Pope Benedict XVI’s Social Justice Legacy

Caritas Australia marks with gratitude Pope Benedict XVI’s leadership and hopes that his legacy and passion for the “poorest of the poor” and concern over the problems of global human development will be hallmarks of his successor.

Caritas Australia CEO, Jack de Groot made the comments on the eve of Project Compassion, one of Australia’s largest humanitarian fundraisers that brings together thousands of Catholic school children and parishes across Australia in solidarity with the world’s poor.

“The Pope is passionate about the world’s poor and on many occasions emphasised that charity and truth are fundamental parts of faith and our development, both as individuals and for humanity as a whole,” Mr de Groot said.

A letter by Pope Benedict XVI sent to all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church in 2009, directed at political, business and religious leaders and aid agencies, warned of the dangers of globalisation.

“He talked about the suffering caused in the underdeveloped world by food shortages, saying that to feed the hungry is an ethical imperative,” Mr de Groot said.

“The Pope also considered a number of trends harmful to development such as the prevalence of corruption in both poor and rich countries, the existence of harmful speculative capital flows, the tendency for aid to be ‘diverted from its proper ends due to irresponsible action’ and the unregulated exploitation of the earth’s resources.”

Having a heart for the poorest of the poor and giving to others are central themes in every Project Compassion. However, special emphasis this year is on the opportunities that these expressions of faith provide.

Mr de Groot says: “It is a timely tribute to Pope Benedict’s social justice work that this year’s Project Compassion is centred on the words of the Holy Father: ‘We work towards a brighter and more humane world so as to open doors into the future’.”

Papal message taken from Pope Benedict XVI’s 2007 encyclical Spe Salvi, 35.

This article can be originally found at the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media Blog at http://mediablog.catholic.org.au/?p=1676
Christians Take Practical Climate Action

By Ms Thea Ormerod

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it.” (Psalm 24:1) This passage tells us the earth belongs to God, not to human beings. Our calling is as stewards of Creation, to cultivate and gratefully harvest from its bounties, but also to treasure and care for it and to restore Creation where human sin has led to ecological destruction.

This weaves in with our calling to live justly. The destructive implications of unsustainable levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere falls most heavily on people in developing countries who are least responsible for it and have least capacity to adapt. And critically, our children and grandchildren will have to bear the consequences of decisions we make today.

Few people know about the Australian Catholic Bishops 2005 statement, Climate Change: Our Responsibility to Sustain God’s Earth: “Several times we have addressed environmental issues and recently called for ecological conversion. We now urge Catholics as an essential part of their faith commitment to respond with sound judgments and resolute action to the reality of climate change.”

The question is, what shape could this resolute action take? How is this call for ecological conversion integrated into the life of local Catholic communities? It usually requires a small group of people to make it a priority to help their community incorporate an ethic of caring for Creation into the various dimensions of community life. These include (1) the liturgical life of the community (2) ecological awareness among members of the congregation (3) the way properties are managed, and (4) the living out of the community’s Mission.

The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change is launching an online Christian Climate Action Kit which will offer guidance in all these areas, complete with many useful links to other resources. Kits are also being developed in other faiths. We hope Catholic Christians will take advantage of this great opportunity to help their faith communities towards ecological conversion.

To find the kit please check out www.arrcc.org.au.

Ms Thea Ormerod is the President of the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC).

Palms Australia Encounter Programs

Palms is a major overseas service agency of the Catholic Church in Australia and has been preparing, placing and supporting Australian volunteers on mission in developing countries for over 50 years.

To provide more opportunities for people to learn about the work of our development volunteers on mission overseas, we have developed Palms Encounters. Encounters are small groups of 8-10 who will travel with a Palms staff member to visit Palms’ volunteers in country and learn about their work.

This is a unique opportunity for those interested in social justice and development, and will provide an opportunity to witness first-hand how communities can work in solidarity to reduce poverty.

This year, for the first time Palms will be bringing 2 Encounter trips to the frontlines of climate change in Kiribati. There will be 4 Encounter trips overall, with 2 to Kiribati and 2 to Timor-Leste. Dates for 2013 are: Encounter Kiribati, 13-25 April or 12-25 Nov. Encounter Timor-Leste 30 June-13 July, or 22 Sept-5 Oct. As participants will travel with a small group, spaces are limited.

You may be interested to watch this short video click on our Encounters (footage taken during our July 2012 Encounter to Timor-Leste): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPwJV2jNPvE

Those interested, please contact sarah@palms.org.au or on 02 9518 9551.
Following the return of the Pacific Calling Partnership (PCP) delegation from Doha last year, the Edmund Rice Centre has provided a succinct five point summary of the results:

- **Weak second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.** Not signed by Japan, New Zealand and Canada. The commitment lays out reduction targets for 2020, ranging from 20% of the EU to 0.5% of Australia. Clearly insufficient. On the positive side, hot air to be increasingly limited.

- **Global Agreement discussion path (Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action - ADP).** Doesn't yet include the overall target for reducing emissions, nor even the legal way to do it. Everything is open to negotiation from now until 2015.

- **Closing the process that opened in Bali (LCA)** which to date had been negotiating the route to global commitments. The principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities are recognized in the text. Previously agreements on mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer, use of market and non-market instruments. Discussions are transferred to work through subsidiary bodies, programs, mechanisms and forums. A Just Transition is recognized under the heading of response measures.

- **Funding.** Finally no recognized medium term commitments. A program of work was opened that will discuss these and other issues. Besides Green Cimate Fund arrangements, the discussion is at the same stage as in Durban.

- **Loss and Damage.** This issue focuses on the compensation for impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided through adaptation. Doha agreements recognize that there should be adequate institutional agreements to allow for monitoring loss and damage, for example a mechanism. Now, only time will tell how it is implemented, but obviously if properly addressed, it would be quite an accomplishment for the most affected countries and for the recognition of the polluter pays principle. from Sustain Labour

The Pacific Calling Partnership of The Edmund Rice Network for Justice and Community education.
What’s on around Sydney

4 March BEYOND THE LIMITS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
12:00pm – 2:00pm, ACU, Room 16A/B Level 16, Tenison Woods House, 8-20 Napier Street, North Sydney. A seminar with Fr Eduardo Agosta Scarel, O.Carm. (PhD), an expert in sustainable development and climate change, with a focus on the relationship between science and faith, and between spirituality and ecology. Please RSVP by 27 February to Duncan Cook at Duncan.cook@acu.edu.au or (02) 9701 4147.

9 March JUSTICE AND PEACE GATHERING FOR PARISHIONERS
11:30am – 4:00pm, St Patrick’s Church, 5 Drynan Street, Summer Hill. Bishop Lucio Andrice Muandula of Xai-Xai, Mozambique will be our guest speaker. Be inspired, share ideas, and support each other in God’s mission for justice and peace. For more information or to RSVP, contact 9390 5935 or email christine.drozario@sydneycatholic.org.

15 March THE SCOPE AND LIMITS OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AUSTRALIA
9:30am-5:00pm, New Law Building F10, Eastern Avenue, University of Sydney Camperdown Campus. This one-day conference will explore the way in which issues of freedom of religion are now emerging as contested matters in western democracies, in particular the United States, Britain and Australia. For further information or to register contact (02) 9351 0323 or law.events@sydney.edu.au

18 March ST PATRICK’S DAY LUNCHEON
12 noon - 2:30pm, The Strangers’ Dining Room, NSW Parliament House, Macquarie Street, Sydney. Don your best of Irish luck outfit and join us for our annual St Patrick’s Day celebrations. Enquiries or to book, email Bronwyn.mckay@catholiccare.org

21 - 27 April SILVER WATTLE QUAKER CENTRE LEARNING PROGRAM 2013: NONVIOLENT ACTION - FROM THE STRATEGIC TO THE PROPHETIC
Silver Wattle Quaker Centre. An exciting live-in program on Nonviolent Action designed specifically for young people aged 18-30. For more information or to register, please visit http://silverwattle.org.au or contact office@silverwattle.org.au or phone 02 6238 0588

6 March INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN: IDEAS WORTH SHARING
6:00pm – 9:00pm, The C10A, Level 3, ‘Hub’ Building, Central Zone o, Macquarie University’s North Ryde Campus. Celebrating International Women’s Day, Carol Angir, Senior Program Coordinator for ActionAid’s violence against women program; Gemma Sisia, Australian founder of Tanzania’s School of St Jude; and Naomi Steer, founding National Director of Australia for UNHCR, share their stories and discuss their work. Enquiries: Sydney Development Cycle sdc.groupsite.com/main/summary 041 727 2101

14 March BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA – FILM AND DISCUSSION
6:00pm – 8:00pm, 101 Law School Lecture Theatre, Eastern Avenue, The University of Sydney. What turns asylum seekers into ‘boat people’? After screening of the documentary Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, filmmaker Jessie Taylor joins a panel discussion with Dr Laura Bugg, Dr Susan Banki, and Najeeba Wazefadost to examine the issues. Enquiries: The University of Sydney sydney.edu.au (02) 9351 2943