



ACSJC BRIEFING

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From the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, the social justice and human rights agency of the Catholic Church in Australia - www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

IN THIS ISSUE

- From the Secretariat
- Latest publications
- Current issues
- December-January Notices
- November News Monitor
- December Social Justice Calendar

FROM THE SECRETARIAT

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone... For there is a child born for us, a son given to us and dominion is laid on his shoulders; and this is the name they give him: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace. (Isaiah 9:2,6)

Dear Friends,

ADVENT

As we enter the Season of Advent, the Church begins a new liturgical year and prepares for Christmas. Advent begins the Christmas cycle and is a time of preparation for the celebration of Christ's coming. We recall the history of God's people and the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Scriptures in Christ.

Many readings during the Season of Advent are taken from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah preached a message of consolation and of hope to a people exiled in Babylon. Enslaved and away from home, they longed for their homeland, for wholeness, for justice and integrity. Isaiah preached hope and urged the people of God to remain vigilant for the coming of the Messiah.

Advent is a time of expectation. It is also a time for taking stock of the year that has passed, of making amends

before the great feast and rediscovering the ongoing presence of God in our lives.

LOOKING BACK

At the end of another year there is much we can be grateful for and celebrate as Australians. Many Australians, but certainly not all, continue to enjoy the fruits of economic growth and development. For the most part we are a peaceful country that celebrates the values of democracy and multiculturalism. And we have sought to be a good neighbour by assisting other nations in their time of need.

RECONCILIATION

As we are taking stock of the year, we realise there are people with whom our nation needs reconciliation. There are events that cry out for justice. The hope of Indigenous Australians for real progress towards national reconciliation has been frustrated. Poverty continues to marginalise families in a prosperous country like Australia. Families and children seeking asylum await the dignity that can never be afforded by prolonged detention or a "Pacific solution". The ordinary citizens of Iraq long for true peace and the restoration of their homeland. This Christmas list could go on.

Through the readings for Advent, Isaiah and John the Baptist call for us to prepare a way for the Lord and make his paths straight. Our world is certainly in need of a Wonder-Counsellor - the Prince of Peace. In preparing for the coming of the Messiah we can reflect on the challenges of our world and again commit to assisting those who are devalued or distressed.

May Christmas be a time of peace, happiness, and renewal for the year ahead.

Members of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and staff of the Secretariat

would like to thank our Diocesan Contacts, readers and subscribers for their support throughout 2003 and wish all a happy and holy Christmas.

- John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flock,
the work of Christmas begins:*

*to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among brothers and sisters. (Howard Thurman)*

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

(orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or email: admin@acsjc.org.au)

2004 SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

The Social Justice Calendar for 2004 focuses on the theme "Cultivating a Culture of Peace". This coincides with the theme for the 2004 Social Justice Sunday Statement.

The calendar includes dates of significant events, information, prayers and reflections.

Cost: \$6.60 (inc. GST), plus postage.
Order now!
http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/publications/social_justice_calendar.html

POSITION AND INFORMATION PAPER - DETENTION OF AUSTRALIAN CITIZENS AT GUANTANAMO BAY

Website paper available at: www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

BACKGROUND PAPER - AUSTRALIA & UNITED STATES FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Available on the ACSJC website - www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/Content/publications/positionpapers/2003_9_5a_australia_&_united_states_free_trade_agreement.html

2003 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT & RESOURCES

Australian Catholic Bishops' Statement: A Generous Heart in the Love of Christ - Challenging Racism in Australia Today. Free electronic version of the 2003 Statement available from the websites of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (www.catholic.org.au) and ACSJC (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/2003jsjss.html).

ECUMENICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY KIT: SUBVERTING RACISM

Ecumenical Kit produced by the Anglican Social Responsibilities Network, Uniting Justice Australia & ACSJC, now available (cost: \$5.50 {plus postage: 1 copy \$1.45; 2-3 copies \$2.45})

LEAFLET & PRAYER CARD: TEN STEPS TOWARDS CHALLENGING RACISM IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Now available. Call (02) 9956 5811

OCCASIONAL PAPER: THE LORD HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR - THE MAGNIFICAT REVISITED.

Catholic Social Justice Series no.48 - Sr Marie Farrell rsm (cost \$5.50 plus postage)

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

CURRENT ISSUES

See

<http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/mediareleases.html>

MEDIA RELEASE - GOVERNMENT CAN DO MORE FOR HICKS AND HABIB

- 12 November 2003: Following the November meeting of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, Bishop Christopher Saunders has called on the Federal Government to do more to secure natural justice for the two Australian citizens detained by US Authorities at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The ACSJC urges the Government to make every effort to end the indefinite detention of Mamdouh Habib and David Hicks and to ensure they have access to the ordinary process of justice through the laying of charges to be brought before a civilian court. As a matter of urgency, the Government should use its close ties with the US to end the legal limbo which has meant that two Australian nationals are being denied their most basic legal and human rights.

http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/content/media_releases/2003_11_12_1069845034.html

DEC-JAN NOTICES

DECEMBER 3 - 5: CONFERENCE, "ADVANCE AUSTRALIA WHERE?"

2003 National Conference of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia. Held at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Federation Square, Cnr Flinders and Swanston Sts, Melbourne (refer: www.eccv.org.au/feccaconf/rego.html)

DECEMBER 4: CONFERENCE, "HUMAN RIGHTS 2003: The Year in Review"

Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, CUB Malthouse, 113 Sturt Street, Southbank, Melbourne. 9.00am-5.00pm (refer: <http://www.lawconf.monash.org/>)

DECEMBER 4: PUBLIC MEETING, "CHILOUT INFORMATION NIGHT"

Address by Rev Elenie Poulos, Director of Uniting Justice Australia, on the recent meeting of the Executive Committee on the UN Commission for Refugees. 7.30pm at Huntley Hall, North Sydney Council Chambers, Miller St. North Sydney (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

DECEMBER 4: PUBLIC MEETING, "PADDY'S ROAD - LIFE STORIES OF PATRICK DODSON"

Gleebooks and ANTaR presents Kevin Keeffe (biographer) in Conversation with Patrick Dodson at Valhalla Cinema, 166 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe, Sydney. 7.00pm.

(refer:

<http://www.antar.org.au/Paddy%27s%20Road%20event.htm>)

DECEMBER 4 - 5: CONFERENCE, "A JOURNEY OF HEALING"

The 2003 National Indigenous Stolen Generation Conference at The Mercure, St Leonards, Sydney (refer: <http://www.community-life.org.au/diary.php#event331>)

DECEMBER 5: PUBLIC ADDRESS, "ON THE RUN IN ACEH: 80 days of living dangerously"

Address by William Nessen, freelance journalist and eye-witness to the biggest ever Indonesian armed forces offensive in Aceh. Sponsored by the Acehnese Community of Australia, Action in Solidarity with Asia, and AID/WATCH. 6.30pm at 23 Abercrombie Street, Chippendale, Sydney. Entry by gold coin donation. (refer:

<http://www.active.org.au/sydney/calendar/?day=5&month=12>)

DECEMBER 5 - 6: CONFERENCE, "HUMAN RIGHTS: NEW PARADIGMS and New Responsibilities"

The National Committee on Human Rights Education is running this conference focussing on rights education in Australia, human rights and good governance in the Asia Pacific and the regionalism and globalisation of human rights. University of Technology, Building 5, Quay St., Sydney (refer: <http://www.nchre-australia.org/conference.html>)

DECEMBER 7: COMMUNITY BBQ, "OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN REFUGEES who are TPV Holders and other Australians". The Monash Student Association in partnership with Afghan students extend an invitation to a community day together. 11.00am to 3.00pm, Lemon Scented Lawn, Monash University, Clayton Campus (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whatshappening_events.php)

DECEMBER 9: ACTION MEETING, "AGAINST THE CLOSURE OF MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRES". Convened by the Western Sydney Community Forum, 9.30am - 12.30pm, Paramatta City Library, Civic Place, Parramatta (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

DECEMBER 10: ADDRESS, ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY and the 7th anniversary of his awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize, of Dr Jose Ramos-Horta, Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Timor-Leste, National Press Club 12.00 - 2.00pm, Canberra (refer: <http://www.npc.org.au/speakers.htm>)

DECEMBER 10: LUNCHEON, "2003 HUMAN RIGHTS MEDAL AND AWARDS". Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission event at Sheraton On The Park Hotel, Sydney. \$25 per ticket. (refer: www.hreoc.gov.au/hr_awards/index.html)

DECEMBER 10: DINNER, "HUMAN RIGHTS DAY DINNER", organised by Amnesty International Australia. Irish Club, Elizabeth St Brisbane. \$40 per ticket. Contact: (07) 3211 1466 (refer: www.amnesty.org.au)

DECEMBER 10 - 12: CONFERENCE, "5TH PATH TO FULL EMPLOYMENT Conference and the 10th National Conference on Unemployment", hosted by the Centre of Full Employment and Equity (CoffEE) to be held at the University of Newcastle.

(refer: <http://e1.Newcastle.edu.au/coffee/conferences/2003>)

DECEMBER 12: NATIONAL SUMMIT, "FORGOTTEN RIGHTS - Responding to the Crisis of Asylum Seeker Health Care". National Summit convened by the Professional Alliance for the Health of asylum Seekers and their Children. NSW Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney (refer: <http://www.psychologyweek.com.au/events.asp>)

DECEMBER 18: END OF YEAR CELEBRATION, SYDNEY-BASE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS - Five activists will be given the Ausnews Reporters Award for the first time since its inauguration three years ago. Redfern Town Hall, 73 Pitt Street, 6:30-8:30 pm Redfern (For details/RSVP call 02 9764 1330 or email SAVE-Australia@erc.org.au).

JANUARY 7 - 11: NATIONAL JUSTICE FESTIVAL 2004, "WANT PEACE? WORK FOR JUSTICE!". National Festival for young adults hosted by the Marist Young Adult Ministry at Ballarat Grammar School, 201 Forest Street, Wendouree, Victoria. (refer: <http://www.maristmelb.org.au/maristmelb/myam/njf/index.html>)

JANUARY 12 - 15: SUMMER SCHOOL, "OPENING UP TO PEACE - An arts-based celebration of Hope". An opportunity to explore a variety of paths to peace in the beautiful historic settlement of Morpeth on the Hunter River, led by Rev. Jon Inkipin, Decade to Overcome Violence Programme Manager, NCCA. (refer: <http://www.stjohnsmorpeth.com/Summer%20School.htm>)

JANUARY 14 - 16, 19 - 20: SUMMER SCHOOL, "INTRODUCING ISLAM". An introduction to the faith of our Muslim neighbours to enable better understanding, friendship and cooperation between Christians and Muslims. Ruin by the Columban Mission Institute at the Catholic Institute of Sydney (refer:

www.columban.org.au;
http://www.cis.catholic.edu.au/five_day_summer_school.htm)

JANUARY 20: PUBLIC LECTURE, "SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RICE 2004". Delivered by Professor Celia Deanne-Drummond, Director of the Centre for Religion and Biosciences at Chester College, University of Liverpool. Catholic Earthcare Australia will host this lecture at the Bellevue Hotel, 159 Hargrave St, Paddington, Sydney (upstairs in the function room) at 7.30pm (refer: <http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/events.html#Future>)

JANUARY 23 - 27: CONFERENCE, "THE WOMEN SCHOLARS OF RELIGION AND THEOLOGY". Convened by ACU National at St Patrick's Campus in Melbourne, 115 Victoria Pde, Fitzroy. (refer: http://www.acu.edu.au/acu_national/News__Events_Calendar/Events.cfm)

JANUARY 31: Workshop, "EMBRACING PEACE". ONE DAY WORKSHOP convened by the Wellspring Community Inc. and Mercy Foundation to be held in Strathfield, Sydney. \$35 per person, \$20 concession. For further info call (02) 9868 5915 or email neil-margaret.holm@bigpond.com

FEBRUARY 7 - 26: SUMMER SCHOOL, "CROSS CULTURAL MINISTRY". This three-week course is being run by the Sisters of St Joseph and St Columban's Mission Society in Baulkham Hills, Sydney. Cross cultural ministry is a critical component of most pastoral ministry. Emphasis will be given to the challenge of living as well as ministering in a new culture. For further info, contact Sr Joan Healy rsj on (02) 8912 4872.

FEBRUARY 6 - 8: CONFERENCE, "A FAIR GO - JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS FOR REFUGEES". National Conference 2004 of Rural Australians for Refugees. An action-focussed conference concerning working with refugees, changing the system, getting the message across, and meeting our

responsibilities. Charles Sturt University, Guinea Street Albury. For further info contact fjohnson@uhchs.vic.gov.au or (0400) 322 599.

(email news of your forthcoming social justice event to: admin@acsjc.org.au)

NOVEMBER NEWS MONITOR

CARDINAL PROPOSES ENCYCLICAL ON MIGRANTS: Reflecting what he called the Catholic church's duty to defend the world's 175 million migrants and 40 million refugees, Washington Cardinal Theodore McCarrick called on Pope John Paul II to issue an encyclical letter on the subject.

BISHOPS SAYS FREE TRADE THREATENS SOVEREIGNTY AND DEMOCRACY: Canberra auxiliary Bishop Pat Power spoke on behalf of Catholic organisations in a coalition of church, welfare, trade union and health groups that is arguing that any free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States will undermine Australia's sovereignty and democratic rights.

SA PRIEST TRAVELS TO CANBERRA TO PLEAD TPV HOLDERS' CASE: Fr Tony Pearson of Adelaide's Otherway Aboriginal and refugee ministry in Adelaide was in Canberra with temporary protection visa (TPV) holders to ask the Federal Government to reassess their cases.

VATICAN OFFICIALS SAY MIGRATION BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES FOR CATHOLICS: Migration brings with it an opportunity for Catholics to experience the universality of their church, to forge bonds with other Christians and to discover the way God is at work in other religions, Vatican officials said.

CHURCH SENDS MESSAGE OF PEACE TO MUSLIMS: The Catholic Church in Australia marked the Islamic

holy month of Ramadan by sending prayerful greetings to Muslims and reaffirming a shared commitment to peace, built on the four pillars of truth, justice, love and freedom.

VIC BUSH SCHOOL CLOSURE HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUING RURAL HARDSHIP: The Director of the Ballarat Catholic Education Office blamed a board's decision to close a remote high school on falling enrolments caused by sustained population and economic decline in farming communities resulting from the a number of factors including the drought.

COMMISSION APPEAL FOR FARMERS AFFLICTED BY ONGOING DROUGHT: The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Brisbane appealed for understanding and concrete support for Queensland farming communities still in the grip of drought.

BISHOPS TO ADDRESS AUSTRALIA'S WORST ECOLOGICAL DISASTER: After its annual conference, Catholic Earthcare Australia said the Australian Bishops will release a pastoral statement next year on concerns for the Murray Darling Basin, to promote the health of the ecosystems.

VATICAN CARDINAL CONDEMNS ISRAEL SECURITY WALL: Cardinal Roger Etchegaray said the Israeli "security wall" being built through Palestinian territories "inevitably creates a geography of apartheid, which provokes rather than controls violence".

PRESS COUNCIL BACKS CHURCH OFFICIAL ON UNFAIR "TRAITOR" HEADLINE: Senior church official Dr Michael Costigan had his complaint about use of the word "traitor" in media coverage of Australian Guantanamo Bay detainee David Hicks upheld by the Press Council.

BISHOP SAYS GOVT CAN DO MORE FOR HICKS AND HABIB: Australian Catholic Social Justice Council chairman Bishop Christopher Saunders wrote to Attorney-General

Philip Ruddock calling on the Government to do more to secure natural justice for the two Australians detained by US Authorities at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

VATICAN GM SEMINAR UNDER FIRE: A Vatican organised international seminar on genetically modified foods ran into controversy, after being criticised by priests working in Africa for failing to include Church personnel opposed to the crops.

POPE DENOUNCES TERRORISM IN ALL ITS FORMS: Meeting with Christian members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Pope John Paul II strongly criticised "all forms of terrorism", because terrorism represents "treason for our common humanity" and lacks the moral foundation necessary for freedom of people.

RECYCLING RESOURCES A CHALLENGE FOR THE CHURCH : The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission of Brisbane challenged all Catholic parishes, schools and agencies to take the Pope's call for ecological conversion seriously by making concerted efforts to recycle resources more diligently.

JESUIT SAYS PAULINE HANSON PRISON SHOCK IS REAL: Fr Peter Norden said Pauline Hanson, former leader of the One Nation political party who was released from a Brisbane prison after winning her appeal, had a rare first-hand experience of the inadequacies of our criminal justice system.

CATHOLIC REFUGEE OFFICE 'WAIT AND SEE' AFTER GOVT CHANGE OF HEART: The Bishops' Migrant and Refugee Office welcomed the news that the Federal Government will now grant a visa "on compassionate grounds" to an Iranian asylum seeker whose children are stranded in Indonesia.

MELBOURNE ARCHBISHOP OPPOSES VICTORIAN TRADING REFORMS: Archbishop Denis Hart expressed opposition to a Victorian

government move to soften trading restrictions on religious holidays.

OFFICE SLAMS GOVT KNEEJERK REACTION TO BOATPEOPLE ARRIVAL:

The Bishops' Migrant and Refugee Office says the Federal Government's decision to remove more islands from Australia's migration zone is an overaction that will do nothing to fix border security.

SUPPORT FOR SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE RECIPIENT:

Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission called for people of good will to support the controversial awarding of this year's Sydney Peace Prize to Dr Hanan Ashrawi.

JESUIT SAYS TERRORISTS DON'T ARRIVE ON REFUGEE BOATS:

Lawyer and human rights advocate Fr Frank Brennan suggested it's not surprising that the Al Qaeda operative Willie Virgile Brigitte came to Australia on a tourist visa and not as a boat person.

LETTER REVEALS PELL CONCERN FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN:

A letter written to former Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock by now Cardinal George Pell in support of the two children of Iranian asylum seeker Sammaki-Hassan-Kiadeh.

- courtesy CathNews, detail at <http://www.cathnews.com/news/311>

DECEMBER SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

DECEMBER 1 WORLD AIDS DAY:

The AIDS epidemic is continually escalating. The disease exists in all corners of the world, but is by far most prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are an estimated 16 countries in Africa where more than one-tenth of the adult population aged between 15 and 49 years is infected with HIV. In Botswana 38.5% of adults are now affected and in South Africa the figure is 19.9% (increased from 12.9% two years ago.) In some areas the disease is being

successfully countered. In Uganda infection rates have dropped to 8% of the population, compared with close to 14% in the early 1990's.

DECEMBER 10 PAUL KEATING'S REDFERN ADDRESS:

"And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians.

"It begins, I think, with the act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion.

"It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me?

"As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.

"This is a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be - truly the land of the fair go and the better chance.

- Paul Keating, Prime Minister of Australia 1991-1996

DECEMBER 18 INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY

Reflection:

Around the globe today, millions of people are on the move - living or trying to live in countries not their own. In some cases, this movement is voluntary. People move across borders for work, education or family reasons. In many more cases, the migration is forced, as people flee civil unrest and war, or search for adequate agricultural land or employment simply for survival. In recent years, the displacement of people has accelerated. At the same time, the typical response to migrants and other displaced people has deteriorated from acceptance and assistance to hostility and rejection.

DECEMBER 28 NEPAL NATIONAL

DAY: The citizens of Nepal continue to suffer from low life expectancy, low literacy and living conditions that deny them dignity. In short, Nepal's levels of human development remain among the lowest in the world. Poverty perpetuates itself because of inequity and inequality in the distribution of resources and opportunities.

There are many ethnic groups in Nepal and the social structure is complex. Creating harmony has been a difficult challenge in Nepal and throughout the region. As a result of conflict and tension, certain groups have been excluded from political and economic power.

Caritas Australia works in partnership with Caritas Nepal, supporting programs to bring about positive change to the lives of the nation's poorest citizens. The projects throughout Nepal are aimed at building community leadership, creating awareness of basic education, health and sanitation, environmental and legal rights and conducting literacy classes among children, teenagers and adults, particularly for girls and women.

DECEMBER 25 CHRISTMAS DAY:

This Christmas, pray for the gift of a love that can include all who come your way and who share your life's journey.

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council Leo XIII House, 19 MacKenzie Street, North Sydney NSW 2060. Tel: (02) 9956 5811, Fax: (02) 9954 0056, Email: admin@acsjc.org.au Website: <http://socialjustice.catholic.org.au> ** ACSJC Briefing is sent by email at the beginning of each month (except January). To subscribe or unsubscribe, go to the front page of the website Comments and contributions are also welcome.