



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

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FROM THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Dear Friends,

The 2004 Social Justice Sunday Statement – Peace Be With You: Cultivating a Culture of Peace – was launched on Wednesday 22nd September. The ACSJC and its Secretariat are very grateful to Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales, for launching the statement.

We are also grateful to Rev. Professor Michael Tate AC, principal drafter of the statement, Dr Michael Costigan, Executive Secretary of the Bishops' Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace, and to Mr Graeme Mundine, Executive Secretary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Council, for their invaluable contributions to this event.

THE CHALLENGE TO CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF PEACE

The statement addresses issues of peace and conflict – both abroad and at home. Our world offers no shortage of examples of war, civil unrest, terrorism and famine. The shocking slaughter of children in Beslan, the Jakarta bombing, the crisis in Iraq and the unfolding disaster in Darfur are the latest dreadful examples. Even in Australia, where most people enjoy a peaceful existence that allows us to go about our lives without fear of violence, there are threats to the human dignity of vulnerable people.

At a time when world peace may seem unattainable, particularly in the face of monstrous injustice and crimes against humanity, the Church affirms that peace is not only possible, it is a duty!

IN THIS YEAR 2004

When launching the statement, Professor Bashir stressed how important it is that each person contributes to world peace. Reflecting on the challenges of our time, the Governor said, "Certainly in this year 2004, our world is wracked with the pain of war, with grave and continuing injustices, ecological devastation – and for countless millions – a miserable and impoverished existence.

"United Nations statistics remind us that ninety percent of those killed and wounded in armed conflict are civilians, and of the nearly fifty million who have been displaced around the world, eighty percent are women and children – in other words, forty million women and children.

"And appalling public health statistics around the world today cause many to despair. Yet despite this, it is a cruel fact that one aspect of a perverse combination of science, technology and economy, – the arms industry – has created 'the world's largest killer industry and the worst enemy of public health'".

The Governor spoke of the impact of the armaments industry on human life – particularly in developing countries. In considering the conditions necessary for peace, Her Excellency used the words of Susan Mubarak, wife of the President of Egypt: "Peace is not just about the absence of military conflicts... Peace is also the absence of poverty and illiteracy... about the eradication of all forms of violence and all violations of human rights, and the absence of all forms of gender-based discrimination against women."

The Governor said, "We yearn for such a peace, and upon each of us is a personal responsibility – indeed an obligation – to work actively towards peace on earth, peace in our nation, and peace in our home."

IN THE NAME OF PEACE

Bishop Christopher Saunders, Chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, drew on the symbolism of the Statement's artwork when considering the conditions necessary for lasting peace.

"The cover of this year's Statement reproduces a painting by Geraldine Gill, from Balgo in the Kimberley, my home Diocese. It is an image of the Pentecost event. Tongues of fire descend on the gathered disciples, lighting up the fire of Divine love in their hearts. The dove of peace, the Spirit of God, dominates the scene, preparing the followers of Christ for their Mission, sending them in his name, in the name of peace."

Highlighting the great challenges to peace he said, "The violence of today's world is laid out before us in a variety of ways. It comes to us through the misuse of authority, the abuse of trust, the ruthless exploitation of economic systems, through greed, selfishness, carelessness and often out of the barrel of a gun.

"And yet, as Christians, our response to these injustices has to be positive, enabling and forgiving – never destructive. The Gospel of Jesus Christ compels us to address and engage the enemies of peace, to build the culture of peace in every way possible.

"The Holy Father has reminded us, and I quote, that 'there is an unbreakable bond between the work of peace and respect for truth. Honesty in the supply of information, equity in legal systems, openness in democratic procedures give citizens a sense of security, a readiness to settle controversies by peaceful means, and a desire for genuine and constructive dialogue, all of which constitute the true premise of a lasting peace.'"

THE SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY TRADITION

Responding to the words of the Governor, Dr Michael Costigan reflected on the importance of Social Justice Sunday, saying, "annual social justice statements have been produced by or on behalf of the Australian Catholic Bishops in most of the years since 1940. The fifty-six statements published in that time to mark the yearly observance of Social Justice Sunday form an impressive body of written material about the Church's social teaching and its application to contemporary problems and issues in this country.

"While some of the statements might have lost relevance with the passage of time, I believe that by and large they form an enlightened and Gospel-inspired collection of commentaries on a wide range of justice issues.

"In so far as their themes have to do with justice, they necessarily relate closely to this year's very timely theme: Peace and the cultivating of a Culture of Peace. Justice and Peace are inseparable concepts. As the Popes and others have reminded us repeatedly, there can be no Peace without Justice and there is no Justice without Peace."

Dr Costigan said, "those who work for Justice can properly be called Peacemakers. In the Lord's words, they are Blessed, 'for they will be called children of God' (Matt:5,9)

THANK YOU

Thank you to all who have helped to raise awareness about Social Justice Sunday and the Bishops' Statement. The Statement and associated resources can be found on the ACSJC website at:

http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/documentation_sjs01.html

Now that we have celebrated Social Justice Sunday together, our work in addressing fostering peace in our homes, communities, our nation and in our world continues. Your further promotion of the Bishops' Statement and associated resources would be appreciated.

The Secretariat still has copies of the Statement for those who would like to place an order.

- John Ferguson (National Executive Officer)

LATEST PUBLICATIONS

(Orders Tel: 02 9956 5811 or download an order form from the ACSJC website: <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/CONTENT/PDF/TEMPLATE-ORDERFORM.pdf>)

2004 SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY STATEMENT & RESOURCES

Australian Catholic Bishops' Statement: Peace Be With You: Cultivating a Culture of Peace.

The ACSJC is continuing to take orders for the Statement. A free electronic version of the 2004 Statement available at:

http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/documentation/documentation_sjs01.html

Ecumenical Social Justice Sunday Kit: Security at All Costs? A Christian reflection on where to draw the line.

Ecumenical Kit produced by the Social Justice Network of the National Council of Churches, now available (cost: \$6.60 {plus postage: 1 copy \$1.45; 2-3 copies \$2.45})

Leaflet & Prayer Card: Ten Steps Towards Cultivating a Culture of Peace

Now available. Call (02) 9956 5811

Social Justice Sunday Statement Liturgy Notes & Teachers' Notes

(<http://www.acsjc.org.au/index.shtml>)

OCCASIONAL PAPER: THE TIMOR SEA'S OIL AND GAS: WHAT'S FAIR?

Catholic Social Justice Series No.51 – Fr Frank Brennan SJ considers the current negotiations between Australia and Timor-Leste concerning the resource sharing arrangements and maritime boundaries of the Timor Sea. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage) (postage rates listed below).

OCCASIONAL PAPER: THE CHURCH AND PUBLIC DEBATE

Catholic Social Justice Series no.50 – Prof. John Warhurst addresses the implications of the issue in the latest paper, The Church and Public Debate: Reflections on Speaking Out in an Election Year. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage).

OCCASIONAL PAPER: FROM ETHICS TO SPIRITUALITY

Catholic Social Justice Series no.49 – Fr Gerard Gleeson reflects on the links between philosophy, theology and Christian spirituality. (Cost \$6.60 plus postage).

2005 SOCIAL JUSTICE DIARY

The ACSJC is now taking orders for the 'Seasons of Social Justice' 2005 Social Justice Diary. The 2005 diary/calendar explores the Gospel challenge to live justly in today's society. A particular social justice theme is developed each month, providing a social justice program for the full year. \$6.60 each (incl. GST). Order now. Delivery by early November. (refer: http://www.acsjc.org.au/CONTENT/publications/social_justice_calendar.html)

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

CURRENT ISSUES

CARITAS AUSTRALIA'S SUDAN CRISIS APPEAL

Caritas is coordinating an emergency appeal and needs donations to assist people fleeing the campaign of violence in Sudan. Please phone 1800 024 413 to make a donation. For further details, refer:

<http://www.caritas.org.au/emergencies/sudan.htm>

PASTORAL LETTER: "LET THE MANY COASTLANDS BE GLAD!"

A beautifully presented booklet from the Queensland bishops on safeguarding the Great Barrier Reef and the waters of the South Pacific. Visit the website of Catholic EarthCare for further details. A donation of \$5 to cover costs and assist the work of Catholic Earthcare Australia is invited.

(<http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/resources.html#COASTLANDS>)

UNIYA BRIEFING PAPERS

Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre has just released two briefing papers on Burma and the Solomon Islands in its View on the Asia/Pacific Series. These briefings can be downloaded at:

http://www.uniya.org.au/research/asia_pacific.html

OCTOBER NOTICES

OCTOBER 1: PUBLIC LECTURE, "BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY CONTROL IN HEALTH:

Meeting the Challenge". Assoc. Prof. Cindy Shannon and Auntie Joan Hendriks will be hosting the 2004 Aquinas Memorial Lecture. 7.00pm, Main Auditorium (Building D), Brisbane Campus (McAuley at Banyo), 1100 Nudgee Road, Banyo, Qld. All welcome please RSVP to 07-3623 7278 or email

rsvp@mcauley.acu.edu.au (refer:

http://www.acu.edu.au/acu_national/News___Events_Calendar/Events.cfm)

OCTOBER 1: COMMUNITY FORUM, "THE PARRAMATTA ELECTORATE:

CAPITAL OF WESTERN SYDNEY?" This forum convened by PolMin will be addressed by political candidates considering higher education and salinity issues. 4.00 – 5.30pm, Mercy Convent, 6 Victoria Road, Nth Parramatta. All Welcome to attend. For more information

contact: Victoria Kearney on 0425267409

OCTOBER 2: SYMPOSIUM, "GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL! DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL FROM GUANTANAMO TO NAURU TO BAXTER TO ABU

GHRAIB". Liberty Victoria & Free Speech Victoria present this symposium that will be addressed by specialists in international law and human rights. 10.00am to 5.00pm, University of Melbourne Law School University Square, 185 Pelham Street, Carlton, Melbourne. Cost: Full - \$30.00 Concession - \$20.00. The Symposium is to be followed by the Liberty Victoria annual Missen Dinner at University House, Melbourne University at 7:30pm. Dinner: Full - \$80.00 Concession - \$70.00. For further info or to book contact Ph: (03) 9670 6422 (refer:

<http://www.libertyvictoria.org.au/index.asp>)

OCTOBER 2: FORUM, "SAVE MEDICARE ALLIANCE".

The Doctors Reform Society are inviting people to attend Day 1 of their National Conference at Balmain Hospital in Sydney. They are holding this forum on the weekend prior to the Federal Elections with the aim of getting Medicare into the media the week beginning 4th October. The Save Medicare Alliance can be contacted on (02) 9281 3588

OCTOBER 4: PUBLIC MEETING, "PICNIC FOR REFUGEES". RAR Central Coast & The Justice Project are organising a Public Meeting in Dobell on Australia's Treatment of Asylum Seekers. "Picnic for Refugees" followed by speakers from 3-5pm. Confirmed speakers include Julian Burnside QC, Aden Ridgeway, John Kaye, Klaas Woldring, Alanna Sherry, Merlin Luck. The venue will be in The Entrance which is about an hour & half north of Sydney. Waiting for confirmation of the venue. (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

OCTOBER 5: CONFERENCE, "CHANGING THE WAY GOVERNMENT WORKS NEW INTERESTS - NEW ARRANGEMENTS". This conference, to be hosted in Melbourne by the Department for Victorian Communities, will bring together national and international speakers from Government, business and community sectors to discuss different perspectives on the key themes most likely to influence change. For more information contact: Justin Kennedy, Conference Research Coordinator on Ph: 03 9208 3427. (refer: http://coss.net.au/events/acoss/1095045679_5088_20040913.jsp?subsite=acoss)

OCTOBER 5: PUBLIC LECTURE, "HISTORIES IN CONFLICT: PALESTINIAN AND JEWISH VOICES IN DIALOGUE". A panel discussion on the future of the Palestinian-Israeli relationship. 6:30 – 8.30pm, Charles Pearson Theatre, Education Resource Building, The University of Melbourne. (refer: <http://events.unimelb.edu.au/index.php?pageID=2>)

OCTOBER 7: SEMINAR, "UNFINISHED BUSINESS: JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION IN EAST TIMOR" Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies Lecturer and Postgraduate Coordinator Wendy Lambourne discusses the circumstances of Timor Leste. 12.30 – 2.00pm, CPACS Oval Office, Mackie Building K01, Arundel Street, Glebe, Sydney (across the footbridge over Parramatta Road from the main campus of the University of Sydney) (refer: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/seminars.htm>)

OCTOBER 10: EXHIBITION, "SHADOWLAND: THIS IS MY CASE". True stories of hope, dreams and survival told by refugees. A photographic Exhibition by Viv Mehes. Shadowlands combines photo narratives and personal fragments from refugees' journeys to offer a powerful statement of the dignity and resilience shown by six refugees living in Australia on Temporary Protection Visas. Admission free. Gabriel Gallery, Footscray Community Arts Centre, 45 Moreland St, Footscray, Melbourne. Call: (03) 9362 8888. (refer: <http://www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org/template.php3?area=news&content=noticeboard>)

OCTOBER 11: LAUNCH OF "THE GIFT OF WATER". A Statement from Catholic Earthcare Australia, endorsed by Bishops of the Murray to be launched on the Murray, Echuca Port, 52 Murray Esplanade Echuca, Victoria at 10.30am. Ph (02) 9956 5800 for further details. (refer: <http://www.catholicearthcareoz.net/events.html>)

OCTOBER 13 – 17: THEATRE PRODUCTION, "CMI (A CERTAIN MARITIME INCIDENT)". This production returns to Sydney, before moving on to Canberra. Wed to Sat 8.00pm, Sun 5.00pm, Sydney Performance Space, 199 Cleveland St, Redfern. Cost \$25/15. Bookings: (02) 9698 7235 or boxoffice@performancespace.com.au (refer: <http://www.performancespace.com.au/eventframe.php>)

OCTOBER 13 – 23: THEATRE PRODUCTION, "THROUGH THE WIRE". Written & Directed by Ros Horin, Through the Wire is a play about ordinary people thrown into extraordinary situations halfway round the world from their homes. Through the Wire is a story of people wanting a new life, but first having to endure restraint, persecution and long amounts of time simply not knowing what will happen next. Performed at The Studio, Sydney Opera House. Cost \$30 or \$22 for Chilout supporters. Bookings: (02) 9250 7777. (Refer: http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/sections/whats_on/boxoffice/event_details.asp?EventID=1205&sm=1&ss=1)

OCTOBER 14: PUBLIC LECTURE, "MULTILATERAL VS. BILATERAL: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE LIBERALISATION OF TRADE IN SERVICES". Mr Abdel-Hamid Mamdouh, Director of the Trade in Services division of the World Trade Organisation in Geneva, will discuss the current schedule for General Agreement on Trade in Services negotiations and the implications of the current wave on bilateral Free Trade Agreements on the state of the multilateral trading system. 6.30-7.30pm Yasuko Hiraoka Myer Room, Level 1, Sidney Myer Asia Centre. RSVP: To reserve a seat, send an email to: events@asialink.unimelb.edu.au with "Mamdouh" in the subject line. (refer: http://events.unimelb.edu.au/eventid_1226.html)

OCTOBER 15: EVENT, "ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE'S TRIVIA COMEDY NIGHT". A night of trivia and fun, hosted by Mick Molloy, with Robyn Butler and Alan Brough. All proceeds help continue the work of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre to support asylum seekers living in our community. 7.00pm - 11.30pm, Collingwood Town Hall, 140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford, Melbourne. \$50 pp/ \$40 concession. Bookings essential: Tables of 10 & 12. Phone: (03) 9499 6057. (refer: http://www.ajustaustralia.com/whats happening_events.php)

OCTOBER 16: WORKSHOP, "MEDIA KNOW HOW FOR ADVOCACY SOCIAL ACTION". Get the inside story from seasoned media experts on how to package your message for maximum newsworthiness - without compromising your cause. 9.30am – 4.30pm, RMIT City Campus, Room 61, Level 11, Building 8, 360 Swanston Street, Melbourne. Cost: Unfunded community groups \$20, Funded NGOs \$60. (refer: http://www.melbourne.indymedia.org/calendar/event_display_week.php?day=12&month=10&year=2004)

OCTOBER 17: CONCERT, "EXOTIC PIECES FOR FLUTE & HARP". Jane Rutter and Marjorie Maydwell will perform works by Bizet, Debussy, Ibert, Colin Brumby, Ross Edwards, Salzedo and Ravel. This event hosted by Uniya at Kin Coppal-Rose Bay Chapel in Sydney will start at 6.00pm. Drinks on the terrace from 4.45pm. Cost: \$60. Call (02) 9356 3888 for further details and to purchase tickets.

OCTOBER 17 – 22: CAMPAIGN, "ANTI-POVERTY WEEK". Anti-Poverty Week is an Australia-wide initiative that began several years ago and continues to grow. In 2004, Anti-Poverty Week begins on Sunday 17 October, which has been designated by the United Nations as Anti-Poverty Day. The National Facilitating Group for Anti-Poverty Week includes representatives from more than twenty major national organisations and social welfare services which are actively involved in efforts to reduce poverty and hardship in Australia and overseas. A full list of events for Anti-poverty Week can be found at the following address:
<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/events.html>

OCTOBER 18: LECTURE, "ERADICATION OF POVERTY FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES". Sir Gus Nossal AC CBE and A-G The Hon. Rob Hulls MP will address this gathering convened by Catholic Social Services Victoria. 7.00pm at Lecture Theatre, Cardinal Knox Centre, 383 Albert Street, East Melbourne (enter via Lansdowne St). Cost \$12.
Call (03) 9287 5566 for further details and to purchase tickets.

OCTOBER 19 – 23: THEATRE PRODUCTION, "CMI (A CERTAIN MARITIME INCIDENT)". 8.00pm daily, The Street Theatre, Cnr Childers St & University Ave, Canberra. Tickets: \$30/20. Call (02) 6247 1223 for bookings. (refer: <http://www.chilout.org/events/index.html>)

OCTOBER 20: PRESS CLUB ADDRESS, "AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ AND THE WAR ON TERROR". Address by Prof. Amin Saikal, Director of the Centre for Arab & Islamic studies, ANU. 12.00pm to 2.00pm, National Press Club, Canberra (refer: www.npc.org.au/speakers.htm)

OCTOBER 21: SEMINAR, "THE REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE" CPACS Administration Officer Iris Welders discusses the circumstances of the Solomons. 12.30 – 2.00pm, CPACS Oval Office, Mackie Building K01, Arundel Street, Glebe, Sydney (across the footbridge over Parramatta Road from the main campus of the University of Sydney) (refer: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/seminars.htm>)

OCTOBER 26: SEMINAR, "ECUMENISM AND THE CHURCH". An evening seminar commemorating the 40th anniversary of 3 principal documents of Vatican Council II: Unitatis Redintegratio, Lumen Gentium and Orientalium Ecclesiarum.
Speakers include Cardinal Cassidy and Fr Peter Joseph. (refer: <http://www.caec.com.au/events/index.html>)

OCTOBER 28 – 29: CONFERENCE, "FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE". ACOSS Congress 2004 will be held in Alice Springs at the Alice Springs Convention Centre. The conference aims to bring Indigenous policy and issues into the mainstream of the policy agenda as well as issues for marginalised and disadvantaged people to the forefront of economic and social policy. (refer: http://www.coss.net.au/events/acoss/1086306490_401_20040604.jsp)

NOVEMBER 3: LECTURE, "SYDNEY PEACE PRIZE LECTURE". Alan Cameron AM, Chair of the Sydney Peace Foundation, announced on 28 May that the Sydney Peace Prize jury has chosen the Indian novelist and human rights campaigner Arundhati Roy as the recipient of the 2004 Sydney Peace Prize. Ms Roy will deliver the City of Sydney Peace Prize Lecture in the Seymour Centre on 3 November 3rd and will receive the Peace Prize in a gala ceremony in Sydney on 4 November. For information contact: Marilyn Harris on (02) 9351 4468 spf@arts.usyd.edu.au (refer: <http://www.spf.arts.usyd.edu.au/news.html>)

(email news of your forthcoming social justice event by the last week of each month to: admin@acsjc.org.au)

SEPTEMBER NEWS MONITOR

EDMUND RICE CENTRE CLAIMS AT LEAST 35 REFUGEES SENT BACK TO DANGER: The Christian Brothers' Edmund Rice Centre for Social Justice claimed that Australia deported at least 35 rejected asylum seekers into dangerous situations, and needs to urgently reform its refugee protection system.

COLUMBAN CONDEMNS VATICAN CONFERENCE "DISGRACE": Renowned Irish environmental activist Fr Sean McDonagh labelled a Vatican conference on genetically modified foods "a disgrace" and "a sustained exercise in propaganda for GE seeds". UN Ambassador to the Holy See James Nicholson had attempted to persuade the Pontifical Academy of Sciences that genetically modified food is morally advantageous.

POPE SAYS TREAT PRISONERS WITH UNDERSTANDING: Pope John Paul II urged a group of officials and trainee Italian prison officers to follow the example of St Vincent de Paul in showing understanding of prisoners and demanding humane treatment.

POPE DENOUNCES 'IMBALANCE' OF WEALTH: Pope John Paul II denounced the "imbalance" between the world's rich and poor, applauding efforts to eliminate hunger including the recent UN initiative to increase funds for development.

EDMUND RICE CENTRE SUPPORTS MOTHER WHO FEARS SON WILL BE 'RECRUITED': A Melbourne mother from Sri Lanka fears her 16-year-old son will be forcibly taken and made to fight with the Tamil Tigers if the family is returned to Sri Lanka.

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT LAUNCHED: NSW Governor Professor Marie Bashir AC launched the Australian Catholic Bishops' annual Social Justice Sunday Statement in Sydney.

COMMISSION WARNS TECHNOLOGY THREATENS BIO INTEGRITY: In a new document on the created world, the International Theological Commission warned that science and technology now offer the dangerous ability to "alter man himself" and destroy the biological integrity of human beings.

POPE TELLS BANKS TO THINK BEYOND PROFIT MOTIVE: Pope John Paul II told an audience of bankers that they should be guided by the "higher values of human living", and not merely "pursuing higher profit".

CATHOLICS LOBBY SAYS GUANTANAMO REPORT SHOWS GOVT DENYING DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS: The Australian Political Ministry Network (PolMin) said that Australians "cannot claim to be defending democracy" while the policy of its government is denying certain essential rights of a democracy including freedom and protection from violence.

JESUIT PROVINCIAL RECEIVES HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD: Fr Mark Raper had his "30 year commitment to protect refugees' human rights" recognised, having been named the recipient of this year's annual human rights award from the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS WARN FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS HURT POOR: Citing possible harmful effects on the poor, Latin American bishops pledged to help grassroots groups have an effective voice in free trade agreements being promoted in the Western Hemisphere.

COMMISSION SUPPORTS ACTION ON INSURANCE CRISIS: Brisbane's Catholic Justice and Peace Commission is supporting the Day of Action organised by the Queensland Council of Social Service to lobby State and Federal Governments for action on the crisis in public liability insurance.

CATHOLIC WELFARE SAYS ALP TAX POLICY "GOES SOME WAY" TOWARDS POVERTY FIX: The Catholic Welfare Australia peak body welcomed Federal Election Campaign's renewed attention to the poor and disadvantaged, specifically the launch of the ALP Tax Policy.

VINNIES PAVES THE WAY FOR MORE FEMALE LEADERS: NSW/ACT St Vincent de Paul Society President John O'Neill expressed regret that "despite the fact that there are two females to every male involved in the good works of the Society, females are sorely under-represented in leadership roles".

JESUIT SAYS 100% OF REVENUE TO EAST TIMOR WOULD BE FAIR: Human rights lawyer Frank Brennan is arguing that the fairest outcome to the Timor Sea maritime boundary dispute would give East Timor 100% of the oil and gas revenue from projects north of a modified median line between Australia and East Timor.

SOUTH AFRICAN AIDS TOLL FORCING FUNERAL COSTS RETHINK: The money poor people spend on funerals is of growing concern to church leaders in South Africa, where the AIDS pandemic left many families burying two or three members a year.

POVERTY EMERGING AS MAJOR ELECTION ISSUE: Candidates in the 9 October Federal Election announced they would be invited by the Vote [1] No More Poverty campaign to attend local Public Forums across the nation, especially in marginal seats, to tell voters where they stand on poverty and inequality.

- courtesy Church Resources' CathNews, stories in detail at
<http://www.cathnews.com/news/409>

OCTOBER SOCIAL JUSTICE CALENDAR

OCTOBER 16 WORLD FOOD DAY

840 million human beings on our Earth remain chronically hungry, 799 million of them in the developing world. Millions of farmers in the developing world have seen their incomes drop below the poverty line over the last decade. A large number of these face starvation. They have often been displaced from their land as an effect of the importation of highly subsidized agricultural exports from the developed world. It is estimated that more than 36 million will die from hunger this year. 75% of people facing hunger live in rural areas. Over three-quarters of people living on less than \$2 per day are small farmers (around 900 million people worldwide). The majority are women.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RICE

Devoting a year to a commodity is an unprecedented step in United Nations history. Compelling factors contributed to this decision: the possibility of increasing numbers of people experiencing hunger and poverty, and escalating conflicts in the world.

Almost 3,000 million people share the culture, traditions and untapped potentials of rice. According to cultural traditions, farmers may compare a grain of rice to a "grain of gold", villagers may greet guests with specially prepared rice dishes, or rice may be perceived to be at the very heart of the culture. Wherever rice is grown, rice enters people's lives as a daily food, at religious festivals and wedding parties, in paintings and in songs.

Rice is a food, but more than a food. It is society, culture, politics, business, the beauty of the landscape, people in their communities. In short, rice is life.

For more information: www.fao.org/rice2004/

I ask the Christian communities, believers, and all men and women of good will to live and work increasingly in the service of the poor and the hungry, so that true reconciliation among individuals and peoples may come about. Participating actively in the joint and concerted struggle against poverty and hunger means taking part in setting up well-planned and resolute programs of action on behalf of justice and peace. May we be sustained in this effort by the invitation that the Bible addresses to every member of the human family: "If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness ... and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters fail not" (Isaiah 58:10-11).

- John Paul II, Message to United Nations for World Food Day 2003

OCTOBER 17 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Although the world has adequate food resources to feed the entire population, every week thousands of children die from malnutrition-related diseases before their first birthday, and thousands more suffer from stunted growth. Eight hundred million people die every year from hunger and malnutrition-related diseases.

Approximately 1.2 billion people struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. An estimated 840 million suffer the gnawing pain of hunger, and as many as 24,000 people, many of them children, die every day as a result. ... There is no time to lose if we are to reach the Millennium Development Goal -- agreed by all the world's countries -- of halving by 2015 the proportion of people who live on less than a dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. ... A world that is not advancing towards the Millennium Development Goals -- a world mired in the deprivation of hunger, the prevalence of disease and the despair of poverty -- will not be a world at peace. On this day, as we recall the link between poverty and hunger, let us also recall the link between development and peace. And in that spirit, let rich and poor alike rededicate themselves to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

- UN Sec. General, Kofi Annan, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2003

POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA

Australia has become one of the most unequal countries in the Western world, with high-income households averaging more than four times the spending power of equivalent low-income households. The gap in after-tax income between high and low-income households in Australia in the mid-1990s was the fourth highest of 21 Western countries surveyed, and was widening. In 1997-98, the top 10 per cent of families gained 26.8 per cent of all family incomes, whereas just 23.1 per cent went to those in the bottom 50 per cent.

For more information: www.bsl.org.au/ncapwebsite/

In Australia, there is an Anti-Poverty Week leading up to this International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. For more information: www.antipovertyweek.org.au

OCTOBER 24 FR AT THOMAS

Fr AT Thomas was murdered in the Hazaribagh District of the Indian state of Bihar. He was working with the dalits, an oppressed people, sometimes known as the "untouchables", supporting them in their struggle for land rights and setting up night schools so that their children, whose labour was needed during the day, could achieve basic literacy.

The Bihar population of around 88 million are mostly landless peasants and "dalits". With a low literacy ratio of 38%, they suffer from increasing human rights violations and extreme suppression, all forms of institutional injustice. Any legislation which challenges the privileged position of the landlord, such as fair wages, trade union membership, or protection from arbitrary eviction, is ignored. In some areas of Bihar, the daily wage is 4kg of rice; in Patna, Jehanabad and Gaya the wage is 2kg of rice; the low caste labourers or "dalits" may receive 1.3 kg of rice for every working day.

Each year, a pilgrimage to the banks of the river where AT's body was found, attracts an increasing number of dalits who celebrate the new life they have found and the man who paid such a price for their liberation.

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