

Summary

Lazarus at Our Gate: A critical moment in the fight against world poverty

The Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2013–2014 calls on the Christian community and all Australians to stand in solidarity with our neighbours around the world who are living in conditions of extreme poverty.

The title of the Statement comes from the Gospel reading for Social Justice Sunday this year – Jesus' parable about the poor man, Lazarus, who lies unnoticed at the gate of the rich man (Luke 16:19–31).

In 2000, the world leaders of 189 nations, including Australia, gathered together and committed themselves to tackling global poverty. Their Declaration gave rise to eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. While great progress has been made over the past decade, many of these goals will not be fulfilled: Around the world, a quarter of a million women still die in childbirth each year and eight million children die annually from malnutrition and preventable diseases. One billion people remain in extreme poverty and 20 per cent of the poorest in the world live in countries near Australia.

'In our region', the Bishops say, 'Australia is the rich man and Lazarus is at our gate.'

Five groups in particular need our support. They are: people who face severe hunger; people who are victims of disaster; Indigenous peoples; people with disability; and refugees and displaced people. The circumstances they face remind us of our obligation to help the world's poorest and to work to combat poverty wherever it is found.

It is time to renew our commitment to address world poverty – a commitment inspired by the mission of Jesus in his Incarnation and in his gift of the Eucharist. Pope Francis has reminded us of our vocation: 'Fighting poverty, both material and spiritual, building peace and constructing bridges'.

What will we do, as individuals and as a nation, to help the most needy who sit at our gate?

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 29 September. This year's Social Justice Statement is titled: 'Lazarus at our Gate: A critical moment in the fight against world poverty'.

The Statement urges all Australians to focus on our obligation to help the world's poorest and to work to combat poverty wherever it is found. Although progress has been made over the past decade in the fight against extreme poverty, one billion people still live on less than \$1.25 per day, and 20 per cent of the world's poor live in countries near Australia.

For further details about the Social Justice Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) or call (02) 8306 3499.

Associated resources

The ACSJC website (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) will have resources available for download free of charge before Social Justice Sunday. They will include Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes, a PowerPoint presentation and resources for schools and social justice groups.

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