

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.

Co-ordinator's Comment

2008 is already a significant year. The apology by Prime Minister Rudd to the Stolen Generations as the first act of the new government has lifted a weight off not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but the whole nation. There is a sense that the fear-mongering, meanness and close-mindedness of recent years is passing. We certainly hope so! The different context provides different opportunities to engage society for those working in the areas of peace, ecology and justice. We look forward to the challenges ahead.

One issue PEJ works on is GM food. The good news is that South Australia has continued its moratorium on GM canola for another two years. The bad news is that the NSW and Victorian Governments have lifted their moratoria and the Federal Minister for Agriculture has publicly expressed his support for GM food.

The situation with GM food is just one part of the bigger issue of food production today. This Connections looks at some aspects of food associated with peace, ecology and justice. The 2006 FEN Statement on Safe Food by a Coalition of Religions is reprinted inside for your use.

Anne Lanyon

PEJ Plans for 2008

Growing Peace

PEJ and the Centre for Christian Muslim Relations will have two inspirational Peace Forums – one in the City of Sydney on April 10th, the other on June 18th during Refugee Week in the culturally diverse council area of Canterbury. (See *Coming Events* for details)

PEJ is preparing the production of a dvd using the peace forums as a model for growing peace in the community. This will be a resource for schools, parishes, community groups, migrant resource centres, peace studies, justice and peace groups and police. Readers are invited to respond to the questionnaire inserted in this Connections.

Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed.

People of the Diocese of Broken Bay and the pilgrims in Sydney will have their eyes opened to the reality of the exploitation of youth in the Philippines, Brazil and, in a different way, Australia at several performances of this World Youth Day event in July. Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed is an official Youth Festival Event.

(See separate page for more information)

Lantern Series on Evangelisation

Issues 9 to 12 will be distributed by April:

#9 *Live Simply, Justly and in Peace*

#10 *Reconciliation*

#11 *Mission Spirituality*

#12 *Inculturated local Church*

This will bring the series to an end. Complete sets of Issues 1 to 12 will be available in an attractive folder, especially during the *Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed* performances.

Faith Ecology Network (FEN)

In October there will be a series of three interesting multifaith seminars on various topics related to the theme: "*Earth: Our Common Home.*"

It is hoped that FEN will have its own website by the end of the year.

GM Food

PEJ will join with other groups to strengthen the campaign against GM food in Australia.

Debt Campaign

PEJ is working closely with Jubilee Australia to engage church communities in becoming Jubilee Congregations and to make a feature of poor country debt issues on Jubilee Sunday, May 18th.
www.jubileeaustralia.org

Migration Issues

Jack Evans will continue to minister to detainees in Villawood Detention Centre and give support to those seeking refugee status.

Education

A formation program for teachers in social justice education and Catholic Social Teaching will be run in partnership with Sydney Catholic Education Office.

“A peaceful and stable environment in every country is a fundamental condition for the attainment of sustainable food security.”

World Food Summit Plan of Action www.fao.org

Globalization and changing patterns of food production and consumption have increased pressures on land and sea and are contributing to national, environmental and ethnic conflict:

Antarctica

In the Southern Ocean 2405 tonnes of toothfish is poached annually, Japan is whaling in the name of scientific research, and a Norwegian company is spending \$100 million to build a ship to vacuum up krill at the centre of the polar food web. *“This is a ... war between conflicting values, a battle to uphold the rule of international conservation law and to protect endangered species from arrogant greed and ecological ignorance,” Steaming in the Southern Ocean, Andrew Darby, 19/1/08 www.smh.com.au/news/*

Africa: Many Modern Conflicts Are Food Wars, Say Experts

Researchers at the US International Food Policy Research Institute, in *exploring the link between hunger and armed conflict have developed the concept of “food wars” where warring parties fight for control of food supplies to reward their supporters and punish their enemies* <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709131192.html>

Conflict disrupts food production.

Food Aid to the victims of conflict can be used by donors to promote their own self interest: dumping excess crops, promoting GM foods, changing political and economic structures. *“Linking food aid to reform is the equivalent of using food as an instrument of political or economic pressure.” World Food Summit Plan of Action www.fao.org*

Aidwatch works to ensure that Australian overseas aid reaches the right people, communities and their environments www.aidwatch.org.au

Aspects of The Millennium Development Goals to halve global poverty by 2015 grew out of the 1996 World Food Summit. Partners in the **Global Hunger Alliance** have identified two classes of initiatives from the Summit most likely to result in significant progress towards food security:

- 1) Those that make meaningful progress toward “elimination of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries”
- 2) Those that increase “the production and use of culturally appropriate and underutilized food crops,

including grains, oilseeds, pulses, root crops, fruits and vegetables”. *Food resources are more than sufficient to support projected population increases, provided that everyone consumes the sustainable, predominantly plant-based diet endorsed by the World Health Organization. Global Hunger Alliance www.globalhunger.net/*

Climate change will increase tensions markedly as people are displaced by rising sea levels, drought, floods and extreme weather events. *Australia must help our Pacific neighbours to meet the challenge of climate change – from assisting our neighbours to adapt to the effects of climate change now, to taking climate change refugees when countries are finally overcome by rising sea levels. Our Drowning Neighbours: www.anthonyalbanese.com.au/*

A new cd Turn Down the Heat, a joint project of the Wollongong Catholic Education Office and the Edmund Rice Centre on behalf of the *Pacific Calling Partnership* was recently launched to support our Pacific neighbours. www.erc.org.au The Edmund Rice Centre has also published a “Just Comment” entitled *“Climate Change and Conflict.”*

Chocolate, conflict and climate change

As Australians munch their way through 20 chocolate eggs per person this Easter (world champions!), cocoa farmers in Cote D’Ivoire struggle to survive. Their country has been divided by ethnic fighting since 2001.

www.wfp.org/country_brief/indexcountry.asp?country=384# The UN has called for a US\$20 trillion investment over the next 20 years in climate change abatement. That’s the price of a \$2.50 chocolate bar per day for each of the 1.1 billion people of the developed world! Coffee, Confection and the Trillion Dollar Climate Connection, Peter Vintila, *OnLine Opinion* 25/2/08 www.onlineopinion.com.au

Taking Notice

The PEJ Centre has been doing workshops for several years using chocolate as a case study of the injustices of globalisation. Awareness of the power of consumers in Australia to bring about change is growing. Through letter writing by students and teachers encouraged in the workshops, the Chocolate and Confectionary Manufacturers have taken notice. PEJ and supporters have been invited to a personal briefing by the CEO on changes in the cocoa industry saying *“there needs to be change to foster an ethical supply chain.”* Your letters do make a difference! Why not join the letter writers? www.columban.org.au/Our-works/peace-ecology-justice/campaigns_and_projects.html

Mothers Group

A group of Melbourne mothers have taken the fight to the food companies about the health risks of genetically modified foods (GM foods) for their children. www.madge.org.au They are supporting a letter to the PM from prominent Australian scientist and business people on the production and labeling of GM foods.

Nutritionists

Hospital and community health workers are campaigning on the availability, preparation and nutritional value of food - fresh food in hospitals; Meals on Wheels; growing levels of obesity in the community. The Columbians are part of the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance which networks between groups. *Scratch where it itches* they say. NSW Health Minister, Reba Meagher, announced soft drinks and foods high in sugar, fat and salt will be *phased down* in all food outlets and vending machines in NSW public hospitals, as part of increased efforts to tackle obesity (12.11.07). www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au/

Food Systems

Columbian Mission Institute cooperates with groups like *Friends of the Earth Australia* which campaigns against the ecologically destructive practices of agri-chemical conglomerates. www.foe.org.au Vertical control of the food chain runs from seed patents and agri-chemical dependence, right through to marketing. They manipulate government regulators to ensure corporate control of the agri-food chain.

Organic Food Systems

Organic-Sustainable-Fossil Fuel Free, *Food Futures Now* www.i-sis.org.uk/foodFutures.php documents how organic, sustainable agriculture and localized food (and energy) systems use the latest science. The so called 'basket case' nations of Ethiopia and Cuba are doing farmer based research that works. UN FAO International Conference on *Organic Agriculture and Food Security* 2-3 May 2007 documented similar results.

Organic Food and Nutrition

A study released by Newcastle University upon Tyne (UK) found that organic vegetable crops contained up to 40% more beneficial compounds and organic milk contained over 90% more nutrients than conventionally produced milk. Over four years 33 academic centres across Europe participated.

Regulation for Food Safety

There is a lack of independent testing done by the Australian government watchdog FSANZ on the effects of *GM additives* which indirectly enter our food chain. GM additives do not have to be labeled if they are below 1 percent by volume. The USA has not even done follow up studies on the effects of eating *whole GM foods* which are a real possibility for Australia.

Food Allergies

After the release of whole GMOs into the human food chain in the USA, food related allergies doubled, but, the possible connection has not been tested for. More science that is open to public scrutiny is needed like that the CSIRO did on GM peas which proved they caused lung problems. Good public science exposed industry lies about deaths from asbestosis, deformities from Thalidomide and DDT.

Tap Water more Healthy

Tap water contains fluoride which significantly improves dental health. Marketing campaigns from bottled water companies sometimes claim that bottled water is safer than tap water. This can be the true in some countries but all major centres in Australia have a clean water supply.

Bottled Water Costs

Tap water costs around \$1.20 a tonne but bottled water costs \$3000 a tonne. Australians spent \$385 million on 250 million litres of bottled water in 2006 (AC Nielson). Its environmental cost - producing, transporting refrigerating and disposing of the bottles - causes 60,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions. It takes 141,666 barrels of oil just to make the resin for the plastic bottles (Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment & Security).

Peak Oil and Food

Oil shortages will impact on food production, its transport and processing. Present food supplies depend on fossil fuels and fossil based chemicals. This another angle on climate change.

Eucharist, Food for the World

'The Eucharist also has cosmic value: The transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ constitutes, in fact, the principle of divinization of creation itself.' Pope Benedict Corpus Christi 2007

Charles Rue

‘In the commitment to transform unjust structures to restore human dignity ... the Eucharist becomes in life what it means in the celebration; it denounces those political and economic powers that deplete the earth's riches; it reminds about the serious exigencies of distributive justice in face of the inequalities that cry out to heaven; it encourages Christians to commit themselves and act in political life and social action.’ (Bishops Synod on the Eucharist No. 48)

The inequalities of food production that cry out to heaven today can be exemplified in the humble potato and biotechnology.

2008 is the Year of the Potato! www.potato2008.org

‘The celebration of the International Year of the Potato (IYP) will raise awareness of the importance of the potato - and of agriculture in general - in addressing issues of global concern, including hunger, poverty and threats to the environment.’

The potato is the third most important food crop in the world. The Andean region is the centre of domestication and diversity of the potato. Columban, **Leo Donnelly**, puts a Peruvian human face to the connections between the potato and hunger, poverty and environmental threats;

‘It’s a blessing if a person, a family, a community manages to break out of economic poverty.... The side effects of poverty are desperation, stress, a social sense of inferiority, even a sense of worthlessness, of not counting in society. Jesus Rosales Amaro...is the father of four youngsters. During his whole life, working as a cultivator of potatoes, he has known only economic poverty.’ “The Far East”, Columban Mission magazine, Jan/Feb 2008.

GM potatoes are being promoted as a solution to global hunger and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Poor farmers in developing countries are targeted in this push. Scientists and groups demonstrating problems with GM potatoes, including health issues are denigrated: 1) Research by Dr Arpad Pusztai on rats fed GM potatoes led to his ostracisation. www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=7255 2) In 2007, Gene Watch reported that a secret Monsanto study saying GM potatoes were unfit for humans was kept quiet for 8 years.

www.gmwatch.org/archive2.asp?arcid=7542

3) UN policies are criticized for holding up the take up of GM food in poor countries. *The United Nations' Unscientific War on Biotechnology* www.scidev.net/content/opinions/eng/un-over-

[regulation-inhibits-new-biotechnologies.cfm](http://www.scidev.net/content/opinions/eng/un-over-regulation-inhibits-new-biotechnologies.cfm)

With this sort of power at work, it is a struggle to defend the rights of poor farmers.

In its application to agriculture, **nanotechnology** also poses a serious threat to food sovereignty. There is an urgent need for critical assessment of nanotechnology's entry into the global food chain. The NSW Parliament is holding an inquiry into nanotechnology. Submissions close March 28th. www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/Committee.nsf/0/60CE9A9B34382DC5CA2573AA00045168 Use your voice and make a submission!

Book Review “Stuffed and Starved: Markets, Power and the Hidden Battle for the World Food System” Raj Patel, Black Inc, Melbourne, 2007.

This book, as the title suggests, is about food, the politics of the global food system, and the manipulations of powerful multinational corporations that enable hunger and obesity to coexist. It’s about the struggle for profit, power and control of the world’s food supply. It’s about the disconnect between farmers and consumers. It points out the recent emergence of consumer backlash.

Patel argues that at every stage of the food story, “choices” are more and more “guided” by those building their empires around food. With their power, the big companies in the corporate food system are able to influence the rules and change the playing field to suit their interests. They do this through the use of various mechanisms such as trade agreements, export credit agencies, the World Bank or the World Trade Organization.

Ever expanding supermarket chains, big companies and advanced food technologies all combine to determine the availability, nutritional value and the variety of what people are eating. In their powerlessness and ignorance poor people, especially, are at the mercy of these powerbrokers who determine the crops, seeds, pesticides and farming methods used. Farmer suicides and the increasing incidents of obesity among the poor are but two of the many human disasters dealt with.

This book ranges across most of the links in the current global food chain and cites examples from across the globe. Patel concludes his book with suggested ways for ordinary people to set about regaining food sovereignty.

What’s missing in this book is the religious/spiritual connection with food.

Anne Lanyon

Coming Events

March

8th 10am – 4pm *Greening the Church: Introducing the Season of Creation.* Jesmond Park Uniting Church, Robert St, Jesmond, NSW.

Contact doug.isobel@bigpond.com

12th Public Forum: *Nanotechnology, Silver bullet or can of worms?* Parliament House Sydney
linda.wilhelm@parliament.nsw.gov.au

14th Public Lecture: *'Cultures of War, Cultures of Peace'* Parkville, Vic

www.psych.unimelb.edu.au/news/Lectur

14th/15th Population, Oil and Climate Change: Their Impact on the Millennium Development

Goals. Ridges Lakeside Hotel, Canberra, Sustainable Populations Australia. **Contact** info@population.org.au

16th Palm Sunday Peace Rallies

Sydney: 1.30 – 3.30 pm Parramatta Town Hall Amphitheatre.

www.nswpeace.org

Melbourne: 1.45pm State Library

melbournepalmsunday2008@gmail.com or 0431 519 577.

Brisbane: 1.30pm, Queens Park:

jshears@powerup.com.au

Darwin: ecnturanium@iinet.net.au.

Adelaide: admin@ecosouth.com.au

18th 5th Anniversary of invasion of Iraq

21st Forestry Day

www.forest.nsw.gov.au/publication/forest_facts/celebrating_trees_forests/default.asp

22nd World Water Day

www.unesco.org/water/water_celebrations/index.shtml

27th Seminar, 'Faith-Based Interventions - The Role of Religion in Corrections' (NSW). Associate Professor Eileen Baldry, Reverend Rodney Moore, Father Michael Whelan SM, Nada Roude, Judge Chris Geraghty. 5.30 pm – 7.30 pm, Assembly Hall, Level 4 (entry level), Sydney University Law School, 173-175 Phillip Street, Sydney. (02) 9351 0239

April

4th,5th Conference *Switch to Green* Canberra

switchtogreen@unaa.org.au

10th Growing Peace in Sydney A Peace Forum put on by Sydney City Council, the PEJ Centre and the Centre for Christian Muslim Relations ph Anne Lanyon 02 9352 8021

13th - 16th Conference: *A Climate for Change* Planning Institute Australia www.pia2008.com/

21st - 24th Australian Network for Plant Conservation Inc (ANPC)

7th National Conference: *Our Declining Flora - Tackling the threats.* Mount Annan Botanic Garden, Sydney www.anpc.asn.au/conferences

22nd Earth Day ww2.earthday.net/~earthday/

23rd World Meteorological Day

www.wmo.int/pages/wmd/

25th Arbor Day

www.arborday.org/arborday/index.cfm

29th – 1st May Fourth Annual Australian Water Summit Darling Harbour, Sydney

cathy.offord@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

www.acevents.com.au/water2008/

May

2nd Nominations for the World Environment Day Awards 2008 close. office@unaansw.org.au

5th – 10th Conference 2008

Facilitating Social Change Commonground Conference Centre, Seymour, Victoria.

Contact Ed McKinley edd@itu.com.au or +61 03 5793 8257 (AUST)

www.fsc.net.au/docs/registration.html#

15th International Day of Families

11th – 16th Tenth World Congress on

Environmental Health. Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre www.ifeh2008.org/index.php

16th World Debt Day www.jubileeaaustralia.org

18th Growing Peace in Canterbury A Peace Forum put on by Canterbury Council, the PEJ Centre and the Centre for Christian Muslim Relations ph Anne Lanyon 02 9352 8021

22nd International Biodiversity Day

www.cbd.int/ibd/2007/

26th National Sorry Day

27th National Reconciliation Week begins

June

5th World Environment Day

www.unep.org/wed/2008/english/

5th - 8th Going Green Expo

www.goinggreenexpo.com.au/index.php

8th World Oceans Day

www.theoceanproject.org/wod/

17th World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.

www.unccd.int/publicinfo/june17/2005/menu.php

What is it?

An expressive performance by young people from Australia, Brazil and the Philippines. Using dance, drama and music, they will present the reality of oppressive situations in which they live. The performance will be part of the Broken Bay *Days in the Diocese*. The Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed is part of the official World Youth Day Youth Festival.

"Theatre is a Language and so it can be used to speak about all human concerns" Augusto Boal, originator of *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

Why?

Everyone has the right to live in dignity. The consciousness of the general public regarding exploitation of these youth needs to be raised. For them to move forward in hope, we first have to reflect on the pain of the past and present, and then respect the difference of equals. Through theatre, transformation can take place at a deep level. We hope to inspire solidarity, action and mission involvement.

Who is participating?

From Olongapo, Philippines, members of the *Preda Akbay Theatre*: young people who have been empowered through theatre to advocate for human rights on behalf of children and youth trafficked for sexual purposes. Some members portray their own experiences. The choreographed musical play tells a powerful story of courage and resistance to abuse and exploitation and is a critical analysis of social issues. The Director of the Preda Foundation is **Fr Shay Cullen** ssc.

From Salvador, Brazil, the dance company of an NGO, *"Cena Um"*: young Afro-Brazilians who tell the story through dance of their ancestors' experience of slavery, and their own story of racial discrimination and prejudice today. *Cena Um* was formed to help them use their natural talents and empower them in a journey of social transformation. The Director is **Fr Colin McLean** ssc.

From St Peter's Catholic College, Tuggerah Lakes, *dance and drama students*: young people from the Central Coast of New South Wales who will be studying and performing *Theatre of the Oppressed* in Term 2, 2008. The Coordinator is **Pollyanna Forshaw** - Youth Ministry Coordinator assisted by a youthful, creative drama/dance team.

Where will it be held?

11th, 12th July 2008,
"Mingara", Tumbi Umbi

16th, 17th July 2008
Sydney Adventist College
159 Albert Rd
Strathfield

Friday 18th July 2008
Parade Theatre, NIDA,
215 Anzac Pde Kensington (TBC)

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!!!

Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed is looking for volunteers to assist during the week of World Youth Day in Sydney:

- Helping set up at performances
- Ushers
- Other logistical tasks
- Hospitality to our guests from Brazil and the Philippines

For further information contact:

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The Columban Youth Theatre of the Oppressed has been made possible through the generous support of Catholic Church Insurances.

STATEMENT ON SAFE FOOD BY A COALITION OF RELIGIONS

As a coalition of believers from eight faith traditions within the Faith and Ecology Network (FEN), we are grateful for and support the work of scientists, health professionals and campaigners who have alerted us to problems associated with access to nutritious food and the increasing presence of genetically modified foods in the market.

we believe that:

- access to nutritious, culturally acceptable and safe food is a sacred gift and a universal human right
- reliable food supplies are best assured by protecting ecological systems and traditional growing methods
- food sovereignty helps national stability and security, and
- human solidarity means ensuring that all people have access to food, locally and globally.

we support:

- research to increase the quality and yields of conventional farming
- informative and accurate labelling of all food stuffs
- overseas development aid which fosters local agricultural systems
- international agreements and local laws promoting food self sufficiency
- programs to give people access to quality food and education about it.

we are concerned about:

- the increasing control of the food industry by agricultural-chemical companies and supermarkets locally and globally
- the move towards the commercialisation of genetically modified crops and animals (GMOs), and subsequent negative impacts on species diversity and the little researched long term effects on human health

we call for:

- independent research by government agencies to better regulate food labelling and the commercialisation of food production
- easier access to, and education about, healthy food
- more publicly funded, peer reviewed, research into the relationship between human health and ecologically sustainable agriculture in Australia and overseas
- an Australian position at Trade Related Intellectual Properties (TRIPs) meetings that helps protect peoples' traditional knowledge and rights to their natural heritage.

We invite the members of all religions to support this call for safe food as a moral and spiritual issue believing that food is a gift to be shared. To raise awareness about safe food and work to make it available fosters human solidarity and promotes the value of life, physical and spiritual.

Issued 18 June 2006 at a Forum on Safe Food, Strathfield, Sydney.

Participants came from Aboriginal, Anglican, Baha'i, Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, Islamic, Jewish, Uniting Church and Anglican religious traditions.

Contact: Anne Lanyon 61 2 9352 8021 pej.cmi@columban.org.au

FEN, the Faith Ecology Network.

To subscribe to FEN, email faith_ecology_network-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.au



COLUMBAN MISSION INSTITUTE

♦ Peace Ecology and Justice

Columban Mission: Global and Local

PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE DVD/RESOURCE

Over the past 5 Years the **Centres for Peace, Ecology and Justice (PEJ) and Christian-Muslims Relations (CMR)**, from the **Columban Mission Institute** in Sydney, have hosted a number of Peace Forums (16 to date). These have been carried out with the assistance of and in consultation with city councils (within and outside Sydney).

The purpose of these forums has been to promote peace and active non-violence in local communities, using the example of Christian-Muslim dialogue. We perceived a need for these after Sept 11, 2002. The response has demonstrated that the forums have met that need. These forums have highlighted the need in Australia today for ongoing dialogue involving all religious traditions and secular groups and for active community engagement in the promotion and maintenance of peace – especially in a multicultural society like Australia.

As one way of contributing to this dialogue and community engagement, the PEJ Centre is planning the production of a DVD, featuring the peace forums themselves, as a model to assist others to do likewise. Though the context will be some of the publicly perceived issues between Christians and Muslims, the message will be about some ways of growing peace between any groups and the positive roles that faith groups can have in this. Accompanying the DVD will be a booklet of questions, issues and topics for discussion (eg The Assisi Declaration of 2002) related to the content of the DVD. Schools, parishes, local councils, tertiary institutions and the police are some of the target groups in mind.

However, to justify such a project and to ensure that the content meets felt needs of those for whom it is made, certain questions should be asked.

Below are some of these questions (you may also have others) and your cooperation in this stage of the project is of paramount importance and greatly appreciated.

- 1) Are you interested?

- 2) Do you think there is a need?

- 3) Would it fulfill/be useful for you/your organisation as a resource?

- 4) In what way would it be useful?

- 5) Any other questions/opinions/ideas you think need to be addressed?

- 6) Your own comments.....

You are invited to reply with your constructive responses? Please include your name and contact details.

Thanking you

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