



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

1 July 2011

Dear Friends,

Re: Social Justice Statement 2011–2012

Building Bridges, Not Walls: Prisons and the justice system
Issued by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

Social Justice Sunday will be celebrated this year on 25th September. I am writing to inform you about the Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2011 and how parishes, schools, Congregations and other organisations and groups can access this document.

Fundamental to the Christian life is our shared responsibility to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the prisoner (Matt. 25:31-46). Among those who make up Australia's growing prison population are people who are often already suffering the burdens of dispossession, illness, poverty and alienation. While society will always require prison as a last resort punishment, it is time for us as a nation to consider alternatives to prison and ways to reintegrate people into community life as responsible fellow citizens.

This year's Statement addresses five key challenges relating to the criminal justice system: fear campaigns about law and order; social factors that can contribute to crime; the dignity of prisoners; adequate support for people coming out of prison; and realistic alternatives to incarceration. No crime can diminish the fact that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. In our parishes and in our communities, let us consider how we can offer support and make a difference for our brothers and sisters in prison and seeking bridges to a new life.

The Statement will be launched in the week prior to Social Justice Sunday. Copies of the Statement can be ordered now from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council by using the attached order form. Additionally, the Statement will be available for download on the websites of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (www.catholic.org.au) and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) from the week of the launch. In the attached summary sheet there is a suggested newsletter entry that can be used by parishes, schools and groups as Social Justice Sunday approaches.

I commend this Statement to you and would welcome your part in its promotion.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Archbishop Philip E Wilson
President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference