

2004 International Year of Rice

CO-ORDINATOR'S COMMENTS

There is a saying: "The people who forget to look back at where they have come from, aren't able to see where they are supposed to be going." As a teacher and grandmother watching little ones grow, I now appreciate more the wisdom of, and necessity for this approach. I recognise that we continually fail to learn from history and to consider what we pass on to future generations. The false gods of pride, power and greed become the norm and violence takes over.

We see what's happening in Iraq and think of Vietnam and the world wars and say, "Here we go again!" The media revelations of the torture of prisoners demonstrate the dehumanizing effect the military machine has on people at all levels. The perpetrators of the many civil wars happening right now seem to have no thought of price the next generation will pay for their destructive ways.

In Australia we have failed to learn that we treat others as we like to be treated. Instead we lock up people seeking asylum. We have failed to learn from our indigenous people about sustainable living and are seeing the effects of our consumerist lifestyle. The litany goes on.

This forgetting to look back and learn is passing on a grim inheritance to the children. These are some of the challenges for the Centre for Peace Ecology & Justice as we try to work for the reign of God here on earth. We remember the experiences of Columbans overseas and see the importance of dealing with issues such as genetic engineering,

migration, and national debt. We constantly remember that we in the privileged world have a duty to give to the poor what is rightfully their share of the earth's resources. We are also aware of trying to pass on this learning to younger generations -hence our work in education. We are very keen to support interest by young people in our work. This edition features some lessons learned by Columbans. ♣ *Anne Lanyon*

Growing Peace – Our Project

The Baulkham Hills local government area is one of the largest and fastest growing parts of the ever-spreading city of Sydney. Urban environment is encroaching on rural environment. Newer arrivals to Australia are moving into places farmed and lived in for several generations. The Hills area is also colloquially known as "The Bible Belt" with a variety of Christian churches. There is an increasing diversity of cultural backgrounds and faiths.

Change such as this brings with it inherent tensions that challenge people and the environment. One such tension flared last year when a Muslim group applied to the council for a development application for a prayer hall. Ill-feeling has continued.

The Public Forum on Peace and Non-Violence held in Baulkham Hills on May 17th brought together over two hundred people from diverse ages, faiths and cultures in an atmosphere of respect and willingness to listen, talk and get active. Let's hope that the seeds planted will grow and spread.

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

Fr Niall O'Brien – An embodiment of Non-Violence

On April 28th, Columban Father Niall O'Brien died. Born in Dublin, Ireland in 1939, he came to the Philippines in 1964, the year following his ordination and spent most of the rest of his life in the Diocese of Bacolod. *He had been the conscience for a generation of Columbans and countless others, embodying in himself and his work the core message of the Gospel - peace, justice. May he rest in that peace.*

In the early 70s he set up a kibbutz in a mountain area of Tabugon, Negros Occidental, to enable poor farmers to enjoy the fruits of their labor as a cooperative. It was typical of Father Niall to take a model from elsewhere, this time from modern Israel, and adapt it to local needs and to the local culture. This venture is still going.

Niall O'Brien was an international figure for a while and a national hero in Ireland, something reflected by the wide coverage given by the Irish media to his death 20 years later. The '**Negros Nine**' were three priests – the other two being Australian Columban **Brian Gore** and diocesan priest Father Vicente Dangan – and six parish workers falsely charged with the murder of Mayor Pablo Sola of Kabankalan and four companions. The three priests were under house arrest for eight months, the last three weeks of that in the Police Constabulary camp in Bacolod City, before they 'broke out' of it and 'broke into' Bacolod City Jail where the others were. They spent six months in jail before the case was dropped. Niall kept a

diary during his imprisonment and later wrote two books, **Seeds of Justice** and **Revolution from the Heart** based on the experience. The latter is a spiritual/theological reflection on the Negros Nine experience and on the more than twenty years he had spent in Negros itself.

His experience of violence in Negros, especially during the Martial Law years, was an influence on Niall's passionate commitment to active non-violence, which he saw as a demand of the Gospel. He was a major force in the introduction of *Pax Christi* to the Philippines and served as national chaplain till his death. He established Misyon, a journal that highlights the work of Filipino missionaries overseas and features a double page devoted to Peace ideas. (See Tools for Non-Violence below)

Adapted from an obituary by Fr Sean Coyle.

<http://www.misyononline.com>

“For me it was the heart of what Jesus did that mattered. Everything he said must be interpreted in the light of what he did: his walking up to the jaws of death, his struggle at the threshold with himself, his cry of anguish before it swallowed him... all spoke to me of non-violence.” p98

“But in the back of my mind was a dream that someday the Church would ban all war, all nuclear weapons, all chaplaincies in armies, all carrying of arms, in a burst of prophetic faithfulness to her vision and faithfulness to the Lord..., and take the consequences.” P45 *Revolution of the Heart*, Niall O'Brien,

Tools for Non-Violence

Words, sometimes can be turned into weapons that inflict deep wounds on the minds and souls of children and adults alike. Here are some unkind words that are better left unsaid:

Labels. Tag somebody “the terrorist” and they will probably live up to your expectations.

Ridicules and Put-Downs. Verbal attacks belittle and debilitate by treading on another's self-worth.

Ugly Humour. Vulgar, sadistic, racist or sexist jokes are not very funny. It is important to know when not to laugh.

Profanity. Common profane expressions do not mean they are acceptable.

Lies. Lying can make things worse. Lies interfere with the listener's right to judge based on truth.

Gossip. Breaching the privacy of others is as unjust as it is unkind. Gossip highlights the negative in the other person. *Peace Ideas – Misyon September – October 2002*

Genetic Engineering is one of the 3 issues Columbans are concerned about globally. In our PEJ Centre it is one of the key issues **Fr Charles Rue** researches and critiques.

Genetic Engineering (GE) technology is being used in

1. **Animal Cloning:** for speed and cost effective experiments which are unallowable on humans, and to quickly pass on qualities of the original animal to progeny (eg milking cows).
2. **Human Cloning:** often produces "parts" for medical cures and the copy is sacrificed.
3. **Immunisation and Vitamin Supplements:** A process associated with GE food technologies (eg. vitamin A, or, small pox immunisation).
4. **Transgenic Organ Transplants:** animals (eg. Pigs) are bred to supply organ transplants for humans (often pigs).
5. **GE selection within the same species:** speeds up the traditional method of selecting *within* a species to develop a particular trait.
6. **Transgenic Animals and Crops for Human Food:** A desirable gene from one species is transferred into a *different species* (eg. a gene to withstand cold is transferred from a fish into a tomato).

Four ethical issues arise around food:

1. The *threat to human health* from eating GE foods;
2. The *threat to biodiversity* by releasing GE species into the wild;
3. The resultant *homogenisation of current food producing species* (eg Maize);
4. And *intellectual property laws* (TRIPS) thus effectively robbing traditional owners.

Official Catholic moral teaching on GE is developing. The need for a systematic GE ethic remains.

- ◆ There is sympathy to GE experimentation to cure human diseases (ACU Conf. Dec. 2003).
- ◆ There is sympathy to the promise peddled by GE companies to feed the world's hungry.
- ◆ Some Conferences of bishops have made official statements against trans-genic foods.
www.mindfully.org/GE/GE3/Catholic-Bishops-Statement14Nov01.htm
- ◆ There is a growing trend to respect the God given integrity of creation and its biodiversity.
- ◆ There is reservation about the use/abuse of animals in experimentation and organ transplants.
- ◆ There is general condemnation of human cloning and infertility treatment.
- ◆ There is criticism of the TRIPS law in the Papal Document *Development of Peoples* # 84 (Populorum Progressio)
- ◆ See also www.osjpm.org and <http://conservation.catholic.org>

For further information check the following websites:

GE manipulates the genes

<http://panna.org/resources/ge.html>

www.non-gm-farmers.com

GE and Transnational Companies (TNC)

<http://www.gmwatch.org>

Agribusiness and the culture of misinformation

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

GE in health and medicine

www.i-sis.org.uk/

www.greenpeace.org.au/truefood/

TNCs control many government regulators. See *On Social Concern*, No 36, cf.34-39 'The Patenting of Life.'

Just Rice

Rice is the staple food for more than half the world's population. According to Dr Jacques Diouf, Director-General of FAO, "Almost a billion households in Asia, Africa and the Americas depend on rice systems for their source of employment and livelihood."

This year the FAO is promoting rice under the motto "Rice is Life", but this campaign may be a double-edged sword for subsistence farmers. The campaign highlights the need for justice because land and water resources for rice production are diminishing even as the world population continues to grow. But the FAO is also promoting the development of Genetically Engineered rice (see Planet Ark 18/5/04 "Poor Missing Out on Benefits of GM Food: UN Body" www.planetark.com). There is concern that this is a push by agribusiness and petro-chemical industries for greater control of rice. www.maryknoll.org/GLOBAL/NEWSNOTES/newsnotes_12040th.pdf "Pushing GMOs"

A partnership of Farmers and Scientists for Agriculture Development in Mindanao, southern Philippines called MASIPAG promotes genuine development of farmers through a pro-poor, sustainable approach to rice growing.

The following reflection is by Columban Fr **Sean Martin** who until two years ago worked with Masipag which has over 30,000 members.

My experience lets me say that the Masipag approach to rice production is possible and very workable. I have seen how organic rice production has given very good yields and is friendly to the land. It encourages the farmer to plant at least 3 or 4 varieties each planting so that if one fails you still have three quarters of the harvest to feed your family. The continual rotation means that bugs cannot survive easily as their food source is cut off by the change in variety every rice season. The farmer is very active in discovering ways to protect the crop in harmony with nature. There is a need to be alert to discover which bugs and organisms are friendly and help the crop

and which ones are harmful. The assumption of most farmers is that all bugs are harmful and need to be sprayed to protect the crop. When the need arises to spray there are leaves and roots that can be used which do not do damage to the environment.

This approach to farming depends on co-operation and an enriched knowledge of the environment which allows ordinary farmers to be mystified by their surroundings and the way nature colludes to produce safe food. Having grown up on a farm where it was difficult to make ends meet, I remember as a teen-ager being congratulated by my father for spraying 30 or so acres of corn in a day to kill weeds. I remember asking does the poison not get into the wheat. "No" was the answer. "It is washed away by the rain" Now I have come around to being aware of the damage that I was unwittingly doing, killing off weeds that were food for the birds and insects.

So now we are confronted with those who say that the only way to feed the world is by using GMO style of production. My experience with Masipag rice production says that there is a better and safer way that allows farmers to be co-creators in preserving and allowing diversity to continue in the world.

Farmers here who are at a subsistence level are dependent on the middle men and need capital to harvest, mill and market their rice. Many who have learned Masipag rice production only produce enough for their families. The process of financing and marketing Masipag so that the hard work of farmers does not go to the middle men is being worked on through workshops. Masipag rice farming is a very viable alternative to GMO's.

For more stories on rice read

The Far East, April 2004.

For further information see

the **FAO** www.fao.org and

the **Asia Rice Foundation** www.asiarice.org

For teaching ideas, purchase the cd-rom "Grains of Life" from **Catholic Earthcare Australia** ph Sascha 02 9956 5800

COMING EVENTS

June

8th – 10th G8 Summit, Sea Island Georgia, For Debt Action see www.jubileusa.org

8th World Oceans Day
<http://www.gdrc.org/oceans/oceans-day.html>

14 th Forum <i>Water of Life</i> , Faith Ecology Network (FEN), Sydney, ph Charles Rue, Centre for Peace Ecology & Justice 02 9488 8844.
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15th- 16th Women's Human Rights Court, University of New South Wales ph Carol 02 9385 1859, email c.shaw@unsw.edu.au

20th World Refugee Day www.unhcr.ch

21st National Forum on Mental Health and Human Rights in the Political Context of Contemporary Australia, Parliament House Canberra, SAVE Aust Inc Fax 02 9764 1743.

22nd World Refugee Day Breakfast Seminar, Julian Burnside QC speaking on: "Refugees; Politics or Justice", Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre, Preston, Vic.

RSVP [Kathy Asvestas](mailto:Kathy.Asvestas@saveaust.org) 03 9230 4470.

26th International Day in Support of Victims of Torture www.un.org/rights

July

4th NAIDOC Week
www.atsic.gov.au/events/NAIDOC/default.asp

5th Conference - Australian Mission Network, Melbourne, Speaker, Sister Susan Smith RNDM- The Holy Spirit & Mission and Women & Mission, ph 03 9379 3544

7th Conference, Australian Mission Network, Sydney Speaker, Sister Susan Smith RNDM- The Holy Spirit & Mission and Women & Mission, ph 02 9488 8844.

5th – 12th International Youth Parliament, Sydney. http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/news/iyp2004/iyp_program.asp

5th – 23rd Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford International Summer School in Forced Migration 2004, UK. summer.school@qeh.ox.ac.uk

11th World Population Day www.unfpa.org

11th - 13th Conference *Living and Learning Together*; NZ Human Rights Commission and the NZ National Commission for

UNESCO, Auckland. Ph Lili Tuioti or Rosi Fitzpatrick 64 9 360 0257, e-mail: tkconz@xtra.co.nz or, Tessa Scrine, Australia (02) 6287 2019
tessa.scrine@bnc.bahai.org.au

17th – 18th Conference "Spirited Women Speak in Many Voices", Canterbury NSW, WATAC ph 02 4937 2091

email watac@watac.net

23rd Schools Tree Day,
<http://www.planetark.com/treedaypage.cfm?pageid=6>

30th National Save the Koala Day
<http://www.savethekoala.com/>

August

6th Hiroshima Day

12th International Youth Day
www.un.org/esa/socdev &
www.unesco.org/youth

26th Anniversary of the Tampa rescue

27th Anniversary of the Death of Helda Camara

29th Refugee & Migrant Sunday

September

1st Wattle Day

5th – 11th Keep Australia Beautiful Week

7th National Threatened Species Day

21st International Day of Peace
www.un.org/peace

26th Social Justice Sunday
www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au
ph 02 9956 5811

28th – 2nd October Conference Creating Ethical Communities Now: Footprints, Pathways and Possibilities
<http://users.chariot.net.au/%7Eaeee/2004/>

October

Advance Notice: Conference in October: Friends of the Earth; Working together for a Sustainable and Meaningful World, Brisbane: Gaia Educational Services: email PaulR@ges.net.au for invitations and expressions of interest.

1st Walk to Work Day
<http://www.walk.com.au/wtw/page.asp?pageid=207>

1st International Day of Older Persons
www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing

4th World Habitat Day
<http://www.unhabitat.org/>

5th World Teachers' Day www.unesco.org

- 17th-24th Antipoverty Week :
<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au/index>
- 16th World Food Day www.fao.org &
www.wfp.org
- 17th International Day for the Eradication of
 Poverty
www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty.htm
- 4th Wednesday of October Universal
 Children's Day (Australia)
www.unicef.org.au
- 24th United Nations Day www.un.org
- 24th-30th Disarmament Week
www.un.org/Depts/dda
- 16th 24th National Weedbuster Week

December

- 4th – 8th Sydney Festival of Popular Education,
 UTS, fax 02-9514 3939, email:
cpe@uts.edu.au
<http://www.cpe.uts.edu.au/forums/2004conference.html>
- 6th – 8th Education and Social Action Conference
 – UTS – Sydney (part of the above)

Advance Notice

- 21st – 24th January 2005 Conference “Christianity
 and Violence”, Canberra email
AAANZ@iprimus.com.au

Books on GE available at ACU North Sydney:

- ◆ Desmond Nicholl *Introduction to Genetic Engineering* Cambridge Press 1994/2002 His one warning "be careful about the use of *Ti plasmids* as vectors in gene transfer technology as they are more than likely to prove to be uncontrollable resulting in dangerous viruses jumping species".
- ◆ Tourte, Yves *Genetically Modified Organisms* USA: Science Publications 2003. He explains the technology in genetically engineering plants and lists nine concerns (p. 83).
- ◆ Buchanan *From Chance to Choice* Cambridge Uni Press, 2000. Two challenges in the genetic age: are 1/ negative eugenics through discarding a defective fetus; and 2/ the genetic enhancement of the human by adding desirable traits.

GE – A Practical Action!

Obtain
 “The Greenpeace True Food Guide 2003” ph
 1800 815 151, www.truefood.org.au

Start shopping for GE-free food.

Brief Australian News

“A Last Resort”

The recently released Human Rights Commission's Report of the Inquiry Into Children In Detention found cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. The full report and a useful summary is available on the Human Rights Commission website www.hreoc.gov.au

ACFID's Response to the Australian Federal Budget

The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has responded to the aid budget:

1. Overseas aid has increased from 0.25% of GNI to 0.26% since the last budget. Australia remains 14th out of 22 OECD donor countries. Since 1995-96, aid as a proportion of GNI has decreased from 0.32%. The target for OECD countries is 0.7%.
2. The increase in aid and development co-operation is focused on law and order in the Australian region. The additional funds are attributable to the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) costs of policing and law and order programs, particularly in PNG and the Solomon Islands. ACFID calls for significant increases in aid and development co-operation that is directed toward achievement of the Millennium Development Goals to halve absolute poverty by 2015.
3. There can be no durable peace and security in our region without sustained investments in reducing poverty and social inequality.

For the complete report see
<http://www.acfid.asn.au/>