

Columban Connections

The Columban Centre for Peace Ecology & Justice



The Centre responds from a Gospel perspective to the regional and global challenges associated with peace, ecology and justice.

“The Columbans are evangelizers and are called to challenge the local Church, having crossed cultures. The Columbans have a role as bridges between cultures in dialogue with peoples, in reconciliation, in ecology and in human rights. As people who left their own country; were welcomed as strangers in another; allowed to walk another’s sacred ground and let into the sacredness of the lives of the people of the people they served, they are challenged even more today to inculturate the gospel among people of all nations, wherever migrants may be”. These words from Columban Brendan Hoban (associate member of PEJ) describe part of the rationale for the focus of Columban work with migrants around the globe.

Migration is a key force in the world today. People are on the move internationally and within nations. The rapid advances in technology have enabled this to accelerate. There are push factors of war and conflict, environmental degradation and disaster which are fear and security driven. There are pull factors such as employment, pleasure, lifestyle and family which are desire driven.

Where ever there are migrants, there are needs particular to their situation. Australia is a majority immigrant country. Using the language “border protection” and “we will decide who comes to this country”, it is currently manifesting a discriminatory drawbridge approach to migration. It is in denial of the real effects of migration on its indigenous peoples. These attitudes are not the Beatitudes of the Gospel. This provides an opportunity for all who profess the Gospel of Jesus.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees are one group where religious organisations have led the way in advocating for their rights. This Columban Connections explores some other issues associated with migration, the role of the Church and some Columban work.

Anne Lanyon

What we’ve been up to.

Being geographically more in the heart of Sydney has meant more workshops, reflection days, teaching and networking across all three Sydney dioceses, a great joy as we make new connections and respond to new challenges.

Release of “The Lantern Series”

Issue One of the new series on evangelisation has been distributed nation wide. *See notice on separate sheet.*

“Safe Food” Multifaith Forum on Food.

PEJ Centre co-ordinated a multifaith group to plan this Forum at Santa Sabina College Strathfield on 18th June.

The keynote speaker, Judy Carman, University of Adelaide is the spokesperson on GM foods for the Public Health Association of Australia. Judy’s interest in GM foods began when she learnt that Australia’s food regulator (ANZFA, now FSANZ) had approved their first GM food and she was appalled at the quality of the science used to justify safety. She found subsequent safety assessments to be even worse. www.ther.org.au Chaired by Noel Debien, ABC Religion Report, the Forum involved Aboriginal, Uniting Church, Muslim, Buddhist, Bahai, Hindu, Catholic and Jewish faith traditions. The program consisted of presentations, responses, discussion, prayer rituals, and resource displays. Charles Rue showed the new Columband dvd on GE food which will be launched later in the year. An agreed Statement on Food by a Coalition of Religions will also be published.

“Dreaming from the Heart” Message Stick

Anne Lanyon co-ordinated the progress of the Message Stick in the Diocese of Broken Bay. It calls the Church to renew Pope John Paul II’s Message to Aboriginal People at Alice Springs, 1986.

<http://passiton.openingthedoors.org.au/speech/pope.htm>



With Anne at the Welcome, Kevin Duncan who lives on Darkiyung land, Bishop David Walker and Yaegl elder Lenore Parker.

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Peace and Migration

At first glance there may not seem any great connection between these. There are some migrants who are fleeing persecution, war, violence and forced from their homelands. But the majority of migrants are not refugees, asylum seekers or trafficked people. The UN estimates that 1 in every 35 people lives outside the country of their birth and in Europe this rises to 1 in every 12.

Human mobility is one of the phenomena of the modern world. With the greater movement of people, poverty, over population in countries, the demographics of ageing and globalization, this trend is set to continue. Many countries today experience problems with migrants that could not be imagined some years ago such as Ireland, Korea, Japan and Taiwan. Many of the traditional countries that were built on the blood of migrants like the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK are torn between a need for migrants and being selective in keeping migrants out.

The result is social tension, insecurity and a rise in ethnic and racial violence. This is not peace and as *Gaudium et Spes* (78) tells us: "Peace is not merely the absence of war, nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies". Peace in the Bible is seen as the fullness of life.

Globalization is the cry of the powerful today from politicians, business people and the financial world. While they laud free markets and the flow of capital, the same people wish to control labour and workers. Pope John Paul II spoke in *Laborem Exercens* about the "priority of labour (workers) over capital". He condemned communism for its "theoretical materialism" and capitalism for its "practical materialism".

If we took these words seriously and worked to practice the principles involved we would not be able to accept that while the capitalist and companies are free to move their capital, workers do not have the same freedom to follow the work. Many workers are forced to leave their countries not just because of persecution, but for economic, ecological and health reasons. The UN definition of a refugee does not fit these categories. It is a legal definition coming from another world and another time. Today we need a human rights based definition which is broader and more just.

The Synod of bishops in 1971, *Justice in the World*, says: "(migrants) are often forced to leave their own country to find work, but frequently find the doors closed in their faces because of discriminatory attitudes, or, if they can enter, they are often obliged to lead an insecure life or are treated in an inhuman manner". This cannot be peace. In the intervening 35 years, the

problem has only increased and will continue to do so into the future.

The migrant issue is not like it used to be in the 1950s and will never return to that. The migrants of today are not just objects of our charity. They are subjects of society which is multicultural. Because many of them do not have the vote, the politicians are not too interested in listening. But the migrants challenge us as Church people and they give us an opportunity to speak for and with the poor, the weak and the marginalized. We may not have a great record in this as many of the religious right show but reading "the signs of the times" we can start doing something now. Work for justice and for human rights is work for peace. A failure to do that is opting for war.

Brendan Hoban

The Newcomers

With a community of about two hundred, it is always easy to pick the new arrivals. You haven't seen them before. Not quite at ease. They need to be noticed - and welcomed. "Where are you from? When did you arrive? How is your family?" This breaks the ice, and then they begin to get to know other members of the community.

Mostly they are people who come from a situation of harassment and persecution in China - occasionally from other countries, like Cambodia or Laos. The next thing is that they have to regularize their status in Australia. This means an application to DIMIA and usually then an appeal to the Refugee Review Tribunal.

Over the last twelve years, working as assistant Pastor in the Chinese Catholic community of West Sydney, I have had a lot of experience in this area. Getting to know people - refugees, solicitors, members of the Refugee Review Tribunal - and myself!

The icing on the cake is to see the families reunited and settling in to life in Australia - and, just as amazing, to see how quickly the young ones pick up English - Australian style!

Columban Fr. Paul McGee works as assistant pastor to the Chinese Catholic Community of West Sydney. Columbans worked in China from the early years of the 20th century until they were forced to leave in the early 1950's with the coming of the communist regime.

Take Action

- Look for opportunities to establish and strengthen personal ties with local migrant, religious and cultural minorities
- Make your workplace a welcoming, inclusive environment for workers of all cultures.
- Support initiatives which help to combat discrimination.

Economic Migrant to Eco-Refugee

Most people migrate to seek a better life for themselves and family. Globally, 175 million people live in a country that is different from their land of birth (Cardinal Hamao, *People on the Move*, April 2005*). They migrate because they can no longer live according to local norms of safety, dignity and wellbeing in their home place. Some are called *economic migrants*, but a growing number are becoming *environmental refugees*.

Environmental migrants are often vulnerable and subject to violence. Nature provides a stark image: Polar Bears and their young drowned as they fell through thin ice. The reason: with global warming the Arctic seas are barely freezing over.

Environmental factors pushing migration are not new. It can be argued that it has often led to major spiritual benefits, but at what cost? One factor in the migration of Abram from Ur to the Mediterranean coast, a spiritual pilgrimage to found a people *as numerous as stars*, was climactic change in the 12th century BC.

Rapidly changing rainfall and temperature patterns at the beginning of the 6th century AD led the tribes of northern Europe and Asia to migrate south, hastening the fall of Roman civilization. It was in response to this that the Irish monks, St. Columbanus included, went as missionaries to Europe.

In our day, climatic change is a major cause of internal migration in Africa. It is an emerging factor in China, when added to population pressures and the desire for economic success. Many Pacific Islanders are already ecological refugees. The Netherlands is moving its citizens from low-lying areas. But, where are the people of Bangladesh and other coastal lands to move to when sea levels rise but a few meters? www.catholicearthcareoz.net.au

Australia is living with its head in the sand. Every level of government is slow to listen to scientific evidence about the connection between the level of fossil fuel use and global warming. Authorities are slow to implement energy saving measures in home building, business and transport. Why? The slow response has multiple reasons – sheer scientific ignorance, being held captive by an ideology of economic growth, false messages from religious leaders who call the concern ‘hysterical’.

The main reason for a slowness of action, however, seems to be fear of voter backlash. Citizens have been brainwashed by a *culture of having more – practical atheism*. Many aspects of Australian society reinforce this attitude – educational aspirations, the desire for endless travel and distraction, personal pampering that makes luxury living the norm for all.

The push to impose genetically engineered food production (GE) is a recent ploy by companies in the profit game. It defies nature, deceives the public and will lead to hunger where traditional agricultural systems feed the people, causing even more migration. (cf. new Columban DVD, and WCC paper. <http://wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/pa-booklet-bio.pdf>).

What have these political and business issues to do with the movement of peoples? Simply put, Australians migrate internally to seek their *so called dream*. Many migrate from overseas in search of seemingly limitless economic advantage.

God will not be mocked and God’s revelation in nature will not be mocked. St Thomas Aquinas taught that nature is revealing of God. The voice of nature today says: Enough!

The world’s environmental crisis might be the opportunity for a religious-ecological conversion. Migration to fulfill our dream might change to staying put. Personally we might dream of living more simply. As citizens we might lobby to change our national dream. In global solidarity we might dream of aid projects like *Seeds of Life* in EastTimor, where sustainable local agriculture, not armaments, aims to create stability thus lessening the desire to migrate.

Charles Rue

* *People on the Move* - magazine of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, Vatican City.

*http://www.cropscience.org.au/icsc2004/poster/3/4/7/2010_piggincm.htm

See

“Climate Refugees: the hidden cost of climate change”, Stephanie Long & Cam Walker, www.onlineopinion.com.au Search *Environment* dated 20.6.05

Take Action!

Friends of the Earth Australia have a *Citizens Guide to Climate Refugees* that includes *Things You Can Do*. See www.foe.org.au/climate

“We once dwelled in valleys below
Where streams and rivers used to flow.
Then loggers stripped the countryside,
Chain saws ripped, and the rivers died.
Next, lowland farmers claimed the land,
And we moved here to where we stand.”
From “The Dream of Mindanao”, **Vincent Busch**
Just released, “The Dream of Mindanao” is a poetic depiction of the disastrous effects of globalization and the dream of a better future using the voices of the indigenous Subanen people and their wildlife. It can be ordered through the PEJ Centre.

Migration and Globalization...

... are two key words in our world today. There are many reasons for migration. For some it is voluntary, for others it becomes a necessity as they flee from conflict and/or poverty, to seek to make a better life for themselves and their children. Yet migration also causes conflict with others.

Globalization is a word that is relatively new and, as yet, not very well defined. It can mean different things to different people, but does mark some kind of new era in human history. It refers to an emerging global culture that goes beyond a group or nation and speaks of international and borderless free flow of people, ideas and capital. It has economic, political, cultural and social implications that effect lives of people and God's creation.

The Vatican issued a document in 2004, *The Love of Christ towards Migrants (Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi)*, in which it sees migrants as Church. They are not just something, some group added to a local diocese, parish, town etc or an object of our charity. God's people are people on the move – not static with definite geographical boundaries.

Brendan Hoban

Bishop's Conference Restructure

Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office incorporated Into Commission for Pastoral Life

<http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bishops/confpres/2006110510.htm>

Excerpt of Letter to **Bishop Joe Grech**, Chair of the former Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

"I am writing to you to support you and your work for the migrant apostolate. I also wish to express my great disappointment with the recent decision of the Bishops Conference with the change of structure in the Conference and what appears to me as a down grading of the office of migration.

I refer you to the document "Erga Migrante Caritas Christi" Nos 1,4,6 and others which are quite clear that it (migration) is a phenomenon today and with globalization in the market place will not only continue but will grow, with demographic reasons as one of the forces.

I wonder how many, if any of the Bishops have even read this important document from Rome?

My concern and worry is that they fail to see the mobility of people, running from the migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, not to mention the obvious mobility of the modern city parish.

Pastoral Life covers all of these, I grant, but it is too broad a concept to cover some of the weakest and most vulnerable in society and Church. It fails to recognize the migrants as Church (on the move) and is more

biblical and scriptural as the people who "have not here a lasting city but look forward to one that is to come"....

I appreciate that the Conference was working on restructuring the organization. I am not happy with the apparent failure to respond to the migration issue appropriately.

The document, "Erga Migrantes", tells us there is need to restructure. "Local Churches must rethink pastoral care (towards immigrants), programming it to help the faithful live their faith authentically in today's new multicultural and pluri-religious context" (41). As part of that, I wonder did the Bishops Conference do anything about Missiology studies in Catholic universities, seminaries, Institutes of Higher Learning, not to mention "compulsory courses of theological specialization" (71)?

When the document speaks of the need in both sending and receiving Churches of specialized training for chaplain/ missionaries, I understand it refers more to the diocesan priest training as I assume that the missionary groups and the religious orders, not only have done this for years but they also have the experience of working as migrant chaplains and people on the move for much longer.

Brendan Hoban

Reflections from Always People – Challenge to the Church

As a major, culturally diverse institution in the country is the Catholic Church inclusive, welcoming and diverse enough to engage people of various cultures?

Why is there still the preference by many for the 'enclave' of a variety of Catholic ethnic communities?

Despite our multiculturalism and multicultural policies in the secular arena, many people, even after years in Australia, still feel they are 'migrants' in their adopted country.

These are some of the questions and issues that the Church needs to more effectively address as a vital part of its mission.

The above is the content of **Jose Zepeda's*** article as he seeks to analyse the whys and wherefores for the present situation within the Australian Church today.

For further information go to the *Pontifical Council for the Pastoral care of Migrants and Itinerant People*, Vatican City website.

*Jose Zepeda is the International Coordinator – *Always People* and Consultor of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

Jack Evans

Coming Events

June

25th – July 1st

Week of Action, "Your Rights at Work"

http://www.actu.asn.au/work_rights/get_involved/JuneEvents.html

28th Seminar, "Ethics, The Practical Realities". Edmund Rice Business Ethics Initiative Sydney .

<http://www.erc.org.au/busethics/forum.shtml>

July

2nd – 9th

National Aboriginal and Islander (NAIDOC) Week

www.naidocweek.com.au

<http://www.natsicc.org.au/>

3rd – 4th Youth Ministry National Symposium: *Builders and Dreamers – Creating Sustainable Ministry with Young People*. Contact **Liz Jones**, Broken Bay Institute 02 9473 4565

www.bbi.catholic.edu.au

11th World Population Day

9th – 14th

Conference, Catchments to Coast, Cairns Australia

www.catchments.org.au

17th – 21st The World Meteorological Organisation Climate Risk Conference, Finland

<http://www.wmo.int/index-en.html>

28th School's Tree Day www.planetark.com

30th National Tree Day

August

3rd *Sydney Peace Fest Film Festival – Tap Gallery, 278 Palmer St; Darlinghurst*

6th Hiroshima Day –

<http://www.hiroshimadaysydney.org/>

9th

International Day of the World's Indigenous People

<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/indigenous/>

12th – 20th

National Science Week

www.scienceweek.info.au/

12th International Youth Day *Tackling Poverty Together*

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/iyouthday.htm>

21st – 24th

Landcare Conference, Brisbane

www.landcare.org.au/conference

25th World Migration Day

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/migration2006.shtml>

Migrations: Signs of the Times

27th Refugee and Migrant Sunday

28th – 3rd September

Keep Australia Beautiful Week

www.kab.org.au

September

24th – 29th

9th International Symposium on Biosafety of Genetically Modified Organisms (ISBGMO), Cheju Island, South Korea, International Society for Biosafety Research (ISBR)

<http://www.isbr.info/isbgmo/>

October

2nd – 7th *Dreaming from the Heart* – 20th

Anniversary Pope John Paul's visit to Alice Springs

http://www.natsicc.org.au/alice_springs_2006.htm

August 27th

5th International Abrahamic Conference
Sydney University

For Further Details Contact:

Sr Pauline Rae, Columban Centre for
Christian Muslim Relations ph 02 9352 8011
Or

Affinity Intercultural Foundation
ph 02 9702 0789

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Resources Available from PEJ



New!

The Lantern Series....Witnessing Christ in the World

The **Columban Mission Institute** is pleased to offer this new series to parishes, schools, diocesan bodies, catechists, discussion groups and religious congregations.

“**The Lantern**” focuses on *Evangelisation – Witnessing Christ in the World* and will tell stories of what Jesus means in Australia today.

We offer this resource in the context of the Church’s Evangelisation project, World Youth Day 2008, and the Centennial World Mission Conference in Edinburgh 2010.

Pope John Paul II’s *Redemptoris Missio* says

*“..in the Church's **one mission** ... we can distinguish .*

***First** ... peoples, groups, and socio- cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known (*ad gentes*).*

***Secondly**, there are Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures ... In these communities the Church carries out her activity and pastoral care.*

***Thirdly**, there is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith ... In this case what is needed is a "new evangelization" or a "re-evangelization.”#31- 33*

The Lantern Series of 12 issues will run over two years. It will provide stories and examples of the **three faces of evangelization**.

This inexpensive resource can be used:

- To re-examine the three faces of evangelisation,
- As a source of material for parish bulletins or newsletters,
- To give away to parishioners,
- For discussion with RCIA candidates and sponsors,
- As a basis for discussion groups,
- For Staff inservice or group reflection and prayer,
- For Classroom discussion with secondary students

There will be three issues for 2006.

Minimum order, 25 leaflets for \$10 including postage.

To order, contact Anne Lanyon, ph 02 9352 8021, fax 02 9746 8033