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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land in 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.

You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it. Atticus Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee

The advice of Atticus is, in truth, an impossible task.

In this newsletter each of us is invited to try to 'climb inside the skin of another person.

As we share the pain, let us hold each person in prayer.

Anne Shay, Peta Anne Molloy

Hundreds Farewell Tamil Asylum Seeker

Why 71% of Australians want the boats pushed back

They have not met people who seek protection and they have not shared their food.

They have not known of the gifts these people bring and could share for our benefit.

They have not seen shoulders straight and eyes bright shortly after they completed the most momentous and dangerous journeys, and the same eyes opaque and body slack with depression after years in detention.

They have never held photos of the women and children in ruined villages and camps, whom their husband and father may never hold or help again.

They have never sat with young men in community detention in fear of their 18th birthday when they are liable to be sent back into detention centres.

They have not tasted the terrors of Manus Island.

cf A. Hamilton Eureka Street

Leo was born in the north-east of Sri Lanka in the midst of a civil war. His family were farmers. During the worst of the bombings, his father wrapped baby Leo in banana leaves and hid him in the jungle.



When Leo was five, his family fled to a refugee camp in India. He described life there as "always cold, always hungry". After more than 20 years he visited Sri Lanka once to see family, but was imprisoned and tortured for a short time before returning to the camp. He eventually travelled by boat to Darwin. After four months of detention, he then settled in the Geelong suburb of Belmont.

Leo joined the Tamil community and he developed deep friendships in the local churches. He found a part-time job two days a week and volunteered in an aged care home.

He gave blood regularly. He sent money every month to an orphanage in the Indian refugee camp where his parents remain.

Despite the help of friends, doctors and counsellors, he continued to experience fear and panic at the thought of being sent home. Recently Leo learnt that two men in a very similar situation had been taken back into detention. He also knew that more than 1000 Tamils have been returned to Sri Lanka, where they face persecution.

Leo took his life in May, pouring petrol over his body and setting himself on fire.

"Such is the terror of being sent back," said a friend. "They know they will be picked up within days. They're totally vulnerable. People can cope with many things that are painful. But if you take away their hope, you virtually wipe their soul."

Leo was an organ donor, and in his death he has given one lung and one eye, his kidneys and liver, to Australians who need them. K. Marshall *The Age* 3/6/14

Leo's parents, living in India, were not granted temporary visas to attend the funeral service.

The family had to wait to watch a video recording of the ceremony that was sent to them afterwards.



Pope Francis is creating a seismic shift in how the Catholic Church talks about climate change. Francis is planning an entire encyclical on environmental questions, which is expected to be released later this year. It is not difficult to predict that climate change will be on top of his agenda.

This will be a timely intervention by the Pope as Australia is rapidly retreating from its small gains in carbon pollution reduction.

N.Ormerod *Eureka Street* 5/6/14

There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

Elie Wiesel

Then God formed the man and woman from the dust of the ground and blew into their nostrils the breath of life, and they became living beings. *Gen 2:7*

Since the beginning of time, the air we breathe is given to us as a free and ever-present gift from God. Unlike food and water, which is often too scarce for the poorest of the poor, no one can hoard, process, package or sell oxygen. Unfortunately, due to humanity's carelessness, the breath of life is now the kiss of death for seven million people a year.

Megan Fincher *Eco Catholic* 5/3/14

Earlier this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its latest report upon the impacts of global warming, highlighting the harmful impact of climate change upon public health, well-being, and even the survival of the human race. In this report, the chapter on "human security" explicitly states that the world is currently not prepared to deal with the security risks associated with a warming world. The authors commented that we are already seeing water and food insecurity, with all aspects of food insecurity set to worsen. Other threats outlined in the report include an increased likelihood of conflict, higher levels of population movement and displacement and damage to infrastructure.

A Security Issue

Vulnerable Australian populations are clearly threatened at the level of human security. This threat will be direct in the form of sea-level rises, health effects and natural disasters.

But there will also be acute indirect threats in economic terms, through declining agricultural yields, threats to the tourism industry and the costs of natural disasters.

Climate change can also contribute to conflict and the destabilising effects of

population movements — the latter will be most relevant to Australia.

This reflects our geographical location and the likelihood of displacement for populations of low-lying island states in the Pacific.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Write to your Federal member and state Senators, urging a strong commitment to action on climate change.

You may wish to use some of the information from this article.

The report indicates that the current Australian Government needs to:

- **make a national commitment to strong action on climate change.**
- **make a strong financial commitment to aiding states in the region to adapt to impacts of climate change effectively.**

M.McDonand, A.Croucher *The Conversation* 2/4/14

Exploitation of the Earth ...

Pope Francis on Care of Earth

After their historical meeting in Jerusalem, marking the 50th anniversary of the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras, **Pope Francis and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew** made this joint statement:

We acknowledge in repentance the wrongful mistreatment of our planet, which is tantamount to sin before the eyes of God.

We reaffirm our responsibility and obligation to foster a sense of humility and moderation so that all may feel the need to respect creation and to safeguard it with care.

Together, we pledge our commitment to raising awareness about the stewardship of creation; we appeal to all people of goodwill to consider ways of living less wastefully and more frugally, manifesting less greed and more generosity for the protection of God's world and the benefit of God's people.

Climate - A Human Rights Issue

... and of Peoples

Lives at Risk



A move to radically reduce the threshold for deciding to send asylum seekers back to possible danger will violate rights and endanger lives, leading refugee lawyer David Manne has warned.

Under sweeping changes recently introduced to Federal Parliament, those whose protection claims are rejected face return to their country unless it is decided they are "more likely than not" to suffer significant harm.

Immigration Minister Scott Morrison says the existing threshold, under which they are not returned if there is a "real chance" of them suffering harm, means they can stay as this risk is "as low as 10 per cent".

The Minister stated that the new "more likely than not" test would mean there would have to be a "greater than 50 per cent chance" of a person suffering significant harm for them not to be returned.

The change, covering those seeking protection under international treaties against torture and on civil and political rights, was one of many to toughen the process for seeking asylum.

David Manne said this proposed legislation was contrary to accepted practice and could carry grave consequences and "ultimately risk the lives of many".

S. Whyte, M. Gordon smh 26/6/14

Prayer and Witness at Detention Centres



Suzette Clark rsc from CRA Justice Network, invited Australian religious to stand and pray outside a detention centre during the first week in June. This was a symbolic action showing that the Catholic Religious of Australia lament the treatment of people seeking asylum in Australia and are standing in solidarity with these people, their sisters and brothers.

Around Australia, Presentation People joined with other religious men and women to pray for all people who seek asylum and refuge, and to lament the indifference and lack of compassion of many Australians. We prayed for a change of heart among Australian people.

Victorians Walk for Justice for Refugees, on 'World Refugee Day'

On 22 June eight Presentation Sisters joined in the Walk for Justice for Refugees through the streets of Melbourne. People of all ages gathered in large numbers for the rally. The banners showed that many church groups were present, voicing their objection to the unjust treatment of the people seeking asylum in Australia. Among the excellent speakers were Sr Brigid Arthur csb and Anna Burke MP (past pupil of Victorian Presentations).



Prayer

A large crowd gathered in St Stephen's Cathedral on 20 June when the Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese led an Ecumenical prayer service. We prayed God to move the hearts of all Australians, including our national leaders, so that asylum seekers and refugees will be treated with dignity, compassion and justice.

Action

End offshore processing. Respect refugee rights

This was the theme of the Brisbane World Refugee Day Rally held on 21 June. The Brisbane Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, the Anglican Church and the Uniting Church were among the rally's supporters. Speakers included Murray Watt, lawyer representing baby Ferouz, born in the Brisbane Mater Mothers' hospital, but declared to be an "illegal maritime arrival"!

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- * Pray - Walk 'inside their skin'
- * Talk about refugees to another person each week
- * Write a letter to a politician, to the newspaper editor
- * Donate to a Refugee Support Group

We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history.

Sonya Johnson

*We are all visitors to this time, this place. We are just passing through.
Our purpose here is to observe, to learn, to grow, to love...
and then we return home.*

Aboriginal Proverb



Grinding the Face of the Poor

Dr John Falzon, CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society, Australia, criticises the 2014 Federal Budget for its impact on the poor.

What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?' Isaiah 3:15

The 2014 Federal Budget was one of most vicious attacks on ordinary people that we have seen in recent Australian history. We are not in the throes of a fiscal crisis but if we embark on this treacherous path of US-style austerity we will be staring down the barrel of a social crisis.

We will be facing a social crisis if the people who bear the burden of inequality, especially the people who are forced into poverty and even homelessness, are made to pay so that the generous tax concessions enjoyed by the wealthy are preserved.

We will be facing a social crisis if the Government seeks to grind down people's lives, humiliating them and hurting them instead of helping them.

But make no mistake. In the face of the social crisis we have a secret weapon. It is called solidarity. And don't worry. It remains a secret weapon even though we name it openly and proudly.

It remains a secret weapon because those who do not practise it can never understand it.

Solidarity is growing strong. It is being taught by the experts; by the people who suffer most from the toxic fruits of poverty and inequality, from the First Peoples of Australia to the most recent arrivals who seek asylum in this beautiful country and everyone in between, all who are attacked, all who are derided and despised.

These are the ordinary people, the great people, who have achieved on the ground the greatest and most progressive social change by analysing and agitating under the guiding stars of struggle and hope. Good social policy might be formulated and legislated from above but it is always created and fought for from below by ordinary people who will not allow the purveyors of injustice and inequality and greed to grind them down.

Eureka Street 28/5/14

STOP PRESS

We rejoice with the people of Muckaty Station in N.T. In June 2014 the Commonwealth Government agreed not to construct a radioactive waste dump on this land. This decision comes after many years of pro bono legal action.

You can read more about this at

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/19/muckaty-nuclear-dump-defeat-is-a-huge-victory-for-aboriginal-australia>

Save the Racial Discrimination Act

In Australia, the Racial Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to do or say things that "offend, insult or humiliate" a person due to their race, ethnicity, colour or nationality, while protecting genuine artistic, scientific and academic expression, and accurate journalism. But, earlier this year, Attorney-General George Brandis drafted changes to the Act, claiming that people have "the right to be bigots". If Mr Brandis' changes are adopted, saying racist things will only be unlawful if it causes a person to fear physical harm and/or encourages others to be hateful.

Even racist comments that reach this high benchmark will be excused if they're made in the public domain (as, in the media).

The reality is, these changes will make our race hate laws so narrow, they'll be effectively useless.

This will have a profound negative impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other ethnic minorities who regularly experience racism and hate speech.

People deserve to be protected from abuse and intimidation based on their race. This is a human right -- and it must continue to be protected under the law.

Call on Prime Minister Tony Abbott to scrap proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act.

Catholic Coalition for Justice and Peace

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