

## **2008 Social Justice Sunday Statement – Summary**

### **A Rich Young Nation: The challenge of affluence and poverty in Australia**

Australia is a rich country in many ways. It has experienced spectacular economic growth and prosperity in recent years, and increasingly our international economic status has become a symbol of our national identity. Yet in Australia there are many who are wealthy, but live in spiritual poverty, and there are those who have been bypassed by the economic growth and live in material poverty.

The challenge that Jesus presented to the rich young man in the Gospel of Mark (10:17–22) is the same we face in Australia today. Will we use our great wealth for the benefit of all and particularly for those who have been denied the benefits of prosperity? Will we act on the challenge Jesus offers, or will we too go away shocked at the challenge before us?

The 2008 Social Justice Sunday Statement considers issues of materialism, consumerism and the overall affluence of our nation against the circumstances of vulnerable Australians who have been denied a fair share of Australia's prosperity.

In 1992, towards the end of the last global recession, the Catholic Bishops of Australia warned of higher levels of serious poverty, unemployment and homelessness, and of the emergence of an underclass of gravely disadvantaged people. Now, the Bishops are renewing that call for justice for those afflicted by poverty in our affluent society. Some who are particularly vulnerable include Indigenous families and communities, single-parent families, low-paid workers, refugees and people who are homeless.

It is important that together we face the reality of poverty in Australia and seek ways to address it, however difficult that may be at a personal or societal level. As individual citizens, as families, parishes and as local communities, we can take the initiative to reach out to our brothers and sisters in need and be enriched by what follows. For in welcoming the poor, the outcast and the stranger in need, we welcome the living Christ, our God and our Creator into our hearts and our lives.

The Statement includes some practical suggestions as to how people can be involved in the social justice and charitable works of the Church.

#### **Bulletin note**

The Bishops would welcome promotion of the Statement in the weeks leading up to Social Justice Sunday. A possible entry in your parish bulletin or newsletter could be:

*We celebrate Social Justice Sunday on 28 September. The subject of this year's Social Justice Sunday Statement, 'A Rich Young Nation', is the challenge of affluence and poverty in Australia.*

*Australia has experienced spectacular economic growth and prosperity in recent years, and increasingly our international economic status has become a symbol of our national identity. Yet in Australia there are many who are wealthy, but live in spiritual poverty, and there are those who have been bypassed by the economic growth and live in material poverty.*

*For further details about the Catholic Bishops' Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website ([www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au)) or call (02) 8306 3499.*

#### **Associated resources**

The ACSJC website ([www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au)) will have the following resources available for download free of charge well before Social Justice Sunday:

- Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes
- Teachers' Resources.

Prayer Cards and 'Ten Steps' leaflets can be ordered from the ACSJC on (02) 8306 3499 or by email: [admin@acsjc.org.au](mailto:admin@acsjc.org.au)