



ACSJC Monthly Briefing February 2014 No 153



From the Secretariat, February 2014

Dear friends,

On behalf of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and its Secretariat, I would like to offer all best wishes and blessings to you, your loved ones and families for the coming year.

On the first day of each New Year the Pope issues a Message for the Church's World Day of Peace. This year is the 47th World Day of Peace. For his first World Day of Peace Message, Pope Francis chose the theme 'Fraternity: the Foundation and Pathway to Peace'.

The text of the message can be found [here](#).

Introducing his Message, Pope Francis expresses a wish for everyone to live a life filled with joy and hope. Every human heart, he says, has an irrepressible longing for fraternity, which draws us to 'look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother'. 'Without fraternity', the Pope says, 'it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace' (#1).

For Pope Francis, the fraternity that binds each of us is grounded in the fact that God is our father and regenerated in Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. He goes on to say:

'In God's family, where all are sons and daughters of the same Father, and, because they are grafted to Christ, sons and daughters in the Son, there are no "disposable lives". All men and women enjoy an equal and inviolable dignity.'

The Holy Father quotes the words of Pope Paul VI: 'in this sacred communion, we must also ... work together to build the common future of the human race'.

That responsibility, Pope Francis suggests, falls most of all to those who are most privileged. In particular, the privileged of the world have a duty of solidarity, social justice and universal charity, which means working for 'a more humane world for all' (#4).

Four areas for action



Pope Francis sketches out four particular areas in which these duties can be fulfilled. They are: overcoming poverty and seeking economic justice; eliminating war; battling against corruption and organised crime; and preserving and nurturing the environment.

With regard to overcoming poverty, the Holy Father calls on us to rediscover the principle of fraternity in the economy and reminds us of the serious financial crises the world has experienced in recent years – something that should lead us to ‘a timely rethinking of our models of economic development and to a change in lifestyles’ (#6).

Pope Francis addresses those who have suffered the terror and destruction of war and assures them of his personal closeness to their situation and the Church’s mission ‘to bring Christ’s love to the defenceless victims of forgotten wars through her prayers for peace, her service to the wounded, the starving, refugees, the displaced and all those who live in fear’ (#7).

Corruption and organised crime are responsible for many evils in the world including drug trafficking, environmental damage, exploitation of labour, slavery and human trafficking, and ‘the frequently overlooked tragedy of migrants, who are often victims of disgraceful and illegal manipulation’ (#8).

Finally, he says, there is our obligation as stewards of the environment – an obligation we are not fulfilling. ‘We do not preserve nature; nor do we respect it or consider it a gracious gift’, the Pope says. We need to find ways in which all can benefit from the fruits of the earth.

The human face of suffering

Perhaps the most notable aspect of the Pope’s first Day of Peace message is his personal concern for the human beings who suffer most under the violence, injustice and neglect that he has mentioned. We can see this in the intimate tone he strikes at the very beginning as he greets everyone and wishes them joy and hope. He has often shown his concern for migrants and refugees, but his empathy is equally strong for people who have been trafficked or enslaved, or for victims of war, violence and terror.

In reflecting on Pope Francis’s Message, it is worthwhile thinking about how we as Australians and citizens of the world are measuring up to the calls made by the Pope.

Two recent issues make an uncomfortable fit with the calls that the Pope has issued.

Economic inequality

The first of these issues is a report issued by the international charity Oxfam. The introduction to the report says:

‘Almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population, and seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years. The World Economic Forum has identified economic inequality as a major risk to human progress, impacting social stability within countries and threatening security on a global scale.’

Other points made in the report include:



One percent of the world's population now owns almost half of the world's wealth.

That wealth – \$110 trillion – amounts to 65 times the total wealth of the bottom half of the world's population.

The richest 85 people in the world own as much as the bottom half of the world's population.

Those points alone make it clear how timely the Pope's message is. It is difficult to see how that enormous and growing inequality can be seen as 'building the common future of the human race' or contributing to the 'equal and inviolable dignity' that is the birthright of all men and women.

The Oxfam report can be accessed [here](#).

Australia's asylum seeker policy

The second issue is closer to home: the recent developments in Australia's policies towards refugees and asylum seekers. Last week, the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Christopher Saunders, issued a media statement referring to the government's policies as being in effect a 'campaign of cruelty'. The 'war' that the government claims to be waging against people smugglers has as its victims 'wretched and defenceless people.'

'We are ignoring the most important issue: the millions of people in our region and around the world who need protection and security', Bishop Saunders said.

Australia's policies as outlined by Bishop Saunders clash with the humane calls from Pope Francis.

Putting the Pope's message into action

Most Australians know that they are among the 'most privileged' members of the world's community, who bear the heaviest responsibility to confront injustice and inequality. We bear that responsibility as individuals and as members of the civil society in whose names Australia's economic and political policies are being carried out. We and the rest of the developed world need to hear these words from Pope Francis:

'We Christians believe that in the Church we are all members of a single body, all mutually necessary, because each has been given a grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, for the common good.'

John Ferguson
National Executive Officer



Current Issues/Resources, February 2014

MEDIA RELEASE: REFUGEE POLICY A 'CAMPAIGN OF CRUELTY': BISHOP



The Australian government is in effect conducting a campaign of cruelty towards asylum seekers, says Bishop Christopher Saunders, the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council. ‘The government’s campaign, like that of its predecessors, has only one purpose: to deter desperate men, women and children from seeking protection from persecution and danger’, Bishop Saunders said. ‘The government claims that it is fighting a war. If it is a war, then it is being fought against wretched and defenceless people. We are ignoring the most important issue: the millions of people in our region and around the world who need protection and security. The only hope for a solution to the refugee problem is international cooperation’, Bishop Saunders said. Read [here](#).

MEDIA RELEASE: CLOSURE OF FOUR IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES WELCOMED

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) has welcomed the decision by the Federal Government to close four immigration detention facilities in Australia. ‘It is not a crime to seek asylum yet sadly these detention centres have been a source of immense pain and misery for thousands of our brothers and sisters who have come to us in search of refuge’, said Fr Maurizio Pettenà, National Director of the ACMRO. ‘Asylum seekers have been effectively hosted in our community for many years now, which is a much more humane alternative to closed immigration detention’, he said. ‘The Catholic Church encourages governments to implement policies which assist people seeking asylum. One of the most life affirming and compassionate ways Australia can help is through our refugee resettlement program’, he said. Read [here](#).

ON-LINE RESOURCES: ‘REFUGEE FACTS’ AND ‘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. Visit [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 [here](#).

NEW PUBLICATION: AUSTRALIA21 BOOK ‘REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: FINDING A BETTER WAY’

This is a collection of essays by an unprecedented range of Australian leaders in the law, military, human rights, religion and politics as well as refugees themselves, all seeking new ways of framing the public conversation about refugees and asylum seekers. Authors include: Julian Burnside, Paul Power, John Menadue, etc. For more information and to download (free) or order, visit [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, visit [here](#).

NEW PUBLICATION: ‘THE FRANCIS EFFECT: LIVING THE GOSPEL OF JOY’

Catholic Mission and Catholic Religious Australia’s Mission Network are excited to present ‘The Francis Effect: Living the Joy of the Gospel.’ This comprehensive book contains twelve responses to the new Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (‘The Joy of the Gospel’), from experts across the Church in Australia and a foreword by leading Missiologist Stephen Bevans svd. The book can be accessed [here](#).

MEDIA RELEASE: GOVERNMENT CUTS TO AID FUNDING A DISAPPOINTMENT

Caritas Australia is disappointed by the Australian Government’s announcement confirming cuts of \$650 million from Australia’s official aid program in the 2013/14 financial year. The cuts reduce funding for programs in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and South and West Asia. They also decrease Government support for non-government organisations like Caritas Australia. In the last year Caritas Australia was able to reach more than 1.1 million people across 20 countries. Caritas Australia’s CEO, Paul O’Callaghan said ‘Success of this kind hinges on our ability to develop relationships of mutual respect with local communities. But to do this effectively, we need funding predictability from Government. We urge the Government to re-establish a sound basis for effective long-term partnership through its budget planning for the next four years.’ Read [here](#).

The Australian Christian Lobby has also expressed disappointment. ACL Managing Director Lyle Shelton said Christians had been at the forefront of urging the both Labor and the Coalition to keep the Millennium Development Goal promises, which included increasing aid to 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2015. ‘Like Labor’s deferrals of aid increases in the past two budgets, the Coalition’s cuts have come as a big disappointment to Christians who believe that we should be generous with our aid. While great strides have been made in lifting people out of poverty, 29,000 children die every day from preventable diseases. Clearly there is much more to be done’, said Mr Shelton. Read [here](#).

OXFAM: ‘WORKING FOR THE FEW’

Oxfam has just released a report entitled, ‘Working for the Few: Political capture and economic inequality’. Almost half of the world’s wealth is now owned by just one percent of the population, and seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years. The World Economic Forum has identified economic inequality as a major risk to human progress, impacting social stability within countries and



threatening security on a global scale. Oxfam warns that this massive concentration of economic resources in the hands of fewer people presents a real threat to inclusive political and economic systems, and compounds other inequalities – such as those between women and men. Left unchecked, political institutions are undermined and governments overwhelmingly serve the interests of economic elites – to the detriment of ordinary people. To access the document, visit [here](#).

TAX JUSTICE NETWORK CAMPAIGN: TAX EVASION

Pope Francis, while drawing attention to the plight of the world's poor, pointed to tax evasion as a significant concern, saying 'To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which has taken on worldwide dimensions. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits'. He further added, 'I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor.' Tax evasion is expected to be on the agenda of our political leaders at the G20 meeting in Australia in November. The Tax Justice Network – Australia, (TJN) has supported international efforts to have implemented a system of 'Automatic Information Exchange' designed to combat tax evasion and provide fairer returns to developing countries. The TJN has postcards available, addressed to The Attorney General, which can be sent to show support for this reform. The postcards are available from Mark Zirnsak, Director, Justice and International Mission, phone 03 9251 5265 or [email](#). More information is available [here](#).

MEDIA RELEASE: AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE (ACOSS)

ACOSS has expressed its support for a comprehensive review of the income support system to simplify the system and improve payment adequacy and support to get a job, as well as to improve the fairness and equity of the system. They have called for this kind of review of working age payments in the past. The process needs to be open and transparent, allowing dialogue between community organisations, employment services, and employers, so that they can develop and back policy changes that will work to improve the job prospects of people disadvantaged in the labour market, and to provide adequate income support for those who need it. There is a need to increase support for those receiving Allowance payments and their support for reforms to create a simpler system, including support for a single base payment with supplements for additional costs where relevant. Read the full statement [here](#).

NEW PUBLICATION: 'IN THE ABSENCE OF TREATY'

This book explores the current inadequacy of the process used in engaging with Aboriginal people, which results in control slipping away from them. It provides concise but incisive account from recent reports about the reasons for the ongoing and growing frustration of many Aboriginal people in the NT. In doing so it hints at possibly the only solution – treaties. For more information and to order a book visit [here](#).

PROJECT COMPASSION 2014 – A FULL AND BEAUTIFUL LIFE

On 2 March, Caritas Australia will launch its annual Project Compassion appeal. Caritas Australia CEO, Paul O'Callaghan, said that Australians have traditionally been supportive of this annual appeal because they see how Caritas works to achieve impact in 35 countries. 'The wonderful generosity of the Australian community has enabled Caritas to work alongside communities over the long term in Asia, Africa, the Pacific, Latin America and



with First Australian communities. This has helped to transform the lives of many marginalised people. Every dollar raised and every individual, school, parish or community that embraces Project Compassion makes a real difference,' Mr O'Callaghan said. During Lent, Australians are invited to raise funds for Project Compassion in a variety of ways. Caritas will provide a Lent Calendar that helps you explore the Project Compassion stories each day until 20 April. To donate to Project Compassion or for more information visit [here](#) or phone 1800 024 413.

PALMS OUTREACH

Many Australians feel powerless and confused about how best to fight poverty and sadly they are not aware of Palms. Palms don't have a large advertising budget or government funding and until now have relied on the generosity of a small number of committed individuals. This must change. They need many more Australians supporting Palms directly and through their community so that they can fill more requests for volunteers by communities in developing countries. Palms are looking for people to spread the word about them; you can do this in many ways: 1. Talk to your friends, family and work colleagues about why you support Palms; 2. Ask them to subscribe to Palms Post Online to find out more about Palms; 3. If they like coffee, tea or hot chocolate, recommend [Coffup](#) 4. Don't be shy about asking them to donate. Just 50 people donating \$50 per month funds a teacher, doctor, nurse or other skilled person to devote 2 years to helping the poorest of the poor in countries like East Timor. 5. Contact your local school's parents and friends association or your parish priest and refer them to Coffup. When they fundraise, half the profits will go to the school or church. For more information visit [here](#).

NEW WEBSITE: 'PRAYING THE HUMAN RIGHTS NEWS'

The Justice and Peace commission in South Africa has started a website through which those in monastic life and consecrated life can stand in solidarity and prayer with the activists and organisations from the various parts in the world that are working for justice and peace. You can visit the [website](#) and invite others to join in the global ministry of prayer for justice and peace.

THE LAW AND JUSTICE FOUNDATION OF NSW GRANTS

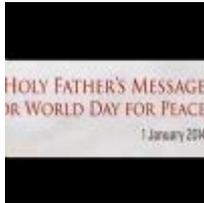
Do you have an idea for a project to improve access for justice? The Law and Justice Foundation of NSW's 2014 General Grants Round #1, for grants up to \$50,000, will close on 21 March 2014. Applicants are encouraged to contact Jane Kenny, Grants and Legal Information Manager, by 7 February – six weeks before the closing date – to discuss your project idea and ensure you're on the right track. Last year's grant recipients included: Barnardos Australia (working with Indigenous female inmates); Alzheimers Australia (protecting people with dementia from financial abuse); Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT (producing video resources to explain legal information by Aboriginal people, especially for those who have difficulty reading); etc. Phone 02 8227 3210 or [email](#). For more information visit [here](#).

PUBLICATION: HEALTH AND WELFARE'S NEWSLETTER 'ACCESS'

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's latest newsletter is available online. In this issue you'll find descriptions of, and the key results from, some of the Institute's most



interesting recent reports across both the health and welfare domains. These include: Australia's welfare 2013, dental care hitting Aussie's hip pockets, Australian prisoners, profiling homelessness services, etc. [View](#) Access no. 36.



ACSJC Publications

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

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. Cost: \$7.50 (including postage). To download an order form, go [here](#).

DISCUSSION GUIDE: 2014 WORLD DAY OF PEACE MESSAGE

The theme for the 47th World Day of Peace Message from Pope Francis is *Fraternity: the Foundation and Pathway to Peace*. In this his first World Day of Peace message, Pope Francis expresses his wish for everyone to live a life filled with joy and hope, in fraternity that helps us 'look upon and treat each person as a true sister or brother'. The ACSJC has prepared a Discussion Guide for the papal message, which is available on our [website](#).

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. Available [here](#)

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 Bishop Gregory O'Kelly SJ are available for download [here](#).

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2013–2014 – STILL TAKING ORDERS



The current 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 from the [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? What can we learn from the teaching of Christ and his Church as we grapple with these questions? Fr Frank Brennan tries to outline some answers to these questions in this 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.' Frank Brennan sets out the facts calmly and clearly and points us towards some ways forward. Available [here](#)

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



News Monitor

[US nun, aged 83, ordered to pay for nuclear sabotage](#)

A US judge ordered an 83-year-old religious sister and two other Catholic peace activists to pay full restitution of nearly \$60,000 for damaging the primary US storehouse for bomb-grade uranium, reported AP in The Sydney Morning Herald.

[Refugee policy a 'campaign of cruelty': Bishop Saunders](#)

The Australian government is conducting a campaign of cruelty towards asylum seekers, according to the Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Christopher Saunders.

[Caritas disappointed by govt aid cuts](#)

Caritas Australia expressed disappointment with the Australian Government's announcement confirming cuts of \$650 million from Australia's official aid program in the 2013-14 financial year.

[Pope urges Davos elite to improve lot of the world's poorest](#)

Pope Francis challenged business leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos to adopt a 'renewed, profound and broadened sense of responsibility' towards the 'most frail, weak and vulnerable' of society, reported The Tablet.

[ACMRO welcomes closure of four detention centres](#)



The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) welcomed the decision by the Federal Government to close four immigration detention facilities in Australia.

[ERC launches Nobel campaign for Kiribati president](#)

The director of the Edmund Rice Centre in Sydney announced the formation of a Committee to promote the candidacy of Kiribati's President, Anote Tong, for the Nobel Peace Prize.

[‘Gay people are not criminals,’ says Indian cardinal](#)

Cardinal Oswald Gracias, Archbishop of Mumbai and president of the Episcopal Conference of India, said that the Church 'never considered gay people criminals,' reported The Catholic Herald.

[CSSV report calls for abolition of suspended sentence policy](#)

A report commissioned by Catholic Social Services Victoria, claimed thousands of offenders will be added to Victoria's overcrowded corrections system when suspended sentences are phased out next year, reported the ABC.

[Good Sams leader wins Human Rights Medal](#)

Clare Condon, the leader of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, won the 2013 Human Rights Medal for her work in helping victims of domestic violence, reported AAP in The Australian.

[Pope Francis backs campaign to end ‘scandal’ of world hunger](#)

People must stand united against the scandal of hunger while avoiding food waste and irresponsible use of the world's resources, Pope Francis said.

[Catholics around the world mourn Nelson Mandela](#)

Catholics around the world are mourning Nelson Mandela, who died aged 95. In a telegram to Jacob Zuma, South Africa's president, Pope Francis praised 'the steadfast commitment shown by Nelson Mandela in promoting the human dignity of all and in forging a new South Africa built on the firm foundations of non-violence, reconciliation and truth.'

[Asylum seeker visa freeze 'a new low': Edmund Rice Centre](#)

The Government's decision to suspend the granting of new permanent protection visas for asylum seekers is 'a new low' in Australia's treatment of these vulnerable people', says Edmund Rice Centre director, Phil Glendenning.

[Pope ramps up charity office to be near poor, sick](#)

When he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis was known to sneak out at night and break bread with the homeless, sit with them literally on the street and eat with them. That's not so easy to do now that he's pope.

– for details click on headlines or go to <http://cathnews.com>





Social Justice Diary, February 2014

1 Sat World Interfaith Harmony Week begins

2 Sun Presentation of Jesus

World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

World Wetlands Day

5 Wed 1996: Signing of Cape York Peninsula Heads of Agreement

6 Thu International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation

Waitangi Day, Aotearoa New Zealand

9 Sun Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

11 Tue World Day of Prayer for the Sick

1990: Nelson Mandela released from prison

12 Wed 1965: Commencement of Freedom Ride in Australia

2005: Sr Dorothy Stang murdered in Brazil

13 Thu 2008: Apology to Stolen Generations by Australian Government

16 Sun Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

20 Thu World Day of Social Justice

21 Fri International Mother Language Day

23 Sun Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

