

## GE and Food Security in Iraq

When Paul Bremer left Iraq after acting as Coalition Provisional Authority Administrator, following the invasion, he left behind 100 orders which have been law since early 2004. Order 81 has implications which seem likely to unjustly disadvantage the food sector in Iraq:

- a) The traditional Iraqi practice of saving and trading seed may be judged illegal,
- b) Patenting of traditional seeds has been opened up to trans-national companies,
- c) If imported seeds mix with traditional seeds, farmers will be liable,
- d) It is likely that GE seeds will be imported and this may well be against the wishes of the Iraqi people for economic, national food security and religious reasons,
- e) The laws allow for the patenting of life forms, including animals, a practice abhorrent to many peoples.

The PEJ and Christian Muslim Centres have written about these concerns to relevant Australian Government Ministers. We have asked them, as a member of the occupying forces, to clarify Australia's role in implementing these orders and asked for the Australian Government to demonstrate its concern for the wellbeing of the Iraqi people by providing the resources to assist their future Government to reverse Orders 39 and 81. For further information <http://www.grain.org/articles/?id=6>

## Debt Update

As Co-ordinator of the Sydney Working Group of Jubilee Australia, [www.jubileeaustralia.org](http://www.jubileeaustralia.org) members of the PEJ Centre, along with other Jubilee Australia supporters have been busy letter writing to the media and political leaders, calling for a debt moratorium and debt-for-aid swap for tsunami affected countries. We are pleased that this campaign has so far been affective. We are also heartened by the appearance of progress made in January by the G7 towards 100% debt cancellation of HIPC countries. We must ensure that these promises (which have been made before) are translated into action at the next G7 meeting in April. We urge you to support this very important campaign. Learn more by reading "**IOU The Debt Threat and Why we Must Diffuse it.**" Plan your own action for **World Debt Day** on May 16<sup>th</sup> or **Jubilee Sunday** on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

### 'I.O.U. The Debt Threat and Why we must Defuse it' Noreena Hertz

Published by Fourth Estate, 2004.

This book was given a 5/5 by Review Index, UK [http://books.reviewindex.co.uk/reviews\\_uk/0007178980.html](http://books.reviewindex.co.uk/reviews_uk/0007178980.html)

"This book is simply the best summary of the developing country debt issue I have ever read. Succinctly, and in clear, simple language, it explains how we got where we are today, and what to do about it. Noreena Hertz considers HIPC, the role of Export Credit Agencies, and the AIDS crisis facing many countries, but her biggest contribution is to make the debt problem understandable without sacrificing accuracy to do so." Professor Ross Buckley, Professor of International Trade and Law, Bond University, and member of Jubilee Australia Policy Working Group.

## Philippines and Debt

2002 OECD figures show that the debt to GDP ratio for the Philippines was 73%. Debt repayments take over 30% of the budget. This letter from Mario Catanes who works with Columban Sr Kathleen Melia and the Subaanen people of Midsalip in Mindanao puts a human and ecological face to the problems of indebted poor countries.

*According to the program of our President in order to pay our country's debts the way forward is to engage in large-scale mining. However we know that according to the Mining Act of 1995, the mining companies have free access to whatever timber they need, whatever water they need, whatever sand and gravel they need, as well as the right to build waste dump sites, tailings ponds and even enter private lands occupied by private landowners. If logging is destructive to life and the environment we know that mining is one hundred times more so. We want to know why should the indigenous peoples and poor farmers be expected to suffer, maybe with their lives, in order that the debts of our country be paid? Why should our mountains and rivers and rice lands be destroyed in order to pay the debts of our country? Why should the poor and environment have to bear the cost of debts incurred by unscrupulous politicians who stored up the money in foreign banks?*

For more information see Ibon Foundation Inc <http://www.ibon.org/index.php>

# 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.

MARCH 2005

## COORDINATOR'S COMMENTS

The events of December 26th, St Stephen's Day, dominated the press for over a month and are still being covered, unusual in today's "here today, gone tomorrow" media. The impact on peoples' consciousness of this massive natural calamity has been huge and, thankfully, there has been a corresponding compassionate public response.

One can't help wondering how different it would be if the other disasters which are occurring all the time in the majority poor world, received a similar response from the minority rich world. The reality that 30,000 people die needlessly every day from poverty, debt and conflict just doesn't hit home with the same effect. Those who advocate, educate and act for peace, ecology and justice consistently struggle to get the attention of media and leaders, mostly to no avail. Nelson Mandela said recently that poverty is not natural ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/4232603.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/4232603.stm)). Neither is militarism natural, nor is the destruction of our environment natural. The ones who are ignored are the ones who suffer the most in these unnatural disasters – like for example the families of the more than 100 000 Iraqis killed in the name of "freedom and democracy" since the invasion; or those who perished nameless in the tsunami because they were trafficked migrants or workers in the sex tourism industry.

This year Catholics are asked to reflect on the meaning of the Eucharist. Let's remember that all are invited to gather around the table and share in the Body of Christ. A system that allows the poor to be thrown the crumbs from the rich ones' table is not part of God's plan for the world. Our work in the PEJ Centre is to challenge the system that is not only just tinkering around the edges of dealing with the unnatural disasters, but actually contributing to them.

## A Response to the Tsunami

To imagine a more just system might be better left to young people like Lauren Hutchins who composed this painting and reflection.

*My painting has different symbols to represent faith, love, courage and hope. These four key words represent what the tsunami created in our world. I chose hope in the hope of a future for the survivors, courage for the survivors and their families, love shown in how people reached out to help them, and faith in God being by their side.*



*In my painting, red is hope and courage as well as the blood shed. The blue is the water covering the green earth as the tsunami did. The red heart in the centre is love. The hands are helping hands as well as drowning hands of the many different types of people affected. There is a hidden cross to show faith.*

**Lauren Hutchins**, is a Year Five student at St Bernard's Catholic School, Berowra. NSW.

Anne Lanyon

## We are moving

As of March 23rd, our new offices will be located at 167 Albert Rd, Strathfield

**Columban Centre for Peace Ecology & Justice**  
C/- Australian Catholic University  
Locked Bag 2002  
Strathfield NSW 2135

**Telephone** (02) 9352 8000  
**Fax** (02) 9746 8033  
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## Revitalising Human Rights

At a recent Australian Catholic University conference, **Chris Sidoti**, former Australian Human Rights Commissioner and currently Director of the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva, spoke passionately about the retreat by governments and society from human rights which he observed as a global, not just an Australian phenomenon. To revitalise the importance of human rights, we need to build new skills. Churches and educational institutions have a vital role in developing these skills which Chris identified as:

- ← investigation and exposure
- ← advocacy
- ← policy research and development
- ← education in schools and communities
- ← local, national and international network building.

Chris went on to give some practical suggestions. For the complete speech, contact the PEJ Centre. With the CMI move to Australian Catholic University, we plan on being even more involved in the development of these skills.

## Growing Peace Forums Continue

The success of previous Christian Muslim Forums on Peace and Active Non-Violence has led to continuing support for our project with local Councils. One pleasing development in the two most recent Forums at Fairfield and Hurstville has been that the planning process involved interfaith groups which were part of the Councils' Multicultural Advisory Committees. We feel the involvement of Mayors and Councillors has demonstrated the need and support for this type of awareness-raising and dialogue, and hopefully for resultant local action. There has been good local media coverage so the message is being spread wider than the many people who have attended. The Hurstville Forum also included young people performing musical items. Plans are already under way for more Forums this year. Our thanks go to the Councils and Affinity Intercultural Foundation, [www.affinity.org.au](http://www.affinity.org.au)

## Fr Cyril Hally Recognised

At the Australian Catholic University Graduation Ceremony, to be held at the Sydney Town Hall on March 31<sup>st</sup>, Fr **Cyril Hally**, who recently celebrated his 85th birthday, will be acknowledged for his many years of service to education in mission, peace, ecology and justice. He will be awarded an honorary Doctor of the University (D.Univ.). Many thanks to **Sr Aileen Crowe** fmm and **Sr Pauline Rae** smsm for their work in preparing this well-deserved recognition of Cyril.

Anne Lanyon

## Catholic Institute of Sydney – Summer School January '05

The five day Intensive '*Refugees and the Mission of the Church*' was recently conducted as part of the new Missiology course. It was facilitated by **Noel Connolly** from the Columban Mission Institute who lectured on relevant Biblical and Social Teachings of the Church, with the input on the refugee issue by **Melissa Phillips**. I recommend these studies for anyone interested in the plight of refugees and human rights movements in the churches.

Brendan Hoban

## Who are we at PEJ?

Hello! My name is **Jack Evans** and I'm a priest with the Columban Mission Society. I spent eight years as a missionary in South Korea and since then have been involved in various aspects of Mission Education with the Columbans in Australia. I also worked with the Marist Brothers Youth Retreat Team for three years and over the years have found myself engaged in youth ministry in some form or other. A couple of years ago I took time out to complete a Masters degree in Theology and now divide my time between chaplaincy work at St Patrick's College, Strathfield, Sydney and working here at the Columban Mission Institute in the Peace, Ecology and Justice Centre. - And trying to be editor of the 'Connections' newsletter!

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <b>I would like to go on the mailing list for Columban Connections (Yes/No)</b>          |                         |
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## **Jobs and the Environment** – they are compatible!

The following abstract from a talk given by Mick Doleman, Ass. Nat Sec. Maritime Union of Australia, shows an awareness of just employment as well as concern for the environment <http://www.mua.org.au/>

"International Shipping was the first global industry to be deregulated. As a result, the qualifications and training of ships' crews are questionable. Sailing under Flags of Convenience (FOCs) has reduced standards. Professor Tony Lane of Cardiff University said 40-50% of seafarers carry fraudulently obtained basic safety training certificates. A solution is to return to a system of accountability under *national merchant carriers*. It would also create jobs for qualified local people. Of the world's 45,000 merchant ships, some 48% sail under FOCs. From 2001-2002 their share of container shipping rose from 21.1% to 43.1% eg located 1,600km from an ocean, Mongolia has registered 350 FOC vessels.

Australian Commonwealth maritime standards are low. Sea worthiness of the ships that come into local waters is doubtful - such as the *Hual Europe* which split apart a few weeks after visiting Sydney in 2002. The *Prestige* was another. Australian law allows single hull oil tankers on its coast. Environmental damage from oil spills is well understood. Less so is the damage to Australian eco-systems from foreign organisms. Bilge water released from ships in Australian coastal waters or harbours is a major pollutant and destroyer of biodiversity. Exotic sea organisms have no natural restraints. Darwin harbour has been invaded. Kelp seabeds off eastern Tasmania are in decline.

A corporate veil hangs over FOC ships. Registered owners, those chartering, cargo owners, crew, managing agents and the ultimate beneficial owners are all separate entities. After a disaster there is no redress. Accountability cannot be established or fines imposed."

## **Spirituality of Eco-Dialogue**

*"The Ecological Movement is a missionary work of the Spirit in these times. Church members and leaders are called to dialogue with that movement within its local and modern context. This involves understanding the scientific method, and respect for the values of major ecological thinkers and activist groups in Australia. Dialogue with these is a missionary act. Coming with a knowledge of Catholic traditions towards the environment and the*

*thrust of recent teaching as sources, dialogue is a search for a deepening of faith. Competent dialogue with the environmental movement is a present day example of evangelisation by Christ's followers as they serve the mission of God."* Sean McDonagh, "Greening the Gospel".

## **Eco-Justice Ministries**

**is an independent, ecumenical agency in USA that helps churches answer the call to care for all of God's creation, and develop ministries that are faithful, relevant and effective in working toward social justice and environmental sustainability. This is an excerpt from a commentary "Prophetic Imagination" by Executive Director, Peter Sawtell.**

*"Brueggemann takes it as a given that the church in the US "is so largely enculturated to the American ethos of consumerism that it has little power to believe or to act." In such a setting, in a time when we have given in to "the royal consciousness", he lifts up prophetic ministry as the hope for transformation . If we cannot imagine that there is a "promised land" that is just and sustainable, then we will never be able to think about starting the exodus. And if our notion of faithful Christianity is tied to affluence and privilege, then we will never be able to image lives of sacrifice and acts of resistance, let alone begin to live that way."* <http://www.eco-justice.org/>

## **Natural Defences**

If nature's traditional defences – living coral reefs and mangroves - had been in place where the Indian Ocean tsunami hit, the damage and loss of life would have been much less. During the previous thirty years many mangrove forests were cut down and replaced with shrimp farms. Soil erosion, dynamiting and pollution have taken terrible tolls on coral reefs in the area. It is now acknowledged that there was much less damage in areas where coral and mangrove were intact than in areas where there were fish farms or open beaches.

Sean Mc Donagh "Where Was God on St Stephen's Day" [http://www.columban.com/where\\_was\\_god.htm](http://www.columban.com/where_was_god.htm)

## **Heeding the Message**

**See 'Tsunami-Hit Nations Look To Save Mangroves'**  
<http://www.planetark.com/dailynewsstory.cfm?newsid=29022&newsdate=17-Jan-2005>

## Blessed Are You Lord God of all Creation (Eucharist and Genetic Engineering)

- Patrick McMullan

*Patrick is a Columban Missionary. With mission experience in Korea since 1984, he is currently working in the Columban Centre for Mission Reflection, Aotearoa New Zealand, returning to South Korea later this year. He completed his MA thesis on globalisation and inculturation at Victoria University Wellington. (This is an extract from a much longer article by Patrick which can be obtained from the PEJ Centre).*

There has been little public theological reflection on GE.

The link between food and faith is never more poignantly realized than in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, which is, in the words of Vatican II, “the source and summit of the Christian life” (Lumen Gentium, 11) Fortunately, while still only a hypothetical construct, it is worth pondering the implications of GE wheat on the Church’s ability to celebrate Eucharist. The Code of Canon Law is specific about what is needed to constitute a lawful Eucharist. “The bread must be wheaten only, and recently made, so that there is no danger of corruption” (Canon 924:2). Wheat (like wine) is, to state the obvious, fundamental.

“Substantially equivalent “ GE wheat would be invalid for use in the Eucharist because of the addition of a new protein that makes wheat tolerant to the herbicide Glyphosate. While the Church naturally makes a direct link between wheat and the real presence, there is also an incarnational and symbolic sense of God’s presence in all food. The millions of believers throughout the world who bless their food before eating attest to this wider faith sentiment.

Like other agricultural seeds, wheat emerges out of the millennial process of evolution, selective breeding, and the guiding hand of the Creator. These seeds are part of our common heritage, which we are called to guard. However, guardianship of those seeds is now under threat as corporations like Monsanto not only patent the genes but also manipulate those patents for commercial gain.

For example, physicist and ecologist Dr Vandana Shiva draws attention to Monsanto’s disingenuous claims “to have ‘invented’ the unique low-elasticity, low gluten properties of an indigenous Indian wheat.” The net result is that the company now has a stake in all products derived from this particular wheat: flour.....and perhaps one day the hosts for Eucharist.

Last year..., Pope John Paul II reflected on the many Eucharistic celebrations he has participated in across the world. These profound moments have given him a “powerful experience of its universal and, so to speak, cosmic character.....even when it is celebrated on the humble altar of a country church, the Eucharist is always in some way celebrated on the altar of the world. It unites heaven and earth. It embraces and permeates all creation” (Ecclesia de Eucharista, 8).

The Pope articulates in an insightful way the key theological response to GE. This response is not, in the first instance, about food safety, health, or biodiversity. Rather, the initial theological response proceeds from a faith-filled meditation on the universe as an orderly, harmonious whole. This whole emerges through the on-going artistry of the Creator and the inherent wisdom of evolution. Moreover, the incarnation alerts us to the sacredness of the whole.

GE is nothing short of an arrogant attempt to commodify the cosmos through technologically sophisticated but morally bankrupt science. This science is an attempt to redefine our vocational relationship with the cosmos in terms of control based on manipulation, contracts and ownership. In contrast, the majesty of the human vocation, which is found in the guardianship of the cosmos, means we must necessarily find morally objectionable this vain attempt at redefinition. For those who claim to be followers of Jesus, the cosmic order is always pure gift from God and can never be the property of multinational corporations. That is, when we are celebrating “on the altar of the world” we are always affirming and acknowledging the bounteousness of a cosmos pregnant with divine meaning. Food can never be an instrumental thing. “ Blessed are you Lord of all creation through your goodness we have this bread to offer...”

# Coming Events

## March

16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> NSW Council on Environmental Education Beyond Declarations - Working Partnerships for Sustainability National Conference, Manly, Australia <http://www.gemsp.com.au/sustain2005/> Contact: **Julie McGraw** Ph: 02 9744 5252

20<sup>th</sup> Palm Sunday – Holy Week commences – Walk against Want and Palm Sunday Peace Rallies.

21<sup>st</sup> Harmony Day [http://www.harmony.gov.au/harmony\\_day/index.htm](http://www.harmony.gov.au/harmony_day/index.htm)

21<sup>st</sup> United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

22<sup>nd</sup> World Water Day [http://www.unesco.org/water/water\\_celebrations/](http://www.unesco.org/water/water_celebrations/)

23<sup>rd</sup> World Meteorological Day <http://www.wmo.int/index-en.html>

23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> **Meeting - Global Action to Prevent War (GAPWA)**  
Australian Volunteers International, 88 Kerr Street, Fitzroy.  
Conveners: Professor Stuart Rees (Sydney) and Professor Joseph Camilleri (Melbourne). Contact: **Pax Christi** (Vic) PO Box 31 Carlton Sth Vic 3053 Tel: 03 9379 3889.

24<sup>th</sup> Assassination of Oscar Romero, 1980

25<sup>th</sup> Opening of World Expo <http://www.expo2005.com/>

29<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> April Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand <http://www.confenceteam.co.nz/eianz/> Contact: Sally Dickson Ph 64-3 343 5911

30<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> Australian Water Summit 2005, Sydney, Australia <http://www.acevents.com.au/water2005/>

## April

6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) - 23rd Session Nairobi, Kenya - <http://www.ipcc>

7<sup>th</sup> World Health Day

10<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Global Week of Action – Trade Justice Campaign

12<sup>th</sup> **ACSJC Launch** – Occasional Paper on Trade Justice, Parliament House Sydney. Contact: Sr Suzette Clarke 02 9956-5811

11<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> 13th Session - United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/csd13.htm>

12<sup>th</sup> **Holocaust Remembrance Day**

12<sup>th</sup> Violence Against Trafficked Women Forum – Surry Hills, Sydney Contact Aletia Dundas ph 02 9299 2215 [adundas@ncca.org.au](mailto:adundas@ncca.org.au)

19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> 16th Global Warming International Conference, New York City, New York, United States of America <http://www.globalwarming.net/gw16-announcement.asp>

22<sup>nd</sup> **International Earth Day**

29<sup>th</sup> April-2<sup>nd</sup> May – National Non-Violence Gathering, Currimindi, Qld. Email [admin@acaat.org](mailto:admin@acaat.org). Ph: 07 4096 3236.

27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> National Conference for Women Leaders of Church Agencies [www.cacw.catholic.org.au/news](http://www.cacw.catholic.org.au/news)

## May

1<sup>st</sup> International Workers Day

3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> 17th International Clean Air and Environment Conference, Hobart, Australia

3<sup>rd</sup> World Press Freedom Day

5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Water Association (AWA) Ozwater Convention and Exhibition, Townsville [http://www.awaozwater.net/watershed/whats\\_new\\_2005.html](http://www.awaozwater.net/watershed/whats_new_2005.html)

5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 3rd Scientific Conference on the Environment and Natural Resources, Republic of Yemen

8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> AWA Ozwater Convention and Exhibition, Brisbane [http://www.awaozwater.net/watershed/whats\\_new\\_2005.html](http://www.awaozwater.net/watershed/whats_new_2005.html)

10<sup>th</sup> Trafficked Women as Refugees Forum, Surry Hills NSW, Contact Aletia Dundas ph 02 9299 2215 [adundas@ncca.org.au](mailto:adundas@ncca.org.au)

16<sup>th</sup> World Debt Day – [www.jubileeaustralia.org](http://www.jubileeaustralia.org)

16<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> Grail National Retreat, Burradoo, NSW – email [grailsydney@ozemail.com.au](mailto:grailsydney@ozemail.com.au). Ph: 02 9955 3053

26<sup>th</sup> National Sorry Day

27<sup>th</sup> Reconciliation Week

## June

5<sup>th</sup> World Environment Day <http://www.unep.org/wed/2005/english/index-flash.asp>

5<sup>th</sup> Fourth International Inter-Religion Abrahamic Conference - Contact Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations

7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> International Sustainable Development Conference, Helsinki.

16<sup>th</sup> Researching Refugee Health National Conference. Refugee Health Research Centre (RHRC), La Trobe University, Victoria.

## July

19<sup>th</sup> Australian Greenhouse Office seminar at World Expo, Aichi Japan: 'Community-based environmental management' – <http://www.expo2005.com>  
Amnesty Human Rights Calendar [http://www.amnesty.org.au/whats\\_happening/calendar](http://www.amnesty.org.au/whats_happening/calendar)

## August

24<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> Karibu International Cross-Cultural Program, Kenya. Email [crt@spp.edmundrice.org](mailto:crt@spp.edmundrice.org)

## October

10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 6th Asia-Pacific Roundtable for Sustainable Consumption and Production, Melbourne, Australia

23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> First International Marine Protected Areas Congress, Geelong, Australia.

## November

2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Fourth Wind Energy Conference and Renewable Energy Exhibition, Melbourne, Australia

13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Greenhouse 2005: Action on Climate Change Conference, Melbourne, Australia.