

# GOSPEL OF LIFE



## HOPE FOR THE WORLD

### Transformation

**'We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future...'**

**Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.'** Preamble to the Earth Charter

A critical moment involves the possibility of identifying and overcoming dangers and of grasping new opportunities.

We are on a journey in life. Each day brings change. We hope and plan that each change will be positive so that it is a daily transformation towards the fulfillment of who we are created to be as part of the whole web of life. As the human part of creation, we have the potential to grow and mature, developing the gifts and the dignity that are inherent in each one of us. It is evident that many are locked out of this possibility.

The reality of our current global context is such that the vast majority of Earth's people are unable to achieve their full development as human beings.

The inequitable fact that 20% of Earth's people use 80% of Earth's resources is not sustainable. When millions of people remain without access to basic education, their full human potential is severely restricted. When children are abused, exploited and denied basic rights, their full dignity cannot be realized. While we have a world so characterized by the vast divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', God's vision of **right relationship** cannot become a reality.

While conflict and violence characterize so many individual lives and regions in our world, we cannot achieve the peace which is Christ's gift to us. As Christians we are called to work for the transformation of the world so that total human development, not simply economic development, is available to all members of the human family.

Pope John Paul II has said that a new vision, a change of

#### Catholic Social Teaching Principle:

**Rights and Responsibilities.** Every person has a right to life and the things required for human decency – food, shelter, clothing, employment, health care and education. Corresponding to these rights are responsibilities to each other, our families, society and our environment.

***Behold, I make all things new.*** Rev 21:5

heart, is needed to implement the Gospel of Life. It is needed on both a personal and systemic level.

In his often oppressive society, Jesus was the living, dynamic embodiment of the transformative power of God. The principles he lived by and taught eventually overturned the accepted social order. The transformative power of the life and death of Jesus can enter **our** lives so that we too are transformed. As with Paul on the road to Damascus, this can come about through a direct encounter, or through the daily practice of Gospel values: practicing reconciliation the humility, justice, peace, charity, honesty and inclusion. The community of believers living the Gospel together, can be a transforming community.

We believe the Spirit can enter our lives so that we recognize opportunities for transformation. This may mean moving away from where we feel comfortable and taking risks.

By being transformed through grace, we can become people of conviction who see that the needs of the poor take priority over the wants of others, the freedom of the weak takes priority over the liberty of the powerful, and the access of the marginalized groups in society and the world take priority over the maintenance of a system which excludes them.<sup>1</sup> This conviction leads us to act in ways which will transform the present order and make 'all things new'.

1 Michael Campbell Johnson, Jesuit Development Services, El Salvador

### PARABLE REFLECTION

**The Parable of the Great Feast** Luke 14:15-24

**'Come, everything is now ready!'** Luke 14:17

God has provided a great abundance. We have all been invited to share the great feast which is possible in our world. Are we like those who make excuses and will not participate in transforming our present reality into one which is more a reflection of God's will?

Or will we take our place at the table of the Kingdom? Herein lies the challenge!

#### Earth Charter Principle 7:

Adopt patterns of production, consumption and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights and community well-being.

**Development demands bold transformations, innovations that go deep.**  
Urgent reforms should be undertaken without delay. It is for each one to take a share in them with generosity.

Pope Paul VI,  
Populorum Progressio, 32.

I WORRY ABOUT THE YOUTH OF TODAY. THEY ARE SENSITIVE, COMPASSIONATE, SERVICE-MINDED, ECOLOGY-MINDED AND ACCEPTING OF PEOPLE FROM ALL CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS. IN SHORT, THEY'RE TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR THE WORLD WE'RE ABOUT TO DUMP ON THEM.



# FACTFILE

The UN Millennium Development Goals were agreed to by 191 countries, including Australia, in September 2000. They represent a shared vision and commitment to the transformation of the world by the 2015. So far, little has been done to make this transformation a reality!

## UN Millennium Development Goals

### \* Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

### \* Achieve Universal Primary Education

- Ensure that all children complete Primary schooling

### \* Promote gender equity and empower women

- Eliminate gender disparity in education at primary and secondary level by 2005 and at all levels by 2015

### \* Reduce Child Mortality

- Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five

### \* Improve Maternal Health

- Reduce by three quarters the ratio of women dying in childbirth

### \* Combat HIV/Aids, Malaria and Other Diseases

- Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/Aids, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

### \* Ensure Environmental Sustainability

- Integrate principles of sustainability into country policies and programs; reverse loss of environmental resources
- Reduce by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water
- Improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020

### \* Develop a Global Partnership for Development

- Develop an open trading and financial system that includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction
- Address least developed countries' special needs
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems
- Develop decent and productive work for youth
- Work with pharmaceutical companies to make available affordable essential medicines in developing countries
- Work with private sector to make available new technologies to developing countries

*'The Good News is the result of a confrontation between a given historical and social situation... and Jesus' offer. What makes it good news is not simply the fact that the Gospel is preached, but its capacity to transform a situation that is bad, inhuman and oppressive into one which is liberating, human and good.'*

Leonardo Boff

*If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness... and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters fail not.*  
Isaiah 58:10-11

*Every one of us, every group, must become a model of that which we desire to create.*

Ivan Illich

## FOR DISCUSSION

- Individuals can have a 'transformative experience'. Share some stories of people who have undergone a transformation, eg., St Francis of Assisi, Oscar Romero, Dorothy Day, or someone you know. What impact did this have on their lives and on others?
- Discuss the UN Millennium Development Goals and how they can be achieved by 2015. Research what has been implemented so far. See [www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org)
- Look again at the Earth Charter [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org) Discuss how the world would be transformed if public policy and decision making at many levels used this document as a basis and guide. How could your school, parish or group begin to adopt aspects of the Earth Charter?
- Discuss the Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-26) as a guide for the transformation of the world, through the personal transformation of the way people live.

## FOR ACTION

- Sign the Micah challenge. See website information below.
- Examine aspects of your own life that are in need of transformation and commit yourself to some small changes.
- Find out about Caritas Australia's approach to human development. How can you participate in this transformative action? [www.caritas.org.au](http://www.caritas.org.au)
- Think Globally, Act Locally. Live more simply!
- Join the Drop the Debt Campaign

## USEFUL WEBSITES:

[www.micahchallenge.org](http://www.micahchallenge.org) The Micah Challenge: a global Christian campaign to promote and implement the Millennium Development Goals

[www.oneworld.net](http://www.oneworld.net) A partnership of various organisations interested in global issues

<http://www.cafod.org.uk> The British Caritas aid and development organisation youth site prompts young people to research questions such as where in the world their clothes come from

[www.jubileeaustralia.org](http://www.jubileeaustralia.org) Jubilee Australia, Drop the Debt Campaign