



Justice News

Newsletter of the Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee

Issue 40

October 2008

A Rich Young Nation

The challenge of affluence and poverty in Australia

A summary of the Catholic Bishops' 2008 Social Justice Sunday Statement

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.

Social Justice Sunday was observed on 28 September. The full text of the Bishops' Statement is available on the website of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (www.acsjc.org.au).

On any social measure of health and well-being, Indigenous people, my people, are hugely over-represented at the wrong end of the scale.

No matter whether you look at life expectancy, health profiles, custody figures, educational outcomes, unemployment, substance abuse, domestic violence, suicide – you name it – the trend is the same.

– *Lowitja O'Donoghue*



12 to 18 October

Inside this issue:

Our Co-ordinator steps down	2
Triumph Fest	3
Timor Leste Reflection	3
Voice of Interfaith	4
East Timor Dinner	4
Anti-Poverty week	4
What it means to be poor	4

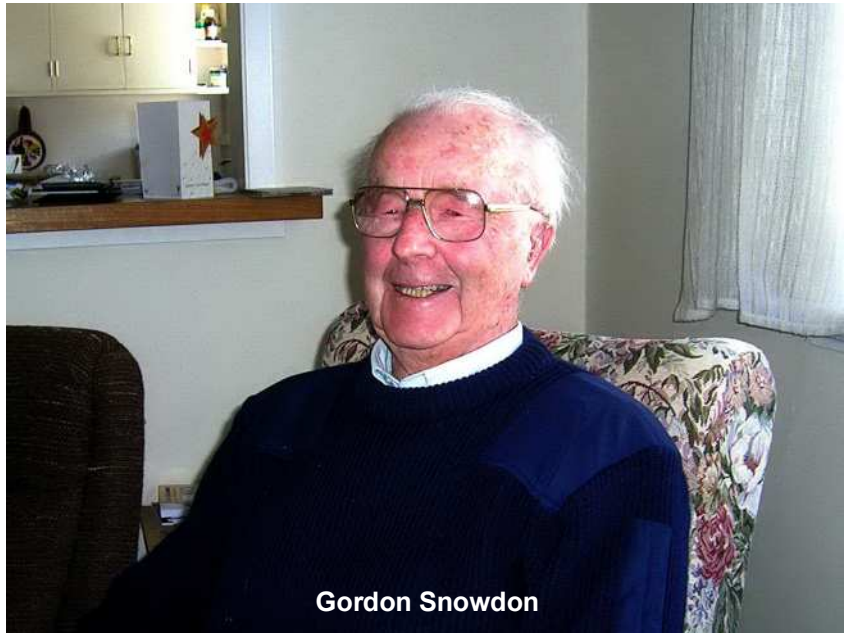
Outstanding commitment to Justice

The Social Justice Committee's Co-ordinator of 25 years steps down

The Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee regrets to announce the resignation of its Co-ordinator of the past 25 years, Gordon Snowdon. Gordon, one of the founding members of the Committee, has carried out this crucial role of Co-ordinator for all these years with extraordinary generosity, energy and commitment. Strongly dedicated to the central message of the Gospels, as set forth in **St Luke 4: 16-20**, Gordon has generously dedicated most of his life to sharing the Good News with the poor, and striving to set the downtrodden free from the shackles of injustice and exploitation. His passion for justice is indeed legendary.

His enthusiastic leadership and crystal clear understanding of the social justice teaching of the Church has inspired and encouraged the members of the Committee over all these years; to the extent that it plays a very significant role in the life of the Geelong Catholic Deanery.

Some years ago Gordon's contribution to the wider community was recognised by the Australian Government when it awarded him one of the Centenary of Federation Medals for significant community service.



Gordon Snowdon

Very happily for us Gordon is remaining an active member of the Committee, where his presence, wisdom and guidance will continue to inspire us to fulfil the Charter that we have undertaken.

So we thank Gordon for his truly outstanding dedication to the mission of the Church here in Geelong and beyond, and as he passes on the baton, we pray that God will reward Gordon abundantly with His grace, peace and love.

Meanwhile the Committee is involved in the demanding task of appointing a new Co-ordinator. We will most likely need three people to take on the role!

Proclaiming the Good News

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

Luke 4: 16-20

Triumph Fest

Tri schools - United in Making poverty History - September 1 2008

The Triumph Fest held at St Joseph's College was indeed a triumph. It was a great day as 3500 young people gathered to enjoy each other's company whilst being made aware of three important issues: the Environment, Global Poverty and Indigenous Australian Poverty.



The event was the idea of the student leadership groups, from past and present years, and was organised almost solely by them. It provided a great opportunity to strengthen bonds within the community, in particular between the three city Catholic Colleges of St Joseph's, Sacred Heart and Clonard, in the pursuit of justice.

The major use of the monies raised will be to support East Timorese children in their education

A Reflection on Timor Leste

by Cr Barbara Abley

As the City of Greater Geelong's representatives, Paul Jamieson, Manager Community Development, and I visited Timor-Leste to spend some time in our sister District of Viqueque, and attend a Local Government Conference, "Strengthening Communities through International Friendship".

It was important for Council to meet officially with the District Administrator of Viqueque and his team, formalise plans to commence the rehabilitation of the Town Square, meet with Christian College "staff" at the Friendship House, and inspect improvements such as the newly built small Hospital and schools many of which are supported by several Geelong community groups and individuals.

The second phase of our visit was to attend the conference convened by President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, together with the Republic's Cabinet Ministers, and Victorian Government representative Rob Hudson MP. More than 40 other Australian Local Governments were represented.

We arrived in the capital, Dili early on the 14th June, picked up an older 4WD, stocked up on water and provisions and started the 6-hour drive to Viqueque – a journey of a mere 190kls approx. The appalling conditions of the road haven't improved in the 6 years since my first visit, although several new bridges have been installed to replace those demolished in the period of Indonesian incursions in the late 1990's early 2000. The road to Viqueque traverses some of the highest mountain ranges in the country which form the spine of the landmass.

In the current situation many young people are unemployed because they lack an education (Literacy levels are rated at 43%, with only 75% of Timorese children able to attend primary school. Secondary Colleges are slowly and gradually being established. UNICEF reports that 60% of the population of Timor-Leste is under 18 years, and 45% of young urban men are unemployed). The Government currently lacks the capacity to assist every village in the country, especially one so isolated as Viqueque. The country faces severe capacity constraints and many civil and governmental institutions are still in the early stages of development. What was so encouraging for Paul and I was that the work and commitment of the City of Greater Geelong and its constituent partners is highly valued by the people of Viqueque, Timor-Leste.

June 2008

Voice of Interfaith

The **Geelong Interfaith Network** has begun to broadcast a monthly program on Community Radio, 94.7, **The Pulse**. It can be heard on the last Thursday of each month, from 3.30 to 4.00pm and each month a different faith community presents a program highlighting various aspects of their faith traditions and practices. In this way the Network hopes to inform the wider community of its presence, and its commitment to encourage and develop a spirit of mutual respect, trust and understanding between the diverse faith communities and traditions within Geelong. At the same time, the Network offers to the City of Greater Geelong its united commitment to live and work together in peaceful cooperation for the well being of the whole community. Upcoming programs can be heard on **30 October, 27 November and 25 December, from 3.30 to 4.00pm**. The Network is greatly indebted to The Pulse and its Manager, Gary Dalton, for their generosity in making the program possible.



Geelong-Viqueque Friendship Schools Inc is working to assist and support schools in the District of Viqueque in Timor Leste that are linked with schools in the Geelong area, and is committed to contributing financially to the employment of an East Timorese School Support Officer. To help raise these funds, you are invited to "**A Glimpse of East Timor**", which promises to be an evening of delightful food with some interesting insights into work being done to help the people of Timor Leste.

A Glimpse of East Timor

Davidson Restaurant -Gordon Institute

Thursday 30 October

6.00 for 6.30 pm

Patrice Hall: Life in the District of Viqueque

Kyle Jackson-Brown, St John of God Pathology: Health Projects in East Timor

Cr Barbara Abley: Australia East Timor Local Government Relationships

Sophie McIntosh: Geelong Schools and Australia East Timor Friendship Schools Project

Tickets available from Rosemary Nugent 5221 7395, or Patrice Hall 52441467.
Cost \$ 50 all inclusive (Three course meal plus drinks)

To be poor means

To have inadequate access to resources and services
To be unable to do certain tasks that are essential for fulfilling one's human potential and carrying out one's social responsibilities
To be shunned, denigrated, blamed, patronised and ostracised by others
To have little opportunity to participate in decisions affecting one's life
To be, and to feel, powerless, excluded, marginalised, effectively, to live 'in exile' in one's own society.
This is at least as damaging to human dignity as the actual inability to purchase certain goods and services.
From the Bishops' 1996 Social Justice Statement

Anti-Poverty Week - October 12-18, 2008

The aim of the week is to strengthen public understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship; and to encourage research, discussion and action to address these problems.

Visit the Anti-Poverty Week website at www.antipovertyweek.org.au for more information. The website provides a place where people who are interested in the Week can:

- find out about activities being held during the Week.
- find out ways of joining in the Week
- access resources about issues of poverty and hardship
- get information about useful contacts.

Earlier issues of *Justice News* and further information about the Social Justice Committee are available on the website of the Justice Unit of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

<http://www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/ccjdp/geelongdeanery.htm>

Justice News is a publication of the Geelong Catholic Social Justice Committee, a Committee of the Geelong Catholic Deanery c/- St Mary's Parish Office, 150 Yarra Street, Geelong 3220.