

**Who will speak for the poor and the broken?**

**Who will speak for the peoples oppressed?**

**Who will speak with them so their voice will be heard?**

**Who will speak if YOU don't?**

**Who will speak for the ones who are voiceless?**

**Speak the truth in places of power?**

**Who will speak for the children of violence?**

**Who will speak for the women abused?**

**Who will listen if YOU don't?**

**Who will speak for the shunned and the outcast?**

**Who will speak for all the people with AIDS?**

**Who will work for the thousands of homeless?**

**Who will work in the ghettos and streets?**

**Who will work if YOU don't?**

**Who will care for the plants and the creatures?**

**Who will care for the land and the sea?**

**Who will act so their voice will be heard?**

**Who will ACT, if YOU don't?**

**The example of Jesus is one that challenges people to action for change. He worked to change the structures, attitudes and actions of the society he lived in. His actions inspired people to do the same thing and this movement of action for justice and peace inspired the development of the Catholic Church.**

**This is an excerpt from a song originally written by Kev Carmody and adapted in 2007 by Aussie hip hop band The Herd.**

*...To the Romans he was a working class Jew  
Born a few months out of wedlock  
The stigma never stuck  
Began a three year public life  
And never made a buck  
Spoke against injustice  
Because it was there he saw  
He saw how capitalism it bled the poor.  
But if he crossed the floor tomorrow  
How many of them would follow  
Staring down their bosses  
But left or right  
He'd still be standing side by side  
With the ones our leaders try to hide  
Out on suburban housing estates  
To be forgotten.  
Kept the oppressed and down trodden  
Breaking bread with the bottom rung..."*

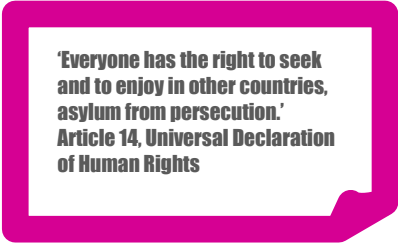
**"Yeah ok, so Jesus was on about justice but that's not what Christianity these days is about. I never hear about what the Church thinks about justice..."**

The Church's stance on everyday issues in people's lives is its best kept secret. We have these fantastic teachings about justice and action and change but if you don't know where to look it's hard to ever hear about them! These teachings take the messages from the stories in the Gospel and apply them to society we live in today.

# What The Australian Catholic Church Says About...

**Refugees** Australia is obliged under international law to help people who come here seeking protection. Such people deserve a quick decision, taken in Australia, about their refugee status. Even those who are not entitled to refugee status deserve humane treatment. Most importantly, children are entitled to security, schooling and social contact. The prolonged detention of asylum seekers and sending them to offshore camps conflicts with our nation's moral and legal responsibilities. Far too often, people in such places sink into despair and mental illness as they wait for a decision.

We must treat all those who come to our shores with justice. If we decide legally that someone must leave Australia, it is also vital that they are not sent into danger of victimisation or harm.



**'Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries, asylum from persecution.'**  
**Article 14, Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

**“Our faith calls us to work for **justice**; to serve those in need; to pursue **peace**; and to promote the life, **dignity** and **rights** of all our sisters and brothers...” Living Justly**



## **Human Dignity**

Every human being is made in the image and likeness of God and therefore has an inherent dignity which gives rise to human rights

Every person is equal in dignity and rights. Every human community, every race and culture is equal in dignity and rights

People are always more important than things. People are never a means or an instrument to be used for the benefit of another.

## **Peace**

“Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity, the life, the freedom of human beings. Violence is a crime against humanity, for it destroys the very fabric of society...do not believe in violence, do not support violence...believe in peace and forgiveness and love, for they are of Christ.” John Paul II



## **Solidarity**

Humans are social by nature. We can not survive without others and can only grow and achieve our potential in relationship with others. Solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good

Being aware of the reality and experiences of others and taking action to make sure that their reality is one where their human dignity, common good and grass roots action is upheld.

## **Common Good**

We are all responsible for each other and must work for social conditions which ensure that every person and every group in society is able to meet their needs and realise their potential.

God intended the goods of creation for the use of all, and so every one has a right to access the goods of creation to meet their needs.



## **Environment** The

overwhelming weight of scientific opinion says that the earth's climate is changing, in part

**"It is immediately evident that humanity has disappointed divine expectations ... humiliating ... the earth, our home. It is necessary, therefore, to stimulate and sustain ecological conversion"**  
**Pope John Paul II**

because of human activity. This is likely to have significant effects on weather, agriculture and life on earth – including human life. We

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples**

Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is 17 years less than for the total population. Rates of many preventable diseases are several times higher. There is an acute shortage of adequate housing. Unemployment is at least three times the national average. Indigenous people represent 2.4 of the population but 22% of those in prison.

Any lasting solutions to these issues demand consultation with

cannot ignore the worldwide ecological effects of climate change and our overuse of resources. Those resources are God's gift to sustain us in this life and for future generations.

No matter what other countries decide to do, we have a responsibility to conserve these gifts. Our abundance of natural resources as well as the potential of renewable energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal power places Australia in a unique position to promote alternatives in energy use that can reduce emissions and protect vulnerable ecosystems.

**"A sustained effort from all Australians and all political parties is needed to achieve lasting dignity and justice for our Indigenous peoples."**  
**ACBC 2007**

Indigenous people in their communities to reverse the negative effects of a fractured culture. Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians need to work together to address these issues and produce comprehensive, achievable and long-term policies that aim at justice for Indigenous people.

## Homelessness &

### Poverty

This is a prosperous country, yet some people have missed out on its wealth – for example, Indigenous Australians, single parents, pensioners, the disabled, young workers and recent arrivals. Most importantly, research shows that poverty is entrenched in particular localities and groups. The Gospel tells us our good fortune is for all, not just the lucky ones. It's important to empower people to find work, pursue education and support themselves, but it's vital not to punish them if they're slow to find a job or fulfil a multitude of requirements.

We have a responsibility to address the structural forces that leave people in poverty. A rich country must also be generous. We can make opportunities available for those who have not benefited from economic growth and treat them with dignity and respect.

### Work

Governments over the past 20 years have deregulated the workplace, created more casual work and introduced enterprise

**Through work we can serve ourselves, our families, others, put love into practice, and partner God in bring God's creative work to being. We have a duty and a right to work.'**  
**Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World**

bargaining and individual contracts. Many vulnerable workers encounter less job security and poorer wages and conditions.

**"We must take haste. Too many people are suffering. While some make progress, others stand still or move backwards and the gap between them is widening."**

**Pope Paul VI**

Workers are entitled to a just wage that will support them and their families without excessive overtime or the need for both parents to enter the labour market. They are entitled to security of employment and work conditions that will leave them time for family life, worship and recreation.

The Church has expressed concerns about the growing demands of work on families. Jobs with low pay and poor conditions often make it harder to establish stable and loving families that can welcome the sacred gift of life, nurture children and provide them a decent future.

## **Peace on Earth (1963):**

- Universal common good
- Affirms democracy and the rights of the press, of speech and of religion
- Human dignity and rights as the foundation for a just and peaceful world

## **The Development of Peoples (1967):**

- Deeper meaning of development – cultural, social, religious, economics
- Urges Fair Trade relations and other forms of international co operation

## **Justice in the World (1971)**

- Calls justice a core element of the Gospel and the Church's mission
- Calls for changes to society so that all people are able to participate actively in the economic, political and cultural life of their community.

## **Evangelisation in the Modern World (1975):**

- Urges Christians to translate the Church's Social Teachings into action and commitment

**Ever heard the Pope talk about prayer and the love of God? Chances are you have! Ever heard the Pope talk about justice and equality? Maybe not, but for the last 100 years various Popes and Bishops (the recognised leaders of the Catholic Church) have been making bold, challenging statements to those in power and those on the ground like us about **justice, equality and peace!****

(Excerpts drawn and adapted from Justice & Peace, Australian Edition 25)

- Recommends the use of modern media to spread Church teachings on peace, justice and development

## **Work (1981):**

- Supports the rights of workers and unions
- Emphasises the importance of people over things
- Develops a spirituality of work

## **Social Concern (1987):**

- Sees the economic gap between North and South hemispheres rooted in the ideological differences between East and West
- Urges collaboration for peace and redirection of resources from producing arms to alleviating misery of impoverished people

## **The Lay Faithful (1988):**

- Promotes dignity of the person
- Calls all to the vocation of working

for justice and solidarity in public life

## **The Centenary Year (1991):**

- Insists on the social message of the Gospel as a basis and motivation for action

**This booklet is an initiative of the AYCW (Melbourne) to provide a brief explanation of Catholic Social Teaching around the issues of justice and peace**

## **What is the YCW?**

The Young Christian Workers (YCW) is an international movement that is run by, for and with **young people** between the ages of 18-30.

The YCW seeks to **ORGANISE, EDUCATE** and **EMPOWER** young people to be a positive change within their own lives and the community.

The type of change we make is informed by our **VALUES, BELIEFS AND FAITH.**

The YCW believes that both personal and collective **ACTION** is the starting point for building justice, dignity and harmony.

You can get involved in the YCW in **Perth, Parramatta, Melbourne** and **Adelaide**

For more info check out our website at

**[www.ycw.org.au](http://www.ycw.org.au)**