

# INFORM-ACTION

Newsletter of the Social Action Office - Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes Queensland

## Beyond Ideology - God is Love

*Isn't it a sign of mature faith, rather than a sign of infidelity, to critique and question, to be critical lovers, but not unloving critics of our Church?*

Sr Patty Fawkner in *Humility, Yes, But*

This quote resonated loudly in me when I came across it recently. My next thought then was about how we as a community concerned with social and environmental justice, in being loyal to higher ideals and principles, often

end up as being perceived as dissenting and radical voices. But is it truly radical to base our voices and actions in the space of deep love, concern and compassion for others? Maybe. But a sign of mature faith is the ever widening circles that we include in our care and concern – rather than the small and contained circles of family, tribe, specific ethnic

group or religious belief or nation. Mature faith equates to the continuing development of an inclusive ethic which comes to encompass *the God of small things*, to borrow a phrase from Indian writer and development activist Arundhati Roy, as well as *the God of all things*.

Pope Benedict XVI has begun his papacy with a teaching on love in *Deus Caritas Est* and in it we find much to reflect upon in terms of the role religious and laity play in living from love in the world. For religious and the Church's social teachings the role is clear – to purify and illuminate reason, offering contributions to the formation of consciences so that the true requirements of justice are known and put into effect. So how does this relate to our current work through the SAO?

Inform-A<sup>c</sup>tion is a shorter newsletter this time round while the SAO and CLRIQ consider how best to move forward in the medium term given that CLRIQ has not yet been in a position to employ a Coordinator for SAO. In the meantime the IR project and its extensions into community responses to the raft of IR legislation continues and an Interim Coordinating Committee has been put in place to facilitate some of SAO's on-going activities. A full planning meeting will be held on Saturday 6 May.



Photo courtesy of the Vatican website

Well this year SAO has committed to illuminate with a clear heart social justice issues for workers and all those disadvantaged in the face of injustice around workplace/lifeworld issues. This includes individuals and families caught up in the Welfare to Work push – projected to drive single parent families and people with a disability into even greater poverty and distress – and all workers who are struggling to find or keep sufficient work adequately paid to meet their and their families basic needs and whose basic rights have been swept aside. The Church's teaching is clear also: the right to human dignity through labour and work justice is privileged over the demands of capital and workers have an absolute right to organise into unions and have unions bargain on their behalf. The changes to IR in Australia fly in the face of such dignity.

One of the ways we will involve ourselves in the formation of consciences this year (as well as continue to form our own) is through a story-based monitoring project where we aim to collect the experiences of people most affected by the vast changes to the IR system and to utilise these to inform communities, our elected representatives and other policy makers, of the Church's teachings on social justice.

We hope to offer more insight into the way *Deus Caritas Est* may inform our social action. If you would like a copy of the SAO commentary on the encyclical please contact the office. We hope it may be a primer for discussion and further reflection.

Angela Ballard  
SAO Project Officer

### Human Trafficking! Stop Slavery!

Did you know?

Over 700,000 persons are trafficked each year. Australia is a country of destination.

Want to learn more?

*Come to an Information Evening!*

**Monday 15 May 7.30-9.00pm**

**Lourdes Hill College, 50 Hawthorne Road  
Hawthorne (Brisbane)**

Presenter: Sr Pauline M Coll sgs, Coordinator of Sisters of the Good Samaritan Working Against Human Trafficking

## Book Review

### *Beyond Right and Left - New Politics and the Culture Wars* by David McKnight

Politicians are normally described in the media and by the general population as “left”, “right” or “centre”. In the last 20 years there have been significant shifts that blur these categorisations so that people may actually fit into all three at the same time, depending on the subject. In this in-depth work, David McKnight rightly shows how this model of analysing and categorising politics is out-dated and simply not helpful.

The concepts of right and left wing politics have their roots in the French Revolution. The left hand side of the French Chamber of the National Assembly espoused liberty, equality and fraternity while the right side was concerned about how these ideas would take shape. Since then, this model has been adopted across the western world as the paradigm of defining a person’s political position: the left represents those who want greater government intervention and the right represents those who oppose it. In popular terms, the “left” has come to mean “liberal” or “advancing new ideas” and the “right” stands for “conservative” or “maintaining the status quo”.

McKnight analyses the “fault-lines” that have been emerging over the last 20 years that blur our understanding of this left-right dualism: environment, poverty, ethical issues, work/lifestyle, economic liberalisation and values. As the world and society change, then our way of labelling people’s political views needs to be more complex and sophisticated. Politicians who are conservative about morality may be radical about economic matters; those who might be radical about social issues might be conservative about family matters. Increasingly, “left” and “right” definitions are inadequate ways of representing current political ideologies.

McKnight rightly points to a “new politics” that is evolving. His work helps us to see the tensions and inadequacies of the old model as well as suggesting a new moral framework. This is an important piece of work to challenge our way of thinking and analysing of what is happening in politics, especially as it is from an Australian perspective.

Jim Darcy *cfc*



## For Your Calendar

**2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification:** [www.iydd2006.org/](http://www.iydd2006.org/)



### MAY

- 1 International Workers Day
- 10 Nelson Mandela’s Inaugural Address as President of South Africa 1994
- 14 Mothers Day
- 18 Jesuit Peter Henriot in Brisbane (*see below*)
- 20 Timor-Leste becomes fully independent 2002
- 20-26 Landmine Action Week (*see below*)
- 21 World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
- 22 International Day for Biological Diversity
- 22 Public lecture by Anthony Kelly CSsR (*see below*)
- 25 *Bringing Them Home* report released 1997
- 26 National Sorry Day
- 27 National Reconciliation Week begins
- 28 Amnesty International founded 1962

### JUNE

- 3 Death of Pope John XXIII 1963
- 3 High Court decision in Mabo case 1992
- 4 Tiananmen Square Massacre 1989
- 5 World Environment Day
- 10 Myall Creek Massacre 1838
- 11 Neville Bonner becomes the first Aboriginal Australian to hold a seat in Federal Parliament 1971
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- 19 Equal pay for women in Australia 1969
- 20 UN World Refugee Day
- 26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

### Landmine Action Week 20-26 May 2006

The SAO will once again take this opportunity to raise awareness of the ongoing pressing issues around landmines as well as to raise funds to support the campaign here in Australia. Get your staff, community or school involved.

Some schools are participating in ODD SOCK DAY on Tuesday 23 May and raising funds for mine detectors. If you are in a school you might also like to learn about and join in the school-based project **Bombs Begone**: <http://www.bombsbegone.org/>

This poster is available from SAO. Please contact Angela if you would like a copy/copies and if you would like to be involved in the campaign.

For lots more information on Landmine Action Week, visit <http://www.landmine-action-week.org/>



### Australian Visit of Jesuit Peter Henriot Brisbane - Thursday 18 May 2006

**Seminar:** 9.00am-12.30pm at Mercy Centre Bardon - *Bringing justice alive from a Christian perspective: Social Analysis Workshop*

**Public Lecture:** 7.30pm-9.00pm at St Joseph’s Gregory Tce - *The Church’s Social Teaching: Where to after John Paul II?*

Contact Br Ted Magee at the Christian Brothers on (07) 3327 2203.

### Free Public Lecture by Prof Anthony Kelly CSsR Brisbane - Friday 12 May 2006

6.00pm with light refreshments before the lecture at ACU Auditorium IB,12 - *Pope Benedict XVI’s First Encyclical, “God is Love”: A Challenge for Christian Life Today*