



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we live. We acknowledge their deep spiritual connections to this land and we thank them for the care they have shown to Earth over thousands of years.

Inside this issue:

<i>Pope Francis speaks of the Call to Care for Creation</i>	1
<i>Earth Hour</i>	1
<i>The Cry of the Poor and of the Earth</i>	2-3
<i>Remote Communities</i>	4
<i>Faith Bandler</i>	4

This is the Easter message, that awakening is possible, to the goodness of God, the sacredness of human life, the sisterhood and brotherhood of all. *Anne Lamott*

As Lent draws us towards Easter, we invite you to reflect on the call and the challenges that face us individually and as part of the community of creation.

Peta Anne Molloy, Anne Shay

Catholics are called to care for creation not only as responsible citizens but as followers of Christ

As the new Universe Story seeps into our awareness, it challenges us to expand the way we think about and respond to the life around us. Awe, wonder - radical amazement - is the response as we encounter the Mystery that is everywhere around us. Nothing less is appropriate or possible than a radical amazement that brings us to shout or whisper "Oh my, God!"

Judy Cannato

In the ABC program *Religion and Ethics*, Clive Hamilton, professor of Public Ethics at Charles Sturt University Canberra, outlined his expectations of the "ecological encyclical" Pope Francis will publish this year:

Francis's starting point is always solidarity with the poor. If we examine his various statements on the environment, we find he consistently links ecological decline to the impoverishment of the poor and vulnerable, sometimes referring to the destruction of South American forests as an example.

For Francis, environmental preservation is linked directly to Catholic Social Teaching (CST), a link that makes his position less vulnerable to criticism from conservatives.

Certainly, as the scientific evidence has mounted, the fundamental principles of CST - solidarity with the poor and vulnerable; the protection of the life and dignity of the human person - demand that the Church take a stronger position on the harms from anthropogenic climate change, which promises to visit widespread and long-lasting suffering on

the world's poorest. There can be no economic justice without environmental justice.

God does more than overlook His Creation; He revealed Himself in it from the outset and shines forth from it - that is why one can experience God directly and overwhelmingly in nature, as many Christians have attested.

On several occasions, Pope Francis has spoken of the contrast between the way humans are greedily exploiting the environment and the imperative for us to act towards it responsibly - that is, in a way that protects the interests of the poor and future generations and respects the integrity of the natural world as a whole.

Environmental protection becomes not a self-interested act nor even a moral duty, but a divine calling.

Degrading the Earth is, he declares, a sin:

"This is our sin, exploiting the Earth and not allowing her to give us what she has within her."

cf Clive Hamilton Religion & Ethics 3/3/15

Earth Hour



Saturday 28 March

8.30 - 9.30 pm

Switch off the lights and the power! Take time to :

- Be amazed!**
- Be filled with reverence!**
- Contemplate!**
- Be entranced by the wonder of the Universe!**

Mary Southard CSJ

The Cry of the Poor

The Forgotten Children Report

Joint statement signed by more than 200 groups

The report of the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention provides compelling evidence of the need for Australia to cease the detention of children once and for all.

After the Commission's 2004 report into the detention of children, the Australian Government pledged that children would be detained only as a last resort.

We urge the Australian Parliament to:

1. Introduce legislation to prevent children from being detained for immigration purposes in the future.
2. End the offshore processing of asylum claims and return all asylum seekers currently subject to offshore processing to Australia, prioritising children and their families.
3. Refer allegations of child sexual abuse in Australian-funded detention centres to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

We have comprehensive, consistent and irrefutable evidence of the harm caused by prolonged indefinite detention. We have practical, humane and effective solutions at our disposal.

It's time to end the detention of children once and for all.

It's time to stand up and say: *never again*.

This Joint Statement was co-ordinated by the Refugee Council of Australia.

Presentation Sisters Lismore, Queensland and Wagga Wagga joined with more than 200 Australian organisations and community groups to sign this statement. You can read the statement and signatures at:

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Joint-statement-end-detention-of-children.pdf>

The Cry of the Earth

Wagga Wagga Sister receives award

On Sunday February 22 the Combined Rotary Clubs of Wagga Wagga honoured people within the community who live by a credo of peace. The awards recognise those people, the quiet achievers, who exemplify Rotary's Peace Communities Program credo. The credo is based on respect for cultural diversity and life and dignity for every person without discrimination or prejudice.



At this ceremony Carmel Wallis received the Wollundry Rotary Club Award.

Following is an excerpt from the citation:

Carmel Wallis is a well-known and respected member of the Wagga Wagga community through her involvement in ErinEarth, which has been a valuable community resource for nearly a decade.

'Sister Carmel educates residents and school children in the wonder of our universe and our place in it, she embraces all members of the community to become a part of the ErinEarth story, mentors and comforts those undergoing hardship and inspires all who meet her to work harder for the protection and conservation of the natural environment. One of Sister Carmel's great passions is linking environmental sustainability with spirituality.

ErinEarth is a sustainable house and garden established in Mt Erin Convent grounds in Wagga Wagga.

Ann McRae pbvm Wagga Wagga

The Cry of the Poor

Reflections of eminent Australians

If the Australian government worked with our regional neighbours and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to process people humanely in offshore detention centres in Malaysia or Indonesia, then there would be no market for people smugglers. Refugees would be flown to their final destination. This is not supposition or hearsay. This was the policy model adopted during the exodus of refugees fleeing Indochina following the Vietnam War. It would work again.

Malcolm Fraser Press Release 11/2/15

But apart from Mr Abbott's lies and bullying, there is another point about his "Stop the boats" rhetoric. The harsh treatment of people in offshore detention amounts simply to this: Because we are concerned about people drowning, we punish the survivors. And now the UN has pointed out that our treatment of the survivors constitutes torture, contrary to our solemn promise made when we signed the Torture Convention 30 years ago.

Julian Burnside *The Age* 10/3/15

In the future, when historians try to comprehend Australia's shocking asylum seeker detention policy, they won't be able to say, "most people didn't know what was going on".

They won't be able to say it because it simply isn't true. Is there a single Australian who doesn't know about the impact on mental health of life in our detention centres? Does anyone not realise we have been deliberately demonising and dehumanising asylum seekers who have fled their homeland, at great

personal risk, in those notorious boats? Could anyone be ignorant of the findings of the Human Rights Commission's report into the damage we are doing to children in detention?

We rise up - as we should - when Indonesia threatens to execute Australian drug traffickers. But where is our rage, our shame, in the face of a policy that, for many asylum seekers, will amount to a kind of slow death?

For any government with a black hole like this one at its moral heart, other moral lapses become correspondingly easier. For example, once you have implemented a policy that hits desperate refugees where it hurts most, denying them identity, dignity, freedom and hope, it becomes easier to be tough on your own poor, elderly, unemployed and marginalised.

Governments that fail to provide moral leadership will inevitably lose their moral authority. And that's a loss that diminishes us all.

Hugh Mackay *The Drum* 19/2/15

Hearing the cry of the Earth...

... and the cry of the poor



Frackman the movie tells the story of Dayne Pratzky and his efforts to halt the **Halliburton** Company's destruction of land and the pollution of water by CSG mining. This has been occurring in the Tara gasfields, on the Darling Downs, Queensland. The movie shows how the pollution of the air, soil and water in Tara impacts negatively on the poor farmers in that area.

The campaign, running alongside the film screenings shows how to change electricity suppliers and how to move from banks and superannuation companies investing in CSG to those that don't support the industry.

Find out more at www.getup.org.au/BetterPowerNSW

ACRATH Conference

ACRATH members who gathered in Melbourne for their National Conference took time to celebrate the work of ACRATH over the last ten years.

ACRATH is now active in most states and territories of Australia and has a number of international connections. The atmosphere at the conference indicates that today's members are fired with compassion for those who are trafficked and with a determination to work against this modern day form of slavery.

Many Presentation Sisters have been active members of ACRATH over the years. Lucy Van Kessel and Joan Kennedy were present at this year's Conference.



Remote Communities aren't a utopian lifestyle but they are good for our people



In referring to funding cuts to remote communities in Western Australia, Prime Minister Tony Abbott said: **"What we can't do is endlessly fund lifestyle choices that are not conducive to full participation in Australian society."**

In response Joe Morrison wrote:

Aborigines live in outstations to give their families a better chance of survival. Real connection to country is not only culturally sustaining, it's good for people.

A visitor to remote communities would see healthier families living out there, nourished by their culture and with a commitment to caring for their country – families who don't want to move to communities where services are run down, where housing is decrepit and grossly overcrowded, and where alcohol and other drugs are wreaking immense damage.

Those outstation residents have not opted for "lifestyle choices"; they have opted for survival.

Government funding of outstations has been under threat for some years now. Outstations in the Northern Territory receive only token financial support. That has been justified by policies which purport to prefer funding for larger, "hub" communities. But those larger communities are neglected, too. No wonder that Aboriginal people prefer their outstations.

It would be a social disaster, an awful abuse of basic human rights if governments abandoned their even meagre support of outstations.

It would be a strategic folly, too. **From outstations, much good work is done to monitor and care for some of the most fragile and pristine landscapes on the planet. Aboriginal people out there are the front line of environmental protection, biosecurity, and, sometimes, border protection.**

Then there's the right of Aboriginal people to maintain connection to their country. They have to prove that connection when they make a native title claim. If the result of government policy is to cause these people to move from their country, basic legal rights will be damaged.

These outstation residents are alert to current events. They know that governments highly "subsidise" those who live in big cities.

These remote Aboriginal Australians have enough to worry about, because life's hard out there and looking at the recent funding cuts, only going to get tougher.

Joe Morrison is chief executive of the Northern Land Council and is of Dagoman and Torres Strait Islander descent.

SMH 11/3/15

Fearless advocate for justice: Faith Bandler 1918 - 2015



Faith Bandler was born Ida Lessing Mussing on a banana farm in northern New South Wales in 1918. Ms Bandler's father, Wacvie Mussingkon, had been kidnapped from one of the islands in Vanuatu, and brought to Australia to work as a slave labourer in the Queensland cane fields. He died when she was only five, but he had taught his children to be independent.

Faith shared her family's interest in politics and followed the civil rights struggle in the United States.

After the Second World War she worked in Sydney where she continued her interest in

politics and met people of the Left, including Dame Mary Gilmore. As a delegate to the Australian Peace Congress in 1950, Faith came under the influence of Jessie Street, who worked to have the rights of women included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Jessie was an executive member of the World Peace Council.

In 1952 Faith married an Austrian Jew, Hans Bandler. Hans had spent time in concentration camps in Dachau and Buchenwald.

Faith's greatest achievement was her 10-year campaign for Aboriginal rights leading to the 1967 referendum which changed the Constitution and included Aborigines in the census.

She also worked for Aboriginal education and housing, was a founding member of the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Australian Republican Movement. She campaigned for the rights of South Sea Islanders and wrote six books, including *Wacvie* (1977), a biographical novel about her father.

John Faulkner's words, spoken at her State Funeral earlier this year, capture an image of Faith Bandler AC:

"Her ability to reach across boundaries of race, class, politics and opinion in the pursuit of her great aims was at the heart of her successes. Her life stands as a testament to how much one person can do to change the country they live in and the world they leave behind."

Su-Lin Tan *The Age* 14/2/15

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