



ACSJC Monthly Briefing December 2013 No 152



From the Secretariat December 2013

Dear Friends,

As we enter the Season of Advent, I wish you a happy New Year. Our liturgical year commenced this Sunday. Throughout Advent we are reminded not be distracted by the cares of life or the extravagances of a commercialised 'Xmas', but to prepare for the coming of the Lord and the liberation he brings.

This is the Season in which we take stock of our year and prepare for Christmas. This is a time for us to consider, not just our personal lives, but the lives of all people – particularly those in our world who are oppressed, devalued and in any way distressed. When we reflect on our commitment to the work to bring justice and peace to our world, we know that we are not alone. God became one of us in the person of Jesus Christ, who as our brother revealed his power to transform the world and bring the offer of salvation.

In Jesus Christ, God dwells among us and shares in our life here and now. It is personal. And as his disciples, we are called share in Christ's mission of serving and ministering to all those in need because they have the dignity of being our brothers and sisters. Jesus makes their plight a personal matter.

But the numbers of people in need are so great. As the Bishops highlighted in this year's Social Justice Statement on global poverty – 870 million people around the world are in hunger and undernourished.

I find it hard to comprehend this level of need in our world. The face of the individual is lost from my mind when reports start quoting figures of above a couple of hundred. It is as though a personal connection is lost and that people become just another statistic. How can I make some kind of personal connection that will help me make a difference for the hundreds of millions people in need?

At the heart of the Bishops' Statement is the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus starts not with a statistic, but by telling a story:

‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table ...’ (Lk 16:19-31)



When he told this parable, who were the people around him? The poor, sick and dispossessed. Some sinners and tax collectors thrown into the mix! There were those who were doing well but wanted answers to the big problems of the day. People who were asking ‘But what difference can I possibly make in response to this overwhelming challenge?’

There was another group. They were there for a different reason – to heckle and to deride his teaching. In the Gospel of Luke it says, ‘The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him’ (Lk 16:14). They would have been criticizing Jesus’ teachings and discouraging the crowd with comments like, ‘This cannot work!’, ‘The need is too great’, ‘Our community can’t afford this.’

But in this parable, Jesus puts the challenges that seem too big back into our control. Even though there might be hundreds, thousands or millions in need, he personalises the challenge of poverty in the character of Lazarus and asks us directly how we will respond.

He gives a voice to those we cannot hear and he brings before us those we do not see. He says they are our brothers and sisters.

Jesus makes it personal.

He gives each unknown person the human dignity of a name – ‘Lazarus’. To call another by name pays respect to the dignity of that person and to God who created us.

So we can ask ourselves:

Each of the 870 million people around the world in chronic hunger – What is their name?

The over 200 million victims of disasters worldwide, including the 13 million people who are now in urgent need after Super Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines?

The 370 million Indigenous people of the world who are over-represented among the poor?

The 45 million who are fleeing their homes and seeking asylum?

The 11,420 children killed in Syria since the conflict began in 2011?

Lazarus is at our gate. Jesus asks us how we will respond.

There are many ways we can work to bring justice and peace for these people who are our sisters and brothers. Even in the pages of these briefings there are many appeals, reports and justice campaigns in which we can become involved and lend our support.

As Christians, the fullness of meaning of all these initiatives is found in Jesus Christ – God who is with us.

A few days before Christmas, on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Gospel of Matthew (1:18-24) recounts the birth of Jesus. In the latest Catholic Social Justice Series paper, *Justice in the Name of God*, Dr Gerard Moore reflects on this very passage:



‘...Joseph has a significant dream from an angel connecting Jesus to the tradition of the prophets. The soon-to-be-born child is described as the Immanuel, meaning ‘God is with us’ (Mt 1:23). The Gospel is interpreting a text from the prophet Isaiah (Is 7:14) and applying it to Jesus. At the same time the messenger sets forth the name and identity of the child. He is to be named Jesus, meaning “YHWH saves” or perhaps “YHWH helps”. In the light of his name, he is the one designated to save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21-22)

‘As well, the word “Jesus” is a shortened form of Joshua, famously the lieutenant of Moses who actually led the people into the land of promise. In essence, then, the Gospel opens with a passage that sets together the name of Jesus, his nature as the presence of God, the liberation he will effect, and the hope given in the promise of a better future.’

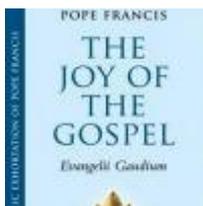
So, we now enter the Season of Advent and prepare to receive the true gift of Christmas – God’s presence among us, renewing us and changing the world.

In his new Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis extends an invitation that has great relevance for us during this Season. He says:

‘I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. ... Now is the time to say to Jesus: “Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you. Save me once again, Lord, take me once more into your redeeming embrace”.’ (n. 3)

Members of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and staff of the Secretariat would like to thank you for your support throughout the year and for your work for justice inspired by the promise of a better future. A happy and holy Christmas to you and your loved ones.

John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)



Current Issues/Resources, December 2013

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION - *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*

At the time of preparing this ACSJC Briefing, the Holy Father has promulgated his Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World. In the first two articles of *Evangelii Gaudium* (‘The Joy of the Gospel’), Pope Francis states:

‘1. THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come.

‘2. The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no



longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.'

To access the Apostolic Exhortation, [click here](#).

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS – 'BEHOLD'

The Diocese of Wollongong is taking orders for 'Behold – Daily Advent and Christmas Reflections 2013.' Behold contains short daily reflections from the beginning of Advent (1 December 2013) through to the Epiphany (5 January 2014). Each day contains a one-page reflection with two pages for Sundays and major feast days. The daily reflections have been written by four religious orders that also run retreat centres in the Diocese of Wollongong. The aim is to provide reflections that are both theologically and spiritually rich, yet accessible to the average reader. It also contains details about upcoming retreats at each of the retreat centres as a next step for readers who would like to go even deeper after the program has finished. To find out more, click [here](#).

CARITAS AUSTRALIA ADVENT CALENDAR

In Advent, the Jesse tree reminds us of Biblical characters and events that prepared God's people for the birth of Jesus. The Caritas Advent Calendar uses the Jesse tree to learn, pray and act with and for our partners around the world today. It is through the stories of the communities, programs and partners that the calendar really becomes a powerful daily reflection throughout the season of Advent. The Calendar is available in a website version, as iPhone/iPad apps and an android version for phone and tablets. An interactive PowerPoint version has been produced for primary school children. To access or download the calendar, [click here](#).

CARITAS APPEALS FOR THE PHILIPPINES AND SYRIA

Caritas Australia is working closely with communities affected by Super Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest storms to ever make landfall, causing widespread devastation in the Philippines and significant damage in Vietnam and China. With network partners Caritas USA and Caritas Philippines, Caritas Australia is on the ground across a number of dioceses in the Philippines, providing emergency shelter, water and sanitation, distributing household relief items, potable water, toilets and cash for work programs to help with the clean-up of debris, as well as delivering much-needed food aid and humanitarian assistance to families in need.

The ongoing conflict in Syria continues to be one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world today. More than 100,000 people have died, and over 8.3 million people are in need of urgent humanitarian aid. Caritas Australia is providing support to Syrian refugees and host communities in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, including food; hygiene kits and bedding materials; health care, including GP clinics; educational and social services; water and sanitation; shelter, blankets, clothing and heaters.

To donate to the Caritas Australia's Typhoon Haiyan Emergency Response Appeal and/or the Syria Crisis Appeal, [click here](#) or freecall 1800 024 413.



NEW REPORT – ‘STOLEN FUTURES: THE HIDDEN TOLL OF CHILD CASUALTIES IN SYRIA’

The Oxford Research Group has released a new report based on an analysis of figures revealing 11,420 recorded child deaths in Syria. This shocking report, *Stolen Futures*, reveals that explosive weapons have been the cause of more than 7 out of every 10 child deaths in Syria since the conflict began in March 2011, while small arms fire accounts for more than one quarter of the total. This includes children caught in cross fire, as well as others targeted by snipers, summarily executed and in some cases, tortured. As Syrians and the international community take tentative steps towards a political resolution to the conflict, co-author, Hamit Dardagan says. ‘This study shows why explosive weapons should never be used where children live and play, how older children quickly become targets in a war and even the youngest suffer its worst abuses. This grim and terrible record also shows why a sustainable peace, not more bombs and bullets, is the only way to guarantee the safety of children.’ To access the report [click here](#).

KAIROS PALESTINE – ‘CHRISTMAS 2013’

Kairos Palestine, together with various Palestinian civil society organisations, has produced a booklet as part of the preparations and promise of Advent. Last year, too, they addressed this resource to sisters and brothers around the world who, in this season, turn to Bethlehem – informing them about our lives under occupation and raising their awareness about our plight. Like last year, they wish to share their reality. They seek to share the experience of the modern Bethlehem – which remains the ‘little town of Bethlehem,’ surrounded by the Wall and many settlements. Access the booklet [here](#).

PALESTINE ISRAEL ECUMENICAL NETWORK (PIEN)

PIEN has members across the denominational and theological spectrum, as well as Christian aid and development agencies working in Palestine and Israel. The group is calling on Australians to respond to the plight of Palestinians living under repressive conditions in the Middle East. ‘Our Christian brothers and sisters in Palestine are crying out to us,’ says the group’s co-convenor, Rev Gregor Henderson. ‘Every month thousands of people from around the world travel to Jerusalem to remember Jesus, but Palestinians living just a few kilometres away can’t reach the site.’ PIEN has launched a website and social media sites with theological and political analysis about the situation for Palestinians. For more information, [click here](#).

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE (ASRC) CHRISTMAS APPEAL

The situation for asylum seekers in Australia is the worst it’s been in 30 years. On top of this, the ASRC is being forced out of its home in West Melbourne, just at a time when demand for services is expected to increase by 300%. The good news is that the ASRC has found a new home in Footscray, three times the size of the current Centre. From this new home, the ASRC will be able to care for over 4,000 asylum seekers in 2014. The ASRC is seeking your support in securing its work into the new year and during 2014. To find out more and donate to the ‘Home of Hope’ Christmas Appeal, [click here](#).

JOINT LETTER TO PM ABOUT USE OF THE TERM ‘ILLEGAL MARITIME ARRIVALS’



The ACSJC was among 138 non-government agencies, faith-based organisations and community groups signing on to a letter expressing concern about the Government's recent

announcement regarding the use of the term 'illegal maritime arrivals' to refer to asylum

seekers who have arrived by boat. Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia, the agency coordinating the initiative, said, 'this letter was developed in response to requests from concerned Australians wishing to see a joint response to this decision. It reflects a growing sense of disquiet among many Australians, not only about the nation's response to people seeking protection from persecution but also about the implications for social cohesion of the Government use of such dehumanising language.' The joint letter can be accessed [here](#).

ON-LINE RESOURCES: 'REFUGEE FACTS' & 'MYTHS ABOUT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS'

'Refugee Facts' has been designed to provide quick facts and comprehensive background information on asylum seekers in Australia, in the interest of ethical and accurate reporting. Authors John Menadue, Arja Keski-Nummi and Kate Gauthier have compiled this manual, which provides key information and statistics for journalists, editors and advocates on asylum seeker issues. It has been designed to provide quick facts and accessible background information on asylum seekers in Australia in the interest of accurate reporting. [Click here](#).

Also, visit the 'Myths about refugees and asylum seekers' page of the Refugee Council of Australia. The RCoA says, 'the circulation of myths and misinformation is one of the biggest barriers to understanding the issues affecting refugees and asylum seekers. Myths create confusion and can fuel conflict, resentment and disharmony.' This page aims to highlight the common myths about refugees and asylum seekers and correct the record for people seeking accurate information: [click here](#).

NEW WEBSITE: MARY MACKILLOP INTERNATIONAL MISSION

Mary MacKillop International (MMI) is the overseas development organisation of the Sisters of St Joseph. MMI was established to bring justice and hope for a better future to marginalised, vulnerable, poor and destitute people and communities internationally. To find out more about MMI's programs with communities in Peru, East Timor and Brazil as well as the Ethica fair trade project, visit the new website [here](#).

'STOP THE TRAFFIK' CAMPAIGN & WEBSITE

STOP THE TRAFFIK is a global movement of individuals, communities and organisations fighting to prevent human trafficking around the world. The network of thousands of individuals, communities, organisations, clubs, faith groups, businesses, schools and charities fight human trafficking by taking local action, building a global movement and campaigning for change. The website provides a range of campaigns that can be taken up locally. Each is aimed at identifying the signs of trafficking and how to report it, becoming advocates for those who are hidden or vulnerable, raising awareness and educating others, campaigning for local, national and international change and networking with others. To find out more about STOP THE TRAFFIK and their campaigns, [click here](#).



MICAH CHALLENGE CAMPAIGN – CHRISTMAS ACTION

As part of its 'Finish the Race' campaign in 2013, individuals and communities have mobilised all across Australia to raise their voices and tell the Australian government that tackling global poverty should remain a priority on the political agenda. As we approach the Christmas season, take the time to write and send a card to your Member of Parliament, include a gift card from one of our agency partners, and ask your MP to stand for a generous and effective contribution to ending extreme global poverty. Include your MP in your season's greetings and use the power of the pen to advocate for the world's poor. To find out more, [click here](#).

CATHOLIC MISSION'S FUNDRAISER: 'LIFE-GIVING GIFT!'

The 'Life-Giving Gift' appeal seeks to help people in desperate need all around the world this Christmas. By purchasing one of sixteen gifts for your loved ones from three different categories you can assist Catholic Mission in its work with children, work with communities, or work through church leaders. Gifts start from as little as \$8 for the very popular laying hen for an orphanage in Peru, through to \$154 for a sewing machine for a disadvantaged woman in India, or a very generous \$12,000 to build a new church in the Philippines. Unlike many families and communities here in Australia, many in developing countries simply do not have the means or the opportunity to make a better life for themselves. Catholic Mission encourages everyone who has a heart for the poor and disadvantaged around the world to reach out and give life to those in need this Christmas. [Website](#). Contact: 1800 257 296.



ACSJC Publications

(Orders: phone (02) 8306 3499 or [download](#) an order form from the ACSJC website that can be faxed to (02) 8306 3498.

ORDER NOW! – 2014 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The 2014 Social Justice Diary includes the dates of significant events, anniversaries and special days which celebrate particular aspects of social justice. 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. A great Christmas gift. Diaries will be available in November. Cost: \$7.50 (including postage). To download an order form, [click here](#).

SERIES PAPER 75 – 'JUSTICE IN THE NAME OF GOD'

Time and again in the Bible we come across the concepts of 'name' and 'word'. People of our time hear and read these concepts so often in Scripture and in the liturgy that it is very easy not to ask what their deeper meaning is. In part, this is because in today's society, 'word' and 'name' do not have the significance they had for the ancient peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. For them, the name of God went with the idea of justice, and the prophets, in taking up the call to justice, did so in God's name: the two are inseparable. In the Gospel of John, the Incarnation is described in a profound way: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Author Gerard Moore describes this paper as 'an attempt to revisit the theology of God as a God of justice' and asks: 'Where does justice fit as we contemplate the



nature of God?’ This paper surveys the prophets as messengers of God’s ideal of justice and shows how this mission culminates in the mission of Jesus himself.

LAUNCH OF THE 2013–2014 SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT

Addresses delivered at the launch of the 2013–2014 Social Justice Statement by John Menadue AO, Author and Social Commentator, Helen Forde, Acting CEO of Caritas Australia, and Gregory O’Kelly SJ are available for download on the ACSJC homepage [here](#).

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2013–2014 – STILL TAKING ORDERS

This year’s Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Social Justice Statement is entitled ‘Lazarus at Our Gate: A critical moment in the fight against world poverty’. The ACSJC is now taking orders for the Statement: [click here](#).

Ten Steps Towards Solidarity Leaflet

Now available. Call (02) 8306 3499

Social Justice Statement Summary, Liturgy Notes, Community and Student Resources, PowerPoint, Video – available [here](#).

Ecumenical resource: ‘Social Justice Matters’. Download from the National Council of Churches [website](#).

SERIES PAPER 74 – ‘TIME TO DRAW THE LINE: FINDING A JUST SETTLEMENT BETWEEN AUSTRALIA AND TIMOR-LESTE’

Beneath the Timor Sea vast deposits of oil and gas lie between Australia, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Who has a just claim to those resources? What does international law say about them? What are Australians’ obligations as citizens of the world? Fr Frank Brennan tries to outline some answers to these questions in this latest Series paper, a sequel to his 2004 paper ‘The Timor Sea’s Oil and Gas: What’s Fair?’ He writes: ‘This paper attempts to explain the issue so that Australians of good will can reach a conclusion about the best way forward for any Australian government committed to justice, transparency and good neighbourly behaviour.’ What can we learn from the teaching of Christ and his Church as we grapple with these questions? Frank Brennan sets out the facts calmly and clearly and points us towards some ways forward.

PASTORAL LETTER – FEAST OF ST JOSEPH THE WORKER 2013

The Pastoral Letter for the Feast of St Joseph the Worker for 2013 is entitled ‘Time for a New Start – a call to increase allowance payments’. It is available for download in regular and ‘three-column’ versions [here](#).

(Catholic Social Justice Series papers: \$7.50 a copy, including postage)





News Monitor

[Church aid workers see great needs in Philippines](#)

Nearly two weeks after Super Typhoon Haiyan tore through the central Philippines, Catholic aid workers were seeing great needs, reported the Catholic News Service.

[Catholic groups sign letter to PM on asylum seekers](#)

Australia's most prominent Catholic organisations, including the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne, Catholic migrant and social justice groups, are among a large group of signatories to an open letter to the Prime Minister about asylum seekers.

[Bishop Hurley says asylum debate shaped by ignorance](#)

The Bishop of Darwin, Eugene Hurley, said Australia's asylum debate has been largely shaped by ignorance. Bishop Hurley said asylum-seekers are misunderstood, demonised and all too often labelled as queue-jumpers and terrorists, reported SBS.

[Vietnam Catholics jailed despite protests](#)

Two Catholics whose arrest sparked mass protests in Vietnam's Nghe An province last month have been jailed, reported Ucanews.

[How a chance meeting opened up a new ministry](#)

While the Good Samaritan Sisters in Pakenham, Victoria, say they're helping their African friends with many aspects of life in Australia, they're also learning a great deal from them.

[Bon Jovi urges everybody to help homeless, others in need](#)

US musician Jon Bon Jovi visited the future site of Joseph's House of Camden in New Jersey in an effort to ensure that Camden's homeless would no longer just be 'livin' on a prayer.'

– For details click on headlines or go to cathnews.com



Social Justice Diary, December 2013

1 Sun First Sunday of Advent

World AIDS Day

2 Mon International Day for Abolition of Slavery

3 Tue UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities



1874: Battle of the Eureka Stockade

5 Thu International Volunteer Day for Economic & Social Development

Hanukkah ends

6 Fri St Nicholas (Santa Claus)

7 Sat UN International Civil Aviation Day

1965 Vatican II Document *Gaudium et Spes*

8 Sun Second Sunday of Advent

9 Mon UN International Anti-Corruption Day

10 Tue UN Human Rights Day

1948: Adoption of United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

1968: Death of Thomas Merton

1992: Redfern Speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating, at launch of International Year of the World's Indigenous People

11 Wed International Mountain Day

12 Thu 1831: Sisters of Mercy founded by Catherine McAuley

15 Sun Third Sunday of Advent

18 Wed International Migrants Day

1894: South Australia becomes the first state in Australia to give women the right to vote

19 Thu UN International Day for South-South Cooperation

20 Fri UN International Human Solidarity Day

21 Sat 1991: Dissolution of the USSR and the founding of the Commonwealth of Independent States including Russia

1993: Native Title Bill passed by the Australian Senate

22 Sun Fourth Sunday of Advent

23 Mon 1901: Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia Policy) enacted

1996: Wik High Court decision



24 Tue Christmas Eve

25 Wed Christmas Day

29 Sun Feast of the Holy Family

30 Mon 1987: Pope John Paul II's encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*

31 Tue 1946: Paid annual leave granted to workers in Australia

