

good things

Still showing in limited release is the beautiful French film *Of Gods and Men*. It tells the story of the murder of seven French Trappist monks in the Algerian civil war. Their decision to stay and continue their ministry, as the government structures fray and the country descends into violence, is handled both sensitively and insightfully.

It says something beyond the artistic merit of the film that it topped the box office for four consecutive weeks in secular France. Similarly the global admiration for the scientists, engineers and workers who stayed behind to work on the Fukushima Nuclear plant after the recent tsunami is illuminating.

Martyrdom (or in the latter case sacrifice) stirs something in us.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking on the four hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom of Welsh Benedictine St John Roberts notes:

The martyr isn't a person who says 'No' to the world in any simple sense. The martyr sees the richness of the world, the wealth of mind and imagination, the wealth of culture and the beauty of the human spirit. And because he sees the whole as the gift and sign of God, he knows that the beauty of the Giver is infinitely more than the whole world itself.

Martyrs are the ultimate 'Yes' men and women. They offer a complete and total affirmation of the goodness of creation and (importantly) its source.

The Church's work of social justice is similar in that it responds to the world's goodness as a way of honouring the creator. In the words of Pope Benedict *'Love of God and love of neighbour are thus inseparable, they form a single commandment. But both live from the love of God who has loved us first.'* Deus Caritas Est #18

Catholic identity in church agencies, particularly charitable ones, is a hotbed issue at the moment. What lessons can be drawn from martyrs on this issue? The Archbishop of Canterbury continues his address by asking:

What is the martyr's message? ... If we want to see a renewal of compassion and service in our society, we need to know where the roots of human beauty and dignity are to be found. And to know where these roots are is something that grows on the soil of contemplation and becomes visible in celebration, even in the face of danger, terror and death.

The key challenge then for Catholic agencies is to respect the freedom and autonomy of the people they work with while giving eloquent expression to *'where the roots of human dignity are to be found.'*

Yours in Christ,
Evan Ellis
Social Justice Coordinator

Out of respect for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, the Parramatta Diocese Social Justice Office acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which our office is located.



Martyr St John Roberts

"He has filled the hungry with good things"

Luke 1:53



Photo Credit: Saoire



“Freedom from fear.”

Refugee Week

Refugee Week runs from Sunday, June 19 to Saturday, June 25. Established by the Refugee Council of Australia as an opportunity to engage the public on this issue and celebrate the many positive contributions of Refugees to Australian society, the theme for this year is a repeat of 2010's "Freedom from fear."

This is reference to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention which defines a refugee as: Any person who owing to **a well founded fear of being persecuted** for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country.

For information of events and activities visit the website: www.refugeeweek.org.au

Of Interest

Are you a priest, pastoral worker, teacher or catechist who works with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers? Then you might be interested in a series of two-day courses being run by Sandie Cornish through the Catholic Institute of Sydney on the topic: 'Perilous Journeys — The migration of peoples today'. While registration closes on Friday 17th June the first two day course is in August.

For information on the course contact:

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For further information and registration contact:

The Registry

Catholic Institute of Sydney

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'Go Back to Where you Came From'

To coincide with Refugee Week SBS has prepared a three-part documentary television series, 'Go Back to Where you Came From.' If you mixed up Channel 9's war documentary *In their footsteps*, with *The Amazing Race* and a UNHCR Report, you might get this interesting documentary. Screening during the evenings of Sunday 19 June to Tuesday 21 June, the series follows the journey of six ordinary Australians who experience the journey of an asylum seeker in reverse; travelling on a leaky boat to Malaysia, Iraq, Kenya and the Congo.

www.sbs.com.au

St Patrick's Blacktown: The Conversation Continues ...

By Sr Judith Lythall

More than 60 enthusiastic parishioners gathered in St Patrick's Hall on the afternoon of Sunday 1 May 2011 for our third Parish Assembly. The afternoon began with prayer and reflection on the first Christian church as recorded in the Acts of Apostles (Acts 2:42-47)

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers."

Evan Ellis, Social Justice Coordinator in our diocese facilitated the afternoon and encouraged conversation that would take the issues/passions identified in the previous weeks into specific and concrete actions.

From the many conversations that had occurred throughout the parish in the preceding weeks a vast range of issues and passions had been identified (see the notice boards in the foyer for the full list) and from these approximately twenty possible key issues for further conversation had been selected. Parishioners who gathered nominated those which we considered priorities by placing coloured dots on two issues which we viewed as important. Issues ranged from 'name tags' for parishioners, ministry to the elderly, parish retreat.

Soon people were busy working in small groups or pairs and grappling with the issue and trying to come up with some concrete action. It was a productive and fruitful afternoon as we talked, listened, shared ideas and plans began to take shape.

The afternoon passed all too quickly and before long it was time halt to our conversations and report back to the other parishioners...and as the afternoon drew to a close Fr Peter shared with the gathering a letter from Bishop Anthony reporting on his visit to our Parish last year. But that is not the end...the conversations continue ...and plans and actions are evolving.

For reflection: "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them ... Those who cannot listen long and patiently will always be talking past others, and finally no longer even notice it ... The death of the spiritual life starts here." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Caritas Corner: Project Compassion 2011

The theme for Project Compassion 2011 was 'Partner with us to make a difference'. The involvement of people in Project Compassion this year has been an illustration of partnerships at all different levels; between schools, parishes and church agencies.

It came during a trying time. After the annual Vinnies Christmas appeal Queensland and Northern NSW were deluged by floods. This was followed by the king hit of Cyclone Yasi. Our Diocese responded generously in separate appeals, as did people Australia-wide. Such generosity was lifted by the round the clock media coverage. This was followed by the terrible earthquake of Christchurch which saw Caritas open an appeal. Finally the world witnessed the apocalyptic scenes of tsunamis slamming into Japan's coastline.

Perhaps unsurprising overall donations have slumped (so far- donations are still coming in) on last year's high. Nonetheless Project Compassion is as much about awareness-raising as fundraising. And this year was a bumper year for that.

Project Compassion was launched at the Parramatta Cathedral by Bishop Anthony and Dr Bruno Miteyo (Mit-ae-oh), Secretary General of Caritas Congo. In many parts of this wartorn country, state structures have atrophied or collapsed with the only functioning institution left being the Catholic Church, of which Caritas Congo is an important part.

Caritas responds by providing food, shelter, clean water and medicine to hundreds of thousands of people. Most of the UN's food aid goes through Caritas. Caritas Congo also runs 185 hospitals nationwide and more than 500 health centres making it the main health provider in the country.

This year we also had visits from Fr George Sigamoney (Sr Lanka), Fr Silas Bogati (Nepal) and Nguyet Thi Dinh (Viet Nam). Over three thousands students in thirteen schools received a presentation from one of these speakers or by a representative of Caritas and eleven parishes had a Caritas presentation during Lent.

A big thankyou to everyone who participated and for all the hard work that went into Project Compassion.

NB. In order for Caritas Australia to reassure many of its international partners that we will be able to continue to fund the programmes to which we are committed and to fulfil our legal requirements here in Australia, it is really important for us to have monies processed, receipts sent, donations acknowledged and Australian Taxation office records maintained before the end of the financial year on 30 June 2011. Your parish/school has been most generous over the years and it would really help us to fulfil our obligations outlined above if you were able to send in monies received for Project Compassion 2011 as soon as possible by:

- direct depositing if set up for your parish
- Direct depositing for schools — if a school would like to direct deposit then please advise the school to contact donorservices@caritas.org.au for banking details
- a cheque/money order made out to Caritas Australia and mailed to GPO Box 9830 in your capital city
- Via credit card online at www.caritas.org.au or by phone at 1800 024 413

Well Said ...

Ross Gittens is the SMH economics editor. He has recently written an article on 'social disadvantage'. With poverty so often reduced to purely economic terms, it's heartening to see an economist remind us that financial constraints are only one dimension. While the article appears as a stab against the so called 150k battlers, it is actually a concise reflection on the whirlpool of factors that conspire to keep people poor. His article can be [read here](#).

Did you Miss ... Feast of St Joseph the Worker

Each year the chair of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ACSJC) releases a pastoral letter to coincide with the feast of St. Joseph the Worker on May 1. In the spirit of Rerum Novarum (1891) and Laborem Exercens (1981), the annual letter provides a contemporary snapshot on the issues facing Australian workers and an exhortation to recover the dignity of work. This year the focus is on Indigenous workers. In a concise statement Bishop Chris Saunders asserts that the opportunity of employment is a foundational social justice issue. With a current budget that is being debated on its merits to working families, and a tendency for economists to see unemployment in economic terms at the expense of its human dimension, the statement is both timely and thought provoking.

It can be downloaded in an easy to read three-column format here. www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

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