

GOSPEL OF LIFE

No.

1



HOPE FOR THE WORLD

Gospel Witness: life of the world

'I came so that you might have life and have it more abundantly'

Jn. 10:10

In the act of creation **God brought forth life and 'it was good'**.

God renewing the gift of life is a recurring theme in the Scriptures. The Word of God as flesh among us brought new life and a new creation. Jesus incarnated God's abiding care. The constant love of God was made concrete by Jesus as he brought good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed. (Lk 4:18).

Jesus taught that the truth will make us free, truly free. Today many Australians are held captive on a treadmill of consumerism. Even the poor aspire to get on the treadmill and we export the false dream to people in other countries. We need that liberation which comes from living the Gospel values. True human well-being comes from recognising an innate and sacred dignity that is not judged on one's possessions.

In a society characterized by poverty, failing religious leadership and ruled by a foreign power, Jesus promised transformation. He gave hope to those faithful to God and God's Way. Amidst the darkness of our world, the Gospel provides light. It is a source of peace and hope. It challenges us to enter into a healing process where our relationships with each other, with the earth and with God are again made life giving.

Catholic Social Teaching Principle

The Common Good: The freedom and good of the individual must be balanced with the good of society.

Fullness of life is possible for all. We are led to ask what the global family needs to value in order to make life in abundance a reality. A new vision, a change of heart, are required to implement the Gospel of Life for the entire human family and for all the natural world.

This series aims to assist groups and individuals to reflect, discuss and act on the Gospel of Life. It aims to help readers to discern where in our world the Gospel of Life is present or is threatened and diminished and to identify areas where the hope for transformation lies.

Ten pamphlets will continue across two years, following Biblical themes such as: human dignity, liberation, conversion, peace, right relationship, integrity of creation, justice, fidelity and the reign of God.

PARABLE REFLECTION

The Prodigal Son Lk 15:11-32

A crucial phrase in the parable of the Prodigal Son is 'then he came to his senses'. The son had lived in the house of his father and enjoyed its gifts of love and material goods. He decided to go his own way and wasted his inheritance.

Like the father waiting and looking for the return of his son, God is waiting to welcome us back if only we come to our senses and choose what is life giving. Our return restores us and our human family to its proper place in the world.

(This series will feature a Parable Reflection in each issue.)

Earth Charter Principle 15

Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.

"Our Mission: To protect the radical good of life in all its manifestations and to prepare an environment for future generations that is closer to the plan of the creator."

Australian Bishops' Social Justice Sunday Statement, 2002.



FACTFILE

Catholic Social Teaching is the collection of writings that are a response by the Church in applying the Gospel to the various political, economic, social and environmental issues of the times. The body of documents includes authoritative statements from the Popes and Bishops of the modern era. Catholic Social Teaching is often described as the Church's "best kept secret".

'In every age, the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task.' Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, #4.

This series will feature one theme of Catholic Social Teaching in each issue.

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all peoples a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family and the larger living world. It is an expression of hope and a call to help create a global partnership at a critical juncture in history.

The Earth Charter is the product of a decade long worldwide, cross-cultural conversation about common goals and shared values. This series will feature one of the principles of the Earth Charter in each issue. www.earthcharter.org

'I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.'

Deut 30:19

'Humankind constantly faces new challenges and new possibilities... a new vision and new insights are needed to ensure the continuance and development of the human family... The future of humanity itself has become dependent on the wise choices made by the human family to ensure the flourishing in abundance of life, love and diversity. There must be continuing reflection on the value of life so that wise choices can be made.'

New Zealand Bishops' Statement, A Consistent Ethic of Life, 1997

'Let no one be discouraged by the belief there is nothing one person can do against the enormous array of the world's ills, misery, ignorance and violence.

Few will have the greatness to bend history, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. And in the total of all those acts will be written the history of a generation.'

John F. Kennedy

FOR DISCUSSION

- We live in a world of extraordinary beauty and blessing. Identify and discuss the bounty and blessing you see in the world.
- We also face extraordinary challenge. Look at the Scripture quotes given here. What aspects of our world do not seem to value life in all its fullness? In our daily lives what choices for 'life' or 'death' confront us?
- In what ways do we need to better acknowledge the oneness of humanity and all life and address the challenges that face the planet?

FOR ACTION

- In what concrete ways can you act to help bring about God's vision for the world? Within your family? Within your parish or community group? Within our nation? Globally?

USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.sao.clriq.org.au

Social Action Office, Conference of Religious Institutes Queensland

www.osjspm.org

Catholic Social Teaching, Office for Social Justice, Diocese of St Paul Minneapolis

www.uscatholic.org

The Busy Christian's Guide to Catholic Social Teaching

www.acsjc.org.au

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council

