

Social Justice Sunday 2009 Sample Editorial

Being Witnesses for Justice

Just over a year ago, pilgrims from around the world joined young people from Australian parishes and schools to celebrate World Youth Day in Sydney. Our bishops saw in many of these young Catholics both a deep concern for those afflicted by war, poverty and injustice and a burning passion for action which puts an end to the pain and indignity they cause for so many people .

In their Social Justice Sunday Statement this year, *And You Will Be My Witnesses: Young People and Justice*, the Bishops challenge us, whatever age we are, to join with these young Christians in being witnesses for change in society. They challenge us to leave a legacy of a more just and peaceful world for future generations.

The Bishops point approvingly to many examples of young people who respond to the suffering of others by generous and compassionate acts of service. They also praise the work of young people who are engaged in social action which seeks to identify the root causes of injustice and to promote change which overcomes it.

The Statement is also an opportunity for the Bishops to highlight some of the injustices faced by young people in Australia and around the world. They urge us to reflect on some serious issues and to ask what needs to change to bring an end to suffering and uncertainty:

- What support do young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to overcome the disadvantage they experience economically and socially?
- What needs to be done to help young people to find secure employment where they are free from exploitation and have good conditions and wages?
- How do young people living with mental illness find dignity and respect?
- How do we ensure that no young person faces neglect or abuse, whether it is physical, emotional or sexual?
- Are world leaders and national governments doing enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals so that global poverty and hunger are halved by 2015?
- What needs to be done to heal the Earth of its serious environmental scars so that future generations can enjoy it?

There are many things we are already doing to respond to the needs of the poor and those who suffer injustice. We are not starting from scratch when it comes to responding to the suffering of others, but this Statement offers us an opportunity to reflect on what we are doing and to consider what more we could do.

Like the young pilgrims who gathered for World Youth Day last year, we, too, are invited by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses and agents of peace and justice in our world. Whether it is the consumption and lifestyle choices we make or what we say and do when we see injustice around us or the action we decide to take to help change policies or arrangements which make life oppressive for others, we are called to have courage and to do something to support those whose lives are a struggle.

Let us ask the Spirit to ignite in us something of the same passion for justice that the Bishops saw in so many young people in Sydney last year. May we be inspired to go out into the world and show by our actions, great and small, that God's love can lift the burdens weighing down so many of our sisters and brothers and create a new world where there is dignity for all.