligations faced at the time: the challenge to establish a coherent law and theology, the constant threat of violence from neighbouring superpowers, God's covenant with his people, rivals to the covenant, and the prophetic contribution reintegrating justice and mercy into the life of the community. (\$6.60 a copy, plus postage - postage rates listed below)

SERIES PAPER - 'TOWARDS A MORE JUST WORLD'.

Duncan MacLaren examines how the Church can confront new problems concerning social justice and human rights. The paper explains how Catholic social teaching and its basis in the Gospels makes Catholic NGOs different from other agencies. It also suggests areas where Catholic social teaching has to be expanded to address some of the deep-seated problems of the modern world. (\$6.60 a copy, plus postage - postage rates listed below)

SERIES PAPER - 'PALESTINE AND ISRAEL'.

In Catholic Social Justice Series No.62, journalist and author Peter Manning provides a comprehensive analysis of the issues behind the Middle East conflict. His detailed examination of the key causes of the conflict helps readers understand the reasons for the impasse. (\$6.60 a copy, plus postage - postage rates listed below)

2008 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT - ORDERS STILL BEING TAKEN. The 2008 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Sunday Statement is entitled 'A Rich Young Nation: The challenge of affluence and poverty in Australia'. The ACSJC is taking orders for the Statement. An order form is available on the ACSJC website. The easiest way to order is to download the order form, make a credit card payment and fax it to (02) 8306 3498. Refer: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

(Catholic Social Justice Series papers and the Social Justice Diary: \$6.60 a copy, plus postage. Postage rates for Catholic Social Justice Series Papers: 1 copy \$1; 2-3 copies \$1.45; 4-5 copies \$2.45)

Orders: phone (02) 8306 3499, fax (02) 8306 3481 or download an order form from the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/TEMPLATE-ORDERFORM.pdf>



This Month's Notices

2 FEBRUARY AND 27 MARCH. COURSE: 'PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS - TRAIN THE TRAINER WORKSHOP' (NSW). Public Interest Advocacy Centre is holding a one-day workshop which will equip you with knowledge and skills to conduct human rights training in your network, group, organisation or sector. The workshop content includes: understanding human rights and the international human rights framework; rights protected and not protected in Australia; human rights protections and gaps in NSW; and considerations in legislating to guarantee human rights in Australia. Cost \$80. 9.00 am - 5.00 pm, Sydney CBD. To register contact kaki@piac.asn.au.

2 FEBRUARY. SEMINAR: 'A SHORT HISTORY OF THE QUAKER PEACE TESTIMONY' (ACT). The ACT Christian Jewish Dialogue Group will be holding a public seminar at which Evan Gallagher will be the guest speaker. The topic will be 'A Short History of the Quaker Peace Testimony'. There will be a request for a gold coin donation to cover expenses, and there will be a short AGM and supper provided. 8.00pm at National Circuit, Forrest ACT.

3 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC DEBATE: 'WE SHOULD LEGALISE EUTHANASIA' (NSW). Debate organised through NSW Right to Life. 'Some people suffer terrible deaths riven by uncontrollable pain, denied the dignity of

choice, willing to die, but unable to do so without the aid of others. Yet, deliberately to end a human life is, for many, always wrong, an affront to nature, a crime against humanity, a sin against God. When the terminally ill ask us to help them to die, then should a fatal act of compassion in every circumstance be proscribed by law?' Debating parties: For: Philip Nitschke, Senator Bob Brown, Professor Peter Baume; Against: The Hon Tony Abbott MP, Fr Frank Brennan SJ, Dr Maria Cigolini. Tickets: \$30 for adults and \$20 for pensioners/students. 6.45pm onwards, City Recital Hall, Angel Place, Sydney. To register contact (02) 9299 8350 or clim@nswrtl.org.au by 23rd January. Web: www.nswrtl.org.au.

4 FEBRUARY. VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SESSION: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (NSW). Volunteer information sessions are conducted every 4-6 weeks to outline the current volunteer roles and projects available in the NSW Action Centre. 4.30- 5.30 pm, Level 1, 79 Myrtle Street, Chippendale. No RSVP is required. For further information contact nswaia@amnesty.org.au or (02) 8396 7670. Web: www.amnesty.org.au/nsw.

5 - 6, 12 - 13, 19 - 20 FEBRUARY. TRAINING COURSE: 'MAKING MY LIVING' (QLD). Lifeline Community Care Queensland is holding an interactive two day workshop which is designed to develop the capacity of service

providers to effectively engage with young people (particularly aged between 18 - 25 years old) from a refugee background. Key components include: The Refugee Experience; Culture and Transition; Self Awareness; Suicide and Self Harm; Mental Health; Engagement Strategies; Self Care. Free of charge to service providers in the Logan, Ipswich, Beenleigh and Gold Coast areas. 9.30 am - 4.00 pm, at Logan (5 - 6 February), Ipswich (12 - 13 February), Gold Coast (19 - 20 February). Bookings essential, contact (07) 3442 1559, 0427 597 695 or chris.chicoteau@lccq.org.au. Web: www.barc.org.au/cms.

6 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC FORUM: 'CAN DEMOCRACY COEXIST WITH LEGAL IMPUNITY?' (NSW). This forum organised by Indonesian Solidarity and supported by West Papua Project, CPACS, will discuss the legal impunity of high level officials in serious crimes including murder in Indonesia over three decades, why it persists despite the democratisation of the last decade, and its implications on human rights abuses in East Timor, West Papua and Aceh. Speakers include: David O'Shea, a Dateline SBS TV journalist; Peter King, Convener of the West Papua Project within the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) at the University of Sydney; Eko Waluyo, program coordinator of Indonesian Solidarity. 2.00 - 4.00 pm, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS), Seminar Room (107 Mackie Building), University of Sydney. For further information contact 0422 647 025; or +61 416 809 107 or indonesian_solidarity@yahoo.com.

8 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC EVENT: 'MELBOURNE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE' (VIC). The Parliament of the World's Religions are holding an afternoon of colourful and inspirational entertainment, from a variety of religious and spiritual communities. It will feature culturally diverse music, dance, ritual and cuisine, as well as highlighting the issues of reconciliation and climate change. Full registration \$57.20, student registration \$28.60. 4.00 - 8.30pm, Melbourne Town Hall, 120 Swanston Street, Melbourne. For registration enquiries, contact (02) 9625 0890 or parliament@meetingplanners.com.au. For all other enquiries contact 1300 852 156 or info@parliamentofreligions2009.org. Web: www.parliamentofreligions2009.org.

parliamentofreligions.org.

9 FEBRUARY. NEIGHBOURHOOD DAY: 'LET US UNITE IN NOAH'S ARK' (VIC). The Australian Intercultural Society have organised a time of joint prayer for people from various cultures and faiths. It will include the symbolic sharing of Noah's Pudding (a traditional dish which represents global friendship and neighbourhood). Free entry. 7.00 - 9.00 pm, Huzur Reception, 250 Hume Highway, Somerton. For more information contact (03) 9326 2177 or info@intercultural.org.au. Web: <http://www.intercultural.org.au/>.

11 FEBRUARY. PRESS CLUB ADDRESS: DR JOSE RAMOS HORTA (ACT). Address to the National Press Club by Dr Jose Ramos Horta, 1996 Nobel Peace Prize recipient and President of East Timor. Cost \$55 members, \$75 guests. 11.45 am - 1.30pm, 16 National Circuit, Canberra. To book contact (02) 6121 2199 or npc@npc.org.au. Web: www.npc.org.au/upcomingspeakers.html.

11 - 21 FEBRUARY. ART EXHIBITION: 'FAR TO HERE' (VIC). The Darfur Australia Network (DAN), an advocacy and community group for Darfuri refugees is holding an art exhibition. In this thought-provoking exhibition, photojournalist Kabir Dhanji documents the lives of Darfuri people who fled the conflict in Sudan, while Darfuri youth capture their day-to-day experiences in Australia on their own cameras. Free entry. Tue - Fri 11.00 am - 5.00 pm, Sat 12.00 - 4.00 pm, fortyfivedownstairs, 45 Flinders Lane, Melbourne. For more information contact contact@darfuraustralia.org or (03) 8060 5659.

13 FEBRUARY. ANNIVERSARY OF THE APOLOGY TO THE STOLEN GENERATIONS (NATIONAL). Australians are invited to commemorate the first anniversary of the apology to the Stolen Generations by attending an event or organising a breakfast. Resources are provided by the National Sorry Day Committee, Reconciliation Australia and Stolen Generations Alliance. Web: <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/i-cms.isp?page=827>.

16 FEBRUARY. DISCUSSION: GLOBAL AFFAIRS DIALOGUES (NSW). Dialogues explore the environmental impact of climate change,

war and social strife, and the wide range of political and religious influences that shape our attitudes, values, and subsequently our actions. Global Affairs Dialogues are held on the first and third Monday evenings of the month. 7.00 - 9.00 pm, Meeting Rooms, Level 1, 280 Pitt Street, Sydney. For further information please contact Dialogues convenor on 0431 605 374 or dialogue_quest@hotmail.com. Web: www.sydneymsa.com.au.

16 - 20 FEBRUARY. CONFERENCE: 'CHRIST AND CULTURE: CHRIST THROUGH CULTURE' (NSW). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) is holding an Indigenous Theology and Spirituality Conference which will explore where Christ's story can, and does, shine through our cultures just as the Father shined through His Son over 2000 years ago in the Middle East. People will be invited to share their stories of ministry and keynote speakers include Dr. Wati Longchar, Dean of Extension Programs of the Senate of Serampore University, India; Dr Limatula Longkumer, Vice Principal, Eastern Theological College, India; Ms. Evelyn Parkin, Theology Teacher Wontulp-Bi-Buya College. Held at Ballina Beach Resort, Ballina. Registration cost \$750 for conference or \$230 for day registrations. Contact natsiec@ncca.org.au or (02) 9299 2215. Accommodation cost: from \$120 upwards depending on accommodation. Contact Ballina Beach Resort on 1800 025 398 and mention the conference when booking. Web: <http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/conference2009>.

17 FEBRUARY. PRESS CLUB ADDRESS: PROFESSOR MICK DODSON AM (ACT). Address to the National Press Club by Professor Mick Dodson, member of the Yawuru peoples, director of National Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Australian National University and chairman of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Professor Dodson represents Indigenous people of the Pacific region on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Cost \$55 members, \$75 guests. 11.45 am -1.30pm, 16 National Circuit, Canberra. To book contact (02) 6121 2199 or npc@npc.org.au. Web: www.npc.org.au/upcomingspeakers.html.

19 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC LECTURE: 'BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THEISM AND ATHEISM' (ACT). The Centre for Progressive Religious Thought in Canberra is hosting this lecture featuring the speaker Hugh Mackay, a well known and popular psychologist, social researcher and author. Members \$7, friends and guests \$10. 7.45 pm, St James Church Centre, 40 Gillies Street, Curtin. Bookings are essential, contact (02) 6281 7419 or rexae@optusnet.com.au.

19-21 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC SUMMIT: 'NSW COMMUNITY CLIMATE SUMMIT' (NSW). The Nature Conservation Council of NSW invites community members to have their say on climate change, so that they can make recommendations to the NSW Government on how we can work together to respond to climate change. The NSW Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, will open the summit and will receive the community's recommendations after the event. Free entry. Friday 21st is an introductory evening. Held in Sydney. To register contact climatesummit@nccnsw.org.au or 02 9279 2466. Web: www.nccnsw.org.au/nswclimatesummit.

22 FEBRUARY. OPEN DAY: INTERFAITH MOSQUE (VIC). Sunshine Mosque staff and the Australian Intercultural Society invite you to a mosque open day including: tour of the mosque; information session about the architecture, prayers and practices; question session and traditional finger foods and refreshments. 2.00 - 4.00 pm, Sunshine Mosque, 618 Ballarat Road, Ardeer. For more information contact (03) 9326 2177. Web: www.intercultural.org.au.

23 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC FORUM: 'WHITE MAN'S DREAMING: THE NT INTERVENTION (ACT). Christians for an Ethical Society (CES) is holding a public forum with the speaker, the Right Reverend Greg Thompson, former Rector of St John's Anglican Church, Reid and now Bishop of the Northern Territory. \$5 donation requested to cover hall costs. 7.30 pm, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, corner of Kings Avenue and Blackall Street, Barton. For information contact (02) 6291 4537 or chair@ces.org.au. Web: http://www.ces.org.au/current_forum.htm.

15 DECEMBER - 24 FEBRUARY. COURSE: BECOME A PASTORAL CARER IN YOUR COMMUNITY (ACT). Pastoral Care Training 2008/9 are inviting people in the Canberra region to train as Pastoral Carers in their local community. Affirm the power of love and care through the Spirit of God in the community. For more information contact (02) 6244 2261 or lyn.kelly@act.gov.au. Web: www.pastoralcareact.org/cpe.

27 FEBRUARY. PUBLIC FORUM: 'ASIA PACIFIC 2009 FORUM' (NSW). A focused one-day forum for leaders in the non-profit sector, addressing the issues facing NGOs in the AsiaPacific region. This year, the Forum will be focusing on Social Enterprise, Sustainability and Training and Development. Speakers include: Bob McMullan MP, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance; Rafael C Lopa, Chairman of MicroVentures Incorporated; Associate Professor Cheryl Kernot, Director of Teaching and Learning at the Centre for Social Impact. Registration \$245. 9:00 am to 3:30 pm, Bayside Level 2, Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour. Contact (02) 9411 6644 or swong@fia.org.au. Web: http://www.fia.org.au/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Conference_2008&Template=/CM/HTMLDisplay.cfm&ContentID=6797.

27 FEBRUARY - 1 MARCH. RETREAT: CHRISTIAN MEDITATION (TAS). The Emmanuel Pastoral and Spirituality Centre is holding a live-in silent retreat with the theme 'Healing Ourselves: Healing the Planet'. This retreat will be led by Janet O'Sullivan. For more information contact Marie Shepherd (03) 6344 4793. Cost \$160. From 6:30 pm Friday to 2.00 pm Sunday at 123 Abbott Street, Newstead. Contact (03) 6334 1082 or ssjemmanuel@bigpond.com.

1 MARCH. CLEAN UP DAY (NATIONAL). Clean up Australia welcomes everyone to join in making Australia a better place to live. To help, contact 1800 282 329. Web: www.cleanup.org.au.

2 MARCH. SPIRITUALITY OVER SUPPER (TAS). Emmanuel Pastoral and Spirituality Centre is holding an evening where you are invited to join in conversation with Janet O'Sullivan, who has completed an internship with Richard Rohr in New Mexico and offers courses in the Challenges of Globalisation. Donation 7.00 -9.00 pm, 123 Abbott Street, Newstead. For information contact (03) 6334 1082 or ssjemmanuel@bigpond.com.

6 - 7 MARCH. CONFERENCE: 'FECCA - ECCWA 2009 WOMEN'S CONFERENCE' (WA). The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia are holding a women's conference on 'Refugee and Immigrant Women - Setting the Social Inclusion Agenda'. Speakers will include leading women from politics, business and the community. For more information contact (08) 9227 5322 or eccwa.women@iinet.net.au. Web: www.fecca.org.au.

6 - 7 MARCH. HUMAN RIGHTS ARTS AND FILM FESTIVAL (QLD). For the first time in Brisbane, this Festival bringing films, artwork and music from all over the globe that challenge, touch and inspire audiences from all walks of life. Films include 'Different Kind of Gun' and 'The Day after Peace', shorts include 'Reel Change' and 'Kicking It'. Action hubs include Make Poverty History, Amnesty International and Caritas Australia. Single tickets \$15 full /\$13.50 concession; festival pass \$38 full/ \$35 concession. Brisbane Powerhouse, 119 Lamington Street, New Farm. Web: www.hraff.org.au/brisbane.html.

8 MARCH. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (NATIONAL). The National Office for the Participation of Women are preparing a Parish Kit to celebrate International Women's Day. It will give people who use this kit, an opportunity to acknowledge and affirm the role women play in church. This kit will be sent to every Catholic parish and will also be available electronically on their website. Web: www.opw.catholic.org.au.

Fight poverty to build peace, Benedict argues

In a major statement “Fighting Poverty to Build Peace” for World Peace Day 2009, Pope Benedict attacked the “unbridled pursuit of wealth and short term profit” as the root cause of poverty and the global food crisis.

Vatican ratifies cluster bomb ban

At an Oslo, Norway ceremony the Holy See signed the international Convention on Cluster Munitions which bans the production and use of cluster bombs.

Catholics call for Poznan climate action

Eighty Catholic bishops and 170 Catholic groups called on the United Nations Climate Summit in Poznan, Poland to take responsibility for urgent climate change action reflecting the needs of the poor and developing nations.

Brennan to head human rights consultation

The Federal Government appointed Jesuit ACU Professor Frank Brennan to head a public consultation on whether Australia needs a human rights charter.

Bonuses no answer: Quinlan

Bonuses to pensioners and other social security benefit recipients are welcome but are “not a long term solution to the adequacy of entitlements and pensions,” Catholic Social Services head Frank Quinlan said.

Indigenous issues highlighted for Human Rights anniversary

The ACSJC called on Australians to “remember the injustices we still have to address”, and the Sisters of St Joseph urged the Federal Government to ratify the UN indigenous rights declaration for the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Catholic groups concerned over carbon plan

Catholic groups reacted with concern and even outrage over the Federal Government’s decision to rule out deep cuts to Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions before 2020.

Capitalism dead: Cardinal Murphy-O’Connor

Soon to retire Westminster Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor caused a stir by telling a gathering of businessmen that “capitalism is dead” as a result of the current world economic crisis.

Quinlan calls for “whole raft” of services for unemployed

Unemployed people need education, retraining and financial and family counselling, Catholic Social Services Australia CEO Frank Quinlan said.

ACSJC, Eastern churches urge Australian Government to step up on Gaza

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council urged the Australian Government to step up international efforts to ensure a ceasefire among Israelis and Palestinians is lasting.

Welfare groups “overstretched”: Quinlan tells government

Welfare groups were already “overstretched” even before the current economic downturn, Catholic Social Services executive director Frank Quinlan told the Federal Government.

Miners under fire over Philippines rice shortage

Citing food security and environmental concerns, Philippines bishops called for a ‘country-wide’ moratorium on mining as another part-Australian owned mine project in Mindanao comes under fire over fears of damage to agriculture.

Zimbabwe facing “passive genocide”: Southern African bishops

Catholic bishops accused leaders of the Southern African Development Community of complicity in a “passive genocide” in Zimbabwe by their failure to act against starvation conditions.

- Courtesy CathNews, click on headlines for details or go to <http://cathnews.com>



Social Justice Calendar

1 Sun 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time
World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

2 Mon Presentation of Jesus (Feast)
World Wetlands Day: Upstream - Downstream
Theme: River basins and their management

5 Thu Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement signed, 1996

6 Fri Waitangi Day, Aotearoa New Zealand

8 Sun 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time

11 Wed Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes -
World Day of Prayer for the Sick

12 Thu The Freedom Ride commenced,
journeying through NSW country towns to raise
awareness of racism against Aboriginals, 1965

13 Fri Apology to Stolen Generations, 2008

15 Sun 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

21 Sat International Mother Language Day,
originating from Bangladesh Martyrs Day

22 Sun 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time

25 Wed Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of
Lent

This is an excerpt from the 2009 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY, which also includes information and ideas for prayer and reflection are included. This is an essential resource for teachers and parishes. 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

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL PO Box 7246, Alexandria NSW 2015. Tel: (02) 8306 3499, Fax: (02) 8306 3498, 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.