

INFORM-ACTION

Newsletter of the Social Action Office - Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes Queensland

FOR THE COMMON GOOD

The recent Senate inquiry into Poverty and Disadvantage will hand down its report this week (mid-March). Will there be anything new? Will there be anything we haven't heard before? Probably not – just more devastating statistics with people generally far more desperate than before – a description of a society where inequality is rife and one that is fearful of sharing its resources, one that forgets and maybe denies its status as part of a total global community, one that forgets that:

Since people are members of the same human family, they are indissolubly linked with one another in the one destiny of the whole world, in the responsibility for which they all share.

Justice in the World (#7) – Synod of Bishops 1971

The SAO in 2000, when planning for the 2001 Federal election, chose to campaign on equality in income, health and housing – addressing the significant gap between those at the top end of the income scale and those at the bottom. In approaching a campaign for the 2004 election we are faced with the reality that not a lot has changed since last time – the issues are the same, the statistics are worse and as a nation we have closed our doors and hearts more to the world at large. 2004 is the International Year of Rice which is a huge reminder to us in our affluent society to work for just outcomes for the 840 million people on this planet who suffer from **chronic** hunger and for whom 51% live in countries and cultures that are dependent on rice production for food, income and employment.

There are enormous challenges for us in finding balance and perspective in our lives and world today and one example of a lack of balance is Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of Christ*. It focuses only on the last twelve hours of Christ's life. While there may be merit in this, it is good to ask – does this film move people beyond a personal saviour – Jesus and me mentality? Does it move people's heart to action in the world? Does it enable people to take to heart Jesus' words – *Do this in*

memory of me? Or to act in our world as Jesus did? If it fails to do this, what Gospel is it promoting? I found Brisbane-based Catholic Social Justice Advocate Tony Robertson's reflections on this movie theme very helpful. His reflection is the impetus behind a banner that publicly hangs in the grounds of St Mary's in South Brisbane:



I see the scars of the Passion of the Christ on the lives and the bodies of adults who experienced abuse as children in institutional care in church and state centres;

I see the suffering of the Passion of the Christ in the lost lives of young kids living on our streets;

I see the pain of the Passion of the Christ in the loneliness of the elderly, people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, women and children who are homeless in our city;

I see the violence of the Passion of the Christ in the statistics of youth suicide particularly those who have experienced the taunts and violence of homophobia which continues in our church and community.

For the sake of the common good of all, may our lives (this election year in particular) be moved to action on behalf of justice and may our Lenten sacrifice crack open our hearts to live passionately in our world.

Annette Arnold, Social Action Office Director

SAO 2004 FEDERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN – FOR THE COMMON GOOD

The aim of the SAO 2004 Federal Election campaign is to name and reframe the basic values of our society and our world that are currently at risk and up for grabs in the political arena – particularly those that impact most on achieving a solid practice of consideration for the common good of all.

These words of Catholic Social Teaching would inform and support this aim:

We must remember that, of its very nature, civil authority exists, not to confine its people within the boundaries of their nation, but rather to protect, above all else the common good of that particular civil society, which certainly cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human family.

Peace on Earth #98

An education and lobbying campaign that integrates these

core values and is informed by the values and policy areas of the three SAO priority areas of *Living Sustainably*, *Social Justice* (Housing/Homelessness) and *Building a Culture of Peace* will be planned and carried out.

In order to do that a special **For The Common Good campaign planning meeting** will be held at Justice Place on **Monday 5 April** at 5.00pm. We would hope to maximise on the wisdom and experience of many people and even if people are unable to make any further commitment, participation at this planning meeting is crucial. We would hope to form a *Common Good Circle* – a group of people who would support both a Project Worker (see page 4) who will be engaged to lead this campaign and the campaign itself.

All SAO Partners are encouraged to attend this meeting and if you are able to come please RSVP to SAO by Thursday 1 April.



BOOK REVIEW



Renewing Creation - Listening to the Groans and Hopes of the Earth

An ecumenical Bible study series for groups commissioned by the Lenten Studies Committee of the South Australian Heads of Churches

Environmental degradation is one of the circles of violence included in the Council of Churches, *Decade to Overcome Violence: Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace*. *Renewing Creation* has been written as a contribution towards overcoming this type of violence. The preface offers information on the Decade and there is an appendix detailing The Earth Charter values and principles for a sustainable future. It is hoped this study will help people come to terms with our violent past and join with creation in bringing peace on Earth.

The front cover of the study book features a painting by Jasmine Corowa of the Rainbow Spirit People – *Day Three: The Bush*. The text is a five part study series, designed for the weeks leading up to Easter. Each part of the study focuses on a specific ecological crisis in the Australian context and concludes with indications of renewal; ways in which a particular disaster is being handled and can, hopefully, be overcome. The themes include:

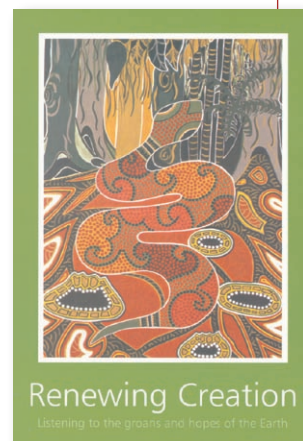
- Creation Waiting
- Creation Groaning
- Creation Birthing

- Creation Reconciled
- Creation Renewed.

The writers hope that the texts and contexts will challenge people to

- appreciate the relevance of the Scriptures to the environmental issues we face in Australia;
- become sensitive to creation as an active participant with whom we can both suffer and celebrate in the current crisis;
- be actively involved with creation in a ministry to heal the earth and participate in the renewal of all creation.

The text can be ordered on line at: <http://users.chariot.net.au/~studies/purchase.htm> or from Churches of Christ in SA & NT Office, 171 Main North Road, Nailsworth SA 5083, ph (08) 8269 7873, or from Pauline Books & Media, 27 Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide SA 5083, or by emailing studies@chariot.net.au. The book costs \$6.00 + p&h.



SAO PRIORITY – CREATING A CULTURE OF PEACE

The SAO once again affirmed *Creating a Culture of Peace* as a priority area for 2004 and will continue to support two projects: *Believing Women for a Culture of Peace* and the *Peace Circle Reading Group*. As we are well into the *International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World – 2001-2010* – we need to keep up the momentum and provide opportunities for people to further explore the issues. The United Nations define the Culture of Peace as a set of values, attitudes, modes of behaviour and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations. In May (tentative dates 12-17) the SAO will co-sponsor with Faith Education Services (Brisbane Catholic Education) a visit by Brendan McKeague. Many will know of Brendan's work in the areas of nonviolence, open space and nonviolent communication. We are hoping to offer a training program for *From Violence to Wholeness* and would appreciate hearing from people who would be interested in this. A public event on *Nonviolent Communication* is scheduled for Monday 17 May late afternoon/evening. Details will be confirmed as soon as possible.

PEACE IS IN OUR HANDS
CULTIVONS LA PAIX
CULTIVEMOS LA PAZ
السلام بين أيدينا
Мир в наших руках
让我们播种和平

Please contact Annette at SAO annette@sao.clriq.org.au or ph (07) 3891 5866 if you are interested in the *From Violence to Wholeness Training Workshop*.

Believing Women for a Culture of Peace

This group is growing and exciting. The new banner is stunning and is the product of the creative work of Yvonne Pirsic, Annette Arnold and Cathy O'Keeffe and the creative feedback from the women at meetings. It was well received at the International Women's Day March in Brisbane on 6 March and again at a function on 8 March – IWD itself.

The group will have its PUBLIC LAUNCH on **Sunday 14 March** and this will be held at the YWCA, 147 Wharf Street, Brisbane City, starting at 1.00pm. All women and girls are welcome and people are asked to bring a small offering of food to share.

The **Vision** of *Believing Women for a Culture of Peace* is:

In a time when differences of religious faith serve as a key factor in the growth of a culture of fear, distrust and hostility, locally and globally, *Believing Women* find themselves called to

- build alliances that will counter the prevailing divisiveness,
- contribute to a lasting culture of peace, and
- collectively acknowledge and celebrate the bonding power of religious faith.

The **Goals** of *Believing Women for a Culture of Peace* are to:

- create opportunities for the development of respectful relationships and mutual support among women of different faiths;
- empower all women so that nothing that we do causes more divisions and conflict;
- build intercultural and inter-religious understanding and appreciation;
- enable those who participate to develop self-awareness through sharing.



SOCIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCES

1) The Christian Brothers of St Francis Xavier Province extend an invitation to all who may have an interest, to attend their **Social Justice Conference *Harden Not Your Hearts*** on **Sunday 18 April**. Keynote speakers include Sean McDonagh, Fr Frank Brennan, Phillip Adams, Geraldine Doogue, Robert Fitzgerald, Jacqui Katona, Rashida Joseph, Dr Noel Preston.

The daytime program for the conference will be held at St Laurence's College, 82 Stephen's Road, South Brisbane, and the evening program at St James' College, 169-201 Boundary Street, Brisbane (Conference Dinner and Panel Discussion 6.00pm-10.00pm).

If you would like to register, please contact the Conference Secretary, Edmund Rice Education, PO Box 923, Indooroopilly 4068, Fax (07) 3327 2248, Phone (07) 3327 2229. Closing Date: Monday 22 March.

2) **Queensland Social Justice Gathering 2004** is to be held at The Haven, Emu Park Qld on the Labour Day weekend, **1-3 May** beginning on Friday evening and finishing by lunchtime on the Monday. This gathering is being organised by the Diocesan Social Justice Contacts connected with the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council and an invitation has been extended to the Social Action Office and its Partners. It is an opportunity to network, be re-energised and nourished by the local environment. It is limited to 26 participants. Previous gatherings have proved to be very worthwhile and it is the most beautiful place by the sea to spend a long weekend! Cost is \$30 for the 3 days plus food costs which are yet to be determined. Any SAO Partners who wish to participate, please contact Peter Arndt (Brisbane Catholic Justice and Peace Commission) on petercipc@uq.net.au or ph (07) 3891 5911.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR



2004 - International Year of Rice

http://www.fao.org/rice2004/index_en.htm

2004 is also the International Year to Commemorate the Struggle against Slavery and Its Abolition

MARCH

- 8 International Women's Day - *Believing Women for a Culture of Peace* Launch (see page 3)
- 19 St Joseph, husband of Mary
- 20 World Day of Planetary Consciousness
- 21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- 21 Week of Solidarity with the Peoples struggling against racism and racial discrimination begins
- 22 World Water Day
- 24 Assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero 1980
- 25 The Annunciation
- 25 Death of Caroline Chisholm 1877

APRIL

- 4 Palm/Passion Sunday - Holy Week commences
- 10 120 Nations sign treaty banning biological warfare 1972
- 11 Easter Sunday - *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), John XXIII 1963
- 14 First Presidential elections elect Xanana Gusmao as President of East Timor 2002
- 14 Death of Rachel Carson 1964
- 22 International Earth Day
- 24 First United Nations Conference opens 1945
- 26 Bishop Gerardi murdered in Guatemala 1998

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Expressions of interest are being sought for a **Project Worker** for the ***For The Common Good Campaign***. This person will be employed by the SAO from **April 2004 to November 2004**. He/she would take a lead role in the planning and coordination of the campaign. He/she would need to have a strong commitment to and understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, a solid understanding of the current socio-political context, and be able to work collaboratively and to expertly manage a campaign. For more details please contact Annette Arnold, Director, Social Action Office, ph (07) 3891 5866.

Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

Justice in the World (#6) – Synod of Bishops 1971