



HOLY SPIRIT SOCIAL JUSTICE

AUGUST 2020 EDITION

A MESSAGE FROM FR MARK

Welcome to Social Justice Sunday. Our Social Justice Group (SJG) has been working across a range of issues from social INjustice for children, unfair detention of refugees and support for the homeless. It's a hard time to be physically active yet with social distancing the group was represented at the 7 Years Far Too Long! Vigil to end refugee detention held in Civic in July.

In this time of the COVID pandemic many other social justice issues get swept under the carpet. It is up to us to help where we can and to pray for the areas where we cannot see how we can help. The Parish SJG will look at ways to assist projects such as MacKillop House and others. I would encourage you to contact members of the SJG and let them know if you have any good ideas about how we can make a difference as a faith community.

The **Bishops Social Justice Statement**,

[TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL: MENTAL HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA TODAY](#)

reminds us that we are all in this together:

'The test of our society's commitment to the common good is the care we show for the people who are most vulnerable or disadvantaged.'

(Pope Francis' encyclical Laudato Si')



The Social Justice Group has been encouraging us to read and act upon Laudato Si. As a church and as a faith community, we are called to help our neighbour in the Parish, in the local, and wider community.

It is no coincidence that the topics covered in the [SJG newsletter](#) reflects the concerns expressed by the bishops about our mental health and its relationship with so much social INjustice.

Perhaps this year we will pledge to learn together about how best to respond to the mental illness of ourselves and others so that we can be the Good Samaritans we all strive to be. It is an area of need that requires education and empathy and if we are going to understand it and its influence in our society, especially in a post COVID world, then we must all learn more about it. This is our Social Justice Sunday pledge.

The Bishops observe in their introduction to the Statement that

'Our society tends to draw away from, or to push away, those who confront us with our frailties and limitations.

It is a dynamic that is completely at odds with the story of Jesus.' (page 7)

Our Church and our Parish goals must be, to share equally in Jesus' promise 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10).

FROM THE CHAIR

Peter Peterson

Dear Parish members

There is so much happening and so much disarray in our country and in the world, that I think if you have any knowledge of the Good Samaritan, you will realise that there is an abundance of opportunities to help those in need yet a feeling of 'what can we do and will it be enough?'

I welcome the Social Justice Statement by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference entitled To Live Life to the Full – Mental Health in Australia Today.

The Statement can be found by following the link in Fr Mark's message.

We can talk about the sad state of affairs generally but sometimes it's a single picture that brings our heart to the insurmountable problem. Well insurmountable for us, not for our God.

Recently I saw a picture of a shattered Wests Tigers football player who had been in a losing team thrashed by the Penrith Panthers. His dismay was way beyond the football game and perhaps related to the fact he carried the name Lebanon (hit by a massive explosion the previous day) and/or other issues that were on his mind.

continued

This man's sadness epitomised the challenge of our time, so after I shed some tears, some to share his empty sorrow, others in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit will fill the void, I wrote this poem.

If these words move you to write to us or join us we'd love to hear from you. peterimantpeterson@gmail.com

GOOD SAMARITAN

Today I saw a photo
A young man in disarray
A man of courage, a football player of tremendous skill
Playing with his devastated country's name, Lebanon,
Emblazoned on his arm

Distraught, dismayed and emptied,
He lives on the edge of personal grief with the
challenges only a refugee can know
Today his team defeated, his country devastated
The edge crumbles beneath him
And he cannot breathe and hot tears
crash down his cheeks
Yet I see strength, commitment, belief and faith
That is his hope to grow in strength
Today and tomorrow

A locked down world, filled with sorrow
We can cry with him seeing his sorrow
As a feeling shared by so many
And yet know that Lord watches over him
Giving hope and sharing sorrow.
Good Samaritan you are sought
Today and tomorrow.

P2



Detaining people in inhumane conditions and refusing them resettlement in order to send a message to people traffickers treats vulnerable people as a means to an end. The damage done in the meantime has compounded their trauma and mental ill-health.

The policy seems aimed at breaking their spirits, but it does the rest of us spiritual harm too. (page 16)

RALLY FOR REFUGEES IN DETENTION



On Sunday, 19 July, the Holy Spirit Social Justice group was represented by Maureen Hilton and a friend at a silent vigil with the theme – 7 Years Far Too Long! The Social Justice Group was spurred into action after reading an email from the Refugee Action Campaign announcing a rally in Civic on 19 July. The email brought to the group's attention the following:

'Over the last 7 years, thousands of people have been held in Australia's offshore detention in PNG and Nauru. Hundreds of men and women are still detained under this regime, including up to 200 people who are being held in immigration detention in Australia after being evacuated under the Medevac provisions for medical treatment and assessment in Australia. The harm and trauma that this prolonged detention has caused to people who simply sought safety is immense.'

The hour long, silent rally was well attended and all enjoyed the sunshine on a cold Canberra winters day! Please join us in prayer for all people in detention, for those who care for them and that our government will show compassion to people seeking asylum in our country. For further information about this unjust and extraordinarily expensive situation, go to refugeecouncil.org.au/seven-years-on/

Or to learn more about Refugee Action Campaign, go to refugeeaction.org/

Maureen Hilton maureenhilton@gmail.com

HANDS UP FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Recently the Heads of Government for the States, Territories and the Commonwealth had their regular meeting to discuss matters of national importance. One of the topics raised was the age at which juveniles could be sentenced to detention in an institution. It was proposed to raise the age of responsibility from 10 years to 14 years of age. No agreement could be reached and the matter was deferred until sometime in 2021.

The fact that we are even having this conversation is a sad reflection on our society. It is a sign that we are dysfunctional and need scapegoats to cover our inadequacies. We have made little advance in the justice area since 1788; okay we don't have flogging and we have done away with the death penalty but we still take away peoples' freedom as young as 10 years for simple things such as being a repeat offender, we are still overtly and covertly colonising the First nation people, we demonise refugees escaping persecution, we decimate the land to feed our greed for our gods, money and power, and we label welfare recipients as bludger and leaner. As a result, we have little trust in the establishment and have a heavy reliance on volunteers in organisations such as Lifeline, St Vincent de Paul, Beyond Blue, CatholicCare etc to ameliorate our mental ill health.

Our decision making is based on the adversarial model and politicians compete with each other at election time to convince the voter they are the toughest on crime. As a result, the disadvantaged in our society

make up the majority of our prison and juvenile detention centre's population. If you can afford competent legal representation you can avoid prison for the less serious crimes. There is a proven successful method available to our justice system. In 1989 the New Zealand government rejected the punishment model and



introduced a conciliatory method called Restorative Justice to deal with juvenile offenders. The method empowers the offenders extended family and their community, including victims, to take a proactive approach to the situation. Ideally the process involves Family Counsellors and Family Support Workers along with allied and mental health workers where appropriate. As a result, the number of beds in juvenile centres have been reduced from 900 in 1989 to 150 in 2020.

A division of Restorative Justice, Real Justice Australia, was established in 1991 by Police Sergeant Terry O'Connell OAM. Terry visited New Zealand, was impressed with the concept and as a director of the project pioneered it here as well as travelling to the United Kingdom and North America for promotion purposes. Response in Australia has ranged from part implementation to outright rejection of the idea. ACT

parliament have been looking at various versions of the concept since 2014.

Holy Spirit Parish is an ideal model to promote Real Justice. We are inclusive as evidenced by the variety of cultures at our services, we are generous. There is a very supportive community spirit evident – one which would embrace the concept of

forgiveness and healing with love and positive encouragement.

We will explore the other issues raised in future publications. In the meantime, we would welcome any ideas as to how we can promote Real Justice and bring peace and harmony to victims, families, communities and to

offenders to replace the cruel and destructive system we have now. As they say it is a no brain-er, a win-win option vs one where there is no positive outcome.

For more information: Peter Knight
pkmonty56@gmail.com



Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers.

They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness (page 15)

NOW SHE IS SAFE..... NOW SHE CAN BREATHE....

THE LEGACY OF MARY MACKILLOP

In the middle of a Canberra winter two months ago, CatholicCare did a wonderful thing, it opened a residence for women who are homeless – and their children. And this is not just another shelter, this is a strategy – to ensure that the women they help go on to find and access safe, permanent housing and stabilise their lives.

Anne Kirwan, CEO of CatholicCare Canberra & Goulburn said that the opportunity to use the old Sisters of Saint Joseph convent to help women get back on their feet was too good to pass up. “What a legacy of Saint Mary MacKillop!”, she said.



Anne Kirwan, CEO CatholicCare

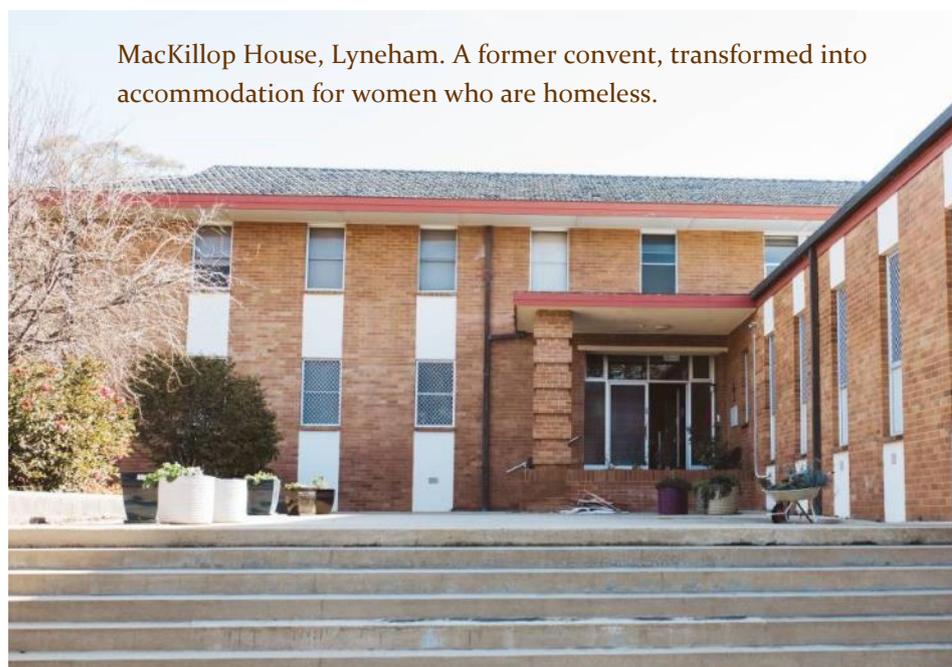
For the first time in ages, twenty single women, and another six with accompanying children will be able to sleep properly tonight – they will be able to breathe.

The convent in Lyneham was originally built as accommodation for single women and MacKillop House has exploited that to focus on the fastest growing segment of the homeless population, single women, especially those over 50 years of age. Women who have run into difficulty and out of options are at significant risk; their plight is made worse by the threat to their safety. Frequently, they sleep in their cars or move from one friend or family member to another, sleeping on couches and the floor. COVID 19 and social distancing changed all that of course – no one wanted a stranger staying in their house.

Mackillop House opened on the 2nd of June to offer a “home” to women who were homeless and to walk with them, hand in hand, as they navigate the public housing system, the medical system, the job market and even the judicial system. CatholicCare have relocated their child and family services so that they are on site for immediate access. They work on a very simple (MacKillop) principle: “tell us what you need and we will work with you”.

Ms Kirwan said that CatholicCare started MacKillop House because that’s where the need was most urgent. It is extremely difficult to focus on getting a job, finding schools and childcare, getting training, rehab, physio, etc, when you are constantly worrying about where you are going to sleep – and how you will pay for it. She said “We needed to provide an option that offers women the stability and reassurance of safety, but also the time, support and resources necessary to get their lives back on track”. MacKillop House is a ‘residence’, where people can stay for up to three months.

This special service focuses on single women, especially older ones. Obviously, many women experiencing homelessness will have



MacKillop House, Lyneham. A former convent, transformed into accommodation for women who are homeless.

(Continued from page 4)

been exposed to domestic and family violence, but that is not the only trigger for homelessness.

Financial problems, relationship breakdown, the loss of a job, mental illness, drug & alcohol use, these often contribute to the loss of housing.

MacKillop House also allows six women to bring their children with them and to live in standalone units, as a family – another reason they can breathe again!

CatholicCare is focused on solutions, not handouts. All residents pay rent from any income they receive so that they learn to budget for the future. The payback for CatholicCare is to see a woman and perhaps, her family, back on their feet and safely and securely housed.

Anyone can refer a woman in need to MacKillop House. Perhaps you know someone who is already homeless or on the brink of losing their home. Call CatholicCare's MacKillop House on **61637677** or go to the websites: www.catholiccare.cg.org.au or mackillophouse@catholiccare.cg.org.au.

A person can also refer themselves, as can their family, friends, doctor, lawyer, or employer.

Onelink is the centralised point for people who are in need of housing in the ACT and therefore is another pathway to assistance – where you can find out more, get advice, or get help; Ring **1800 176 468**.

If you would like to find out more about CatholicCare, or perhaps you would like to donate your money or your time, please ring Toni La Brooy on 0408 880 943 or 6162 6144.



Mental illness is both a cause and a consequence of homelessness. The inability to negotiate rental markets or the supported accommodation systems, with a lack of other community support, puts people at a high risk. And being homeless, living in poverty, with all of the uncertainties and fear of harm and violence is a cause of high levels of psychological distress. (page 12)

SOCIAL INEQUALITIES EXACERBATE PANDEMIC

The pandemic is shining a very large spotlight on the social and economic inequalities in societies all over the world. Low paid casual workers who don't get sick leave, many of whom are carrying out essential work, are in the firing line and they can't afford to stop working. They often live in cramped low-quality living conditions as well, exposing them more readily to a range of sickness and to Covid 19.

We are only now seeing paid pandemic leave being granted to people in Melbourne who otherwise would have no sick leave; basically, because the situation is getting way out of control and is affecting everyone.

The aged care sector especially, is suffering due to poorly trained, low paid and casual workers. There are no mandatory staff to patient ratios and the sector has been neglected for a long time throughout Australia and this neglect is coming home to roost. The infection and death rate in Victorian aged care facilities is simply horrific.



It appears that we need a revolution in our thinking, to bring about a different society. We have an opportunity to become a fairer and kinder society which in turn will help to get the pandemic under control and have a positive ripple effect into the future.

There have been many signs of people coming together and helping their fellow man, woman and child. This desire to help needs to be embedded in the Government, private enterprise (multinational down to small businesses/enterprises), the banking sector and the general community.

But will this only occur during a crisis?

(Continued on page 6)

Through faith, prayer and action we can bring about permanent change if we want to. If enough of us are prepared to actively encourage change and be part of it, as well as demanding that our politicians listen to us, and if they think there are votes in it, they will listen and act.

Below is an excerpt from a news story published in the Canberra Times on 4 August, which illustrates my point. It's written by Stephen Bartos who is former parliamentary budget officer for NSW and previously Commonwealth Finance Department deputy secretary. It wasn't really a social justice article, more a comment on finances and the public service in relation to the pandemic. It says a lot about society's priorities before the pandemic.

"There's a political rule that unemployment doesn't change votes - unless a voter personally knows somebody who is unemployed. That explains why the dole bludger myth, and pitifully low levels of Newstart (JobSeeker's predecessor unemployment benefit program) were prevalent when unemployment was hovering at 5 per cent or below. Relatively few voters - not enough to swing elections - cared. But now a majority of voters are either unemployed, have a relative who is, or know someone who is unemployed. It has become a key concern for politicians."

Full story below if you have a Canberra Times subscription

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6858218/deficit-will-throw-shadow-on-public-service-spending-for-decades/?cs=14329>

In other words, not enough people gave a damn and some politicians and people in our society not only didn't care but wanted to kick them while they were down. They blamed vulnerable people for their plights without wanting to consider what structural problems and indifference in society was doing to contribute to unemployment and therefore people living in extreme poverty.

What other areas in society do we NOT care enough about to allow politicians to reflect back on us our priorities, with an increasingly insecure casual workforce in Australia, a long neglected aged care sector, the planet's health needs inconveniently clashing with economic interests among many areas that the pandemic is throwing up as needing attention.

For more information: Paul Crowley crowleysix@icloud.com

IN THE NEWS

A few more related articles to consider are below:

Michael Pascoe: Federal government kills social housing hopes, The New Daily 7/8/2020 <https://thenewdaily.com.au/finance/finance-news/2020/08/07/government-kills-social-housing-hopes/>

Mapping COVID-19 spread in Melbourne shows link to job types and ability to stay home, ABC/The Conversation 30/7/2020 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-30/coronavirus-covid-19-melbourne-job-types/12504896>

New data shows shortfall of 3000 social housing properties in Canberra prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Canberra Times 3/8/2020 <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6858971/shortfall-of-3000-social-housing-properties-in-canberra/>



We ask you to join us in prayer for the sick, the unemployed, all young people, the homeless and all people who are uncertain about their future.

Loving God,

we ask you to bless those people who are yearning for love, care and compassion. Send us to be your witness into their lives, to be with them and to show by our kindness, your love and care for all people, especially those who are frail, sick, unemployed, homeless or suffering mental ill health.

Grant us the courage to stand beside them as a community and raise our voices in support of their needs.

We call upon your name to be with them and pray that they feel your love and come to know you, by our actions. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Amen.



Intimate connection with the heart of God may require us to embrace and find meaning in the vulnerability and suffering that comes with loving.

It will draw us to work to eliminate that suffering which cuts people off from God, each other, and the rest of creation - suffering that denies people and communities participation in the fullness of life. (page 18)