



Co-ordinator's Comments

As the saying goes “De-ni-al” is not just a river in North Africa (The Nile!!!) We humans are good at denying what is staring us in the face. We don't like to admit that the economic system driving social, political and environmental policy of today might be wrong. While reflecting on the impacts of the extreme weather events in our country and the poverty and social unrest in places like Tunisia, Egypt and Haiti, the words from Micah 6:8 kept coming to me: “*And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*” It seems to me that God is speaking to us through the natural world and saying we must be more humble in our way of living. Are we listening? Do we know how to? If we do, are we teaching others?

Anne Lanyon

What we've been up to since the last Connections!

■ A successful Seminar and Dinner, “**Other Ways: Growing Alternatives to Violence**” was attended by over 100 people. An excerpt from Sr Susan Connelly's talk is on p2.
■ The FEN Film night “Renewal” was attended by an interfaith audience, including many school students. www.renewalproject.net/film In response to the film, a local representative panel spoke about their initiatives. For further details contact:

1. **All Hallows, Five Dock Parish- School Garden Project:** Michelle Carrick and Heather Palmisani
E: michellecarrick@bigpond.com
2. **Sustainable Hindu Temple:** Vijai Singhal **E:** vijai_singhal@hotmail.com **W:** www.svtsydney.org, www.hindu council.com.au
3. **Sustainable development at Santi Forest Buddhist Monastery - Ayya Analaya** **E:** annietara@gmail.com **W:** www.santifm.org
4. **Mizaan Ecosophy & Wellbeing (Muslim), and Cooks River Regeneration project:** Murisa Hasanovic **E:** info@alghazzali.org **W:** www.alghazzali.org
5. **Cafe Church Goes Green:** Stephanie Gesling

E: coordinator@cafechurch.org.au

W: www.cafechurch.org.au

- The NSW State Election Kit 2011 “**Caring About the State of our Future and doing something about it**” prepared by NetAct. For parishes, schools, or individuals, this kit of papers on 7 election issues seen through the eyes of Catholic Social Teaching is available from us or www.clrinsw.org
- “**Going Fair: A Report Into Implications for Fair Trade Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate** by Jonathan Avis, Macquarie University intern with the PEJ Centre Oct 2010 (available on the PEJ website).
- A preparation program for a group of young people from Croydon and Punchbowl Maronite parishes who spent 3 weeks volunteering in the Payatas garbage dump area of Metro Manila.

Reality and Catholic Social Teaching

The medieval mystic, Hugo of St. Victor, had an axiom: Love is the eye! What we see is largely shaped by either the love or bitterness we feel at any given moment. The challenge for us is always to look at the world with love – seeing things as they are, the goodness, the indifference and the ugliness that make up reality. Jesus called this purity of heart. It's virtually a non-negotiable for those willing enough to work for a more equitable and just social order – an order that Christians call the *Reign of God*. Such a way of seeing has always been at the core of the Church's teaching. Sadly, many times it's been forgotten. Every age needs a prophet or prophets to refresh the corporate memory. For the first time in the history of Church documents Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* called on *all* people to “establish with truth, justice, love and freedom new methods of relationship in human society”. The encyclical continues to be a reminder that without honesty to the real we build our houses on sand.

Jack Evans

Columban Mission Institute

Centre for Peace Ecology and Justice

167 Albert Road, Strathfield NSW 2135 • Postal Address: Locked Bag 2002 Strathfield NSW 2135

Phone (02) 9352 8021 • Fax (02) 9746 8033 • Email pej.cmi@columban.org.au • www.columban.org.au

Non-Violence in Action

The amazing people power revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have demonstrated the power of non-violent action. They can motivate us here in Australia to support those struggling against injustice and oppression, eg:

■ **in Australia:** Recently, stalwart member of FEN, Miriam Pepper, was fined along with 72 other people who were part a large non-violent action protesting the NSW Government's plans to build a new coal fired power station next to the existing Bayswater Station. On December 5th they were charged when 130 people occupied the train line of one of Australia's big carbon polluters.

Miriam, a member of the South Sydney Uniting Church, explained, "*I am inspired by the long Christian legacy of nonviolent direct action. Throughout history, people of faith and love have shown their commitment to God's kingdom of justice, peace and reconciliation of creation by putting their bodies in the way of forces that deny life. As a part of my own small journey of seeking to participate in and witness to this kingdom, I felt called to take similar action.*"

www.insights.uca.org.au/news/2010/no-coal-protest_16-12-2010.htm

■ **in the Philippines:** Columban Fr Sean Martin, a fellow priest, a nun, a former police chief and 6 other people from the dioceses in Zamboanga del Sur, Mindanao are facing charges over a peaceful picket by over 500 Catholic parishioners against mining activity on their land. Ex Prime Minister Arroyo opened up the Philippines to mining companies claiming the financial benefits would help pay the huge foreign debt. But the voices of irrigators, lowland farmers and Subanen indigenous who oppose the mining in Zamboanga have largely been ignored and exploration has been proceeding. The local people feel that the few remaining forests will disappear, and they will be faced with the loss of their land and livelihoods. The priests and bishop of the area have been showing their support for this non-violent action for justice for their people.

Egyptian Women and Non-Violence

Egyptian women were very much involved in the peaceful uprising that ousted Ex President Mubarak. Trish Madigan OP, (past CMI staff member) points out in a recent article that "*they build on a long history of women who struggled for recognition of their human rights and for freedom in Egypt...To ensure that the contribution made by women will not be overlooked, Leil-Zahra Mortada has placed a collection of photos of women in the Egypt protests on her [website](#). She calls it a 'homage to all those women out there fighting, and whose voices and faces are hidden from the public eye!'*" www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=25048

An excerpt from a talk by Susan Connelly rsj, Mary MacKillop East Timor Mission

What Timorese people are doing as they grapple with their recent past and continue to suffer the effects of the mindless violence they have endured is to **hold a mirror up to the Australian face**. When you look into a mirror, if you can manage to take your eyes off your own face, you can see behind you.

As Australians we have begun to look into the mirror the Timorese are raising and we are looking back at our past. As we look into that mirror we find the collusion with violence with which we have caused so much suffering. We need the Timorese. Without the lessons from our shared past, we might well believe the myths we have spun for ourselves, the myths that as a nation we always stand by our mates, are always generous to a fault and fight for the underdog.

We need East Timor to help us to recognise the violence of the disloyalty, greed, and cowardice we have displayed. The narrative that has been a major part of the Timorese survival is a narrative we share with them and it is that of the Cross.

For a complete copy of this talk, please contact the PEJ Centre.

Conflict Resolution Champion Dies

Stella Cornelius AO helped establish some of Australia's peace institutions: the **Conflict Resolution Network**, Macquarie University's Centre for Conflict Resolution and the National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2010, when she was awarded the UN Association of Australia Peace Award, she said that Anzac Day should go beyond remembering sacrifice in war to become "*an annual reminder of our universal desire for peace*". www.crnhq.org/ RIP Stella!

Inaugural Australian Gerard Seminar

I attended this seminar held at St Paul's College, Sydney University. A network has been established to promote discussion and awareness of the theories of René Girard in Australia. Wolfgang Palaver, University of Innsbruck, President of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion (on the right in the photo) was the key presenter.



Global Day of Action on Military Spending: April 12

The world spent \$1.53 trillion dollars on the military in 2009 when \$30 billion a year could eradicate world hunger according to the World Food Summit. To get involved see <http://demilitarize.org/> **Anne Lanyon**

Humility and Reality

Humus is the root of the word humility. Even though the word *humility* in English has taken on connotations of weakness, it is about being grounded, down to earth, about recognizing what is true. Recent natural catastrophes of floods, cyclones and fires in Australia remind us that we have to get real about this land we live in. We face its truth in humility rather than arrogance.

Many recent media reports following a series of natural catastrophes often reveal a human arrogance towards nature - *nature is a monster, at war with nature*. There have often been shrill reports demanding that we make Australia flood proof, or, that cruel nature has to be tamed. Some styles of reporting can turn viewers into little more than voyeurs while they avoid asking why these things are happening.

Why have government planners allowed people to build on flood plains or in the bush or on beach fronts? Tropical oceans are warming so that they produce more frequent storms and increased rainfall? Architects, greedy builders, dreamy home owners and short term business planners need to get real. *Where is the logic in their position?*

Traditional Catholic ethics rightly emphasized rational argument where logic played a major role and its reasoning has now expanded to include environmental issues.

In ethics, Scripture gives images, language and ideals to guide the reasoning process as do cultural practices and human experience. Civil laws and international agreements like those on human rights and protection of nature add their wisdom. Together they form *a coherent set of principles that ground Catholic ethics*. When it comes to examining natural disasters, stupidity, greed or political expediency leads to chaos. An alternative is to logically apply principles in taking decisions on how to respond to environmental catastrophes.

Humility leads us to see the truth about how humans live on this land Australia. It helps us recognize that this land has its limitations with *droughts and flooding rains* as Dorothy Mackellar told us. With its wide fluctuations of climate it is unreal to think that decade long droughts and wild fires will not be with us again soon. Agriculture and builders cannot operate well in a make believe view of the land.

We are blessed that some *long term government planners and dedicated personnel* did their preparation to meet recent natural disasters. There is integrity in their work. *But preaching natural limits and actively*

opposing the unreal dreamy planners has its cost. Several people identified themselves as Christians when they stood with demonstrators to stop the expansion of coal mining in the Hunter. They were charged and fined. It takes both ethical insight and courage to say that mining companies should not rule Australia.

The cry of *jobs, jobs* in the gold mines should not stop the rivers flowing as happened to the Belabula near Orange where I grew up. Australia's mineral wealth will not go away if it is exploited at a slower pace. Listening to the earth speaking to us in Australia through floods and drought, fire and cyclone, can help *give new spirit to our Catholic faith*. Our theology of the incarnation takes on new depths when we re-connect with earth. Our moral teaching goes beyond sexual ethics to influence the development priorities of our nation. As we renew our faith, we will lessen our arrogance towards earth and other people if we humbly ground ourselves in the truth of things. We will live with more contentment.

The Columban Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation website in Australia (JPICoz) has been totally revamped. <http://www.columban.org.au/our-works/JPIC-Justice-Peace-Integrity-of-Creation/>

Charles Rue

Upcoming PEJ Projects

OUT SOON!

Stations of the Forests (Australian Version)

DVD and supporting booklet using the 'Stations of the Cross' format to lament the stages of death of part of God's Creation, the Rainforests.

In the International Year of the Forests, how can prayerful reflection on the destruction of forests challenge us to take action in our communities?

Pre-orders taken now!

Ph 02 9352 8021 E pej.cmi@columban.org.au

**Culture of Peace Formation Program for Educators
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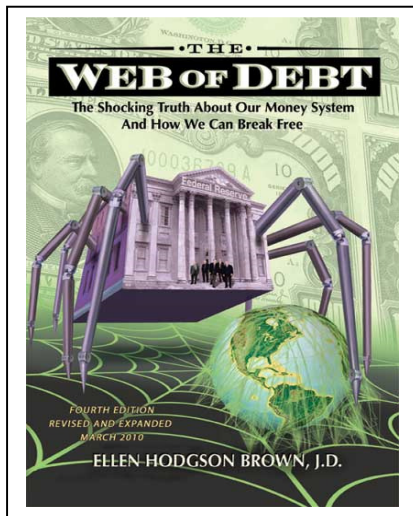
Registration: Columban Mission Institute 02 9352 8021
Closing Date: April 13th

Book Review: The Web of Debt,

Ellen Hodgson Brown,

Third Millennium Press,

Fourth edition, March 2010 www.webofdebt.com



If you are like me and have trouble getting your head around economic terms but know from the evidence around you that the economic system is not working for the good of the community, then this book is for you.

Written from the USA perspective, it unravels historically, the web of debt that is drowning USA and global citizens. It does this in a manner that reveals banking as a “giant Ponzi scheme”. It shows how Australia too is caught in this web. The author uses the allegory of “The Wizard of Oz” to demonstrate how the current precarious global financial situation has been engineered by a small group of powerful people. They run the Federal Reserve which is not a government organization, but a private corporation owned by a consortium of very large multinational banks. (Ch 13)

Ms Brown cites financial commentator **Hans Schich**: “The game has gotten so centralized and concentrated, that the greater part of U.S. banking and enterprise is now under the control of a small inner circle of men. He calls the game “spider webbing.” Its rules include:

- Making any concentration of wealth invisible.
 - Exercising control through “leverage” – mergers, takeovers, chain share holdings where one company holds shares of other companies, conditions annexed to loans, and so forth.
 - Exercising tight personal management and control, with a minimum of insiders and front-men who themselves have only partial knowledge of the game.”
- “The international bankers have succeeded in doing more than just controlling the money supply. Today they actually *create* the money supply, while making it appear to be created by the government.”

First Published in 2006, this book has been regularly updated and is now available as an audio book – a ‘must read and discuss’!

Need for economic change in the Middle East

At the root of the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt is economic injustice. For this tide of change spreading from North Africa to Middle Eastern countries to be successful there needs to be a revolution in economic structures. In the resource rich Gulf nations the gap between rich and poor is ever growing and the environmental impact ever increasing.

Jubilee Australia News

As an active member of Jubilee Australia’s Board, PEJ is encouraged by the impact Jubilee has been having with its strategies when naming the reality of economic injustice to some powerful Australian institutions, particularly those related to the mining industry.

“Mining projects undertaken by Australian corporations in developing countries have, in many reported cases, had unacceptable consequences, including social unrest, irreversible environmental damage, and the infringement of individual and community human rights”, said Adele Webb, National Coordinator. www.jubilee.org.au

■ As the major watchdog of Australia’s export credit agency, EFIC, Jubilee appeared before the Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia’s relationship with the Countries of Africa. Read the transcript on the Committee website. Search www.aph.gov.au

■ EFIC, at Jubilee’s recommendation, recently held a consultation with Jubilee and other civil groups prior to the update of its Environment and Social Policy Procedures. This breaks down some previous secrecy.

■ As part of the Robin Hood Tax Coalition, Jubilee made a submission on long term options for international climate finance to the Department of Climate Change consultation.

■ Jubilee pointed out to the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness that sovereign debt obligations of many poor countries wipe out aid effectiveness.

■ The Mission to Australia of the UN Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights consulted with Jubilee. He found that AusAID does not have a specific policy requiring all programs to be consistent with a human rights-based approach to development. Read the Media Release by Dr Lumina. www.un.org.au/UN-expert-on-foreign-debt-and-human-rights-discusses-Australian-aid-news317.aspx

Sean McDonagh ssc to receive Justice Award.

Sean has been chosen by the Partnership for Global Justice (An NGO at the UN comprising 120 religious orders) to receive the **Eight Annual Justice Award for his work in Ecology, Environment and Religion.** The Award will be presented at their Annual Meeting in New York on May 1st

Anne Lanyon