



Presentation Society Justice Newsletter



Issue No. 6

Dear Sisters and Associates

The International Presentation Association Assembly in November brought together the largest and most culturally diverse group of Presentation Sisters ever to gather. For the first time the Leaders and the Justice Contacts of the 26 Presentation groups met together. A number of groups also sent a third representative. In all there were seventy-six participants. The outcomes of the Assembly provide us all with a direction for global Presentation presence for the next four years. The Identity Statement which was formulated in 1988 was rewritten as were the Purpose and Expressions of Purpose (1999) which were renamed the Mission and Directions for Mission for IPA. A copy of these is

included. The focus areas, which were named by the Society Congress in 2001, were reaffirmed in the second of the Directions for Mission.

The content of the Society Justice Newsletter will continue to reflect these focus areas. This issue of the newsletter provides an update on the ever threatening situation in West Papua, on the plight of refugees in our country (both human rights issues) and the continuing need for us to keep the issue of reconciliation to the forefront. As this is a Christmas issue we have included a reflection on Peace.

Joan Power, Annette Shears, Kathleen Tynan and Margaret Kelly

Identity Statement

We are Presentation women who share the charism of our foundress Nano Nagle.

We reach out in faith, in a spirit of hospitality, compassion and simplicity to all of creation.

The cry of those made poor and the cry of the Earth call us to continue the mission of Jesus to bring forth a sustainable society founded on respect for earth, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace.



Mission of IPA

Flowing from our identity as Presentation women the mission of IPA is to channel our resources so that we speak and act in partnership with others for global justice.

Directions for Mission

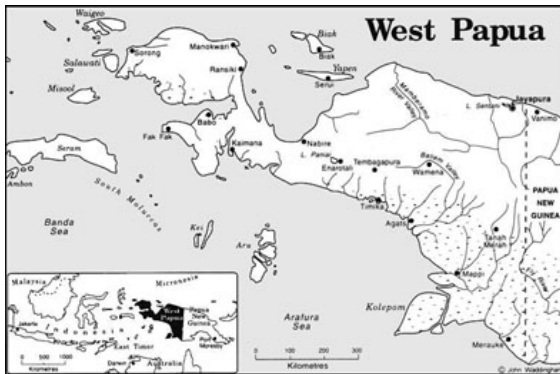
1. We call each other to deepen our passion for those made poor and for all creation. In our work for justice we nurture a contemplative stance in keeping with our Presentation identity.
2. We strengthen our Justice Network to work for structural change especially in issues related to:
 - Women and children
 - Indigenous peoples
 - Environment/sustainable living
 - Human rights.
3. We develop the most effective means to use our NGO status with the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations and we work with other local, national and international peoples' movements and organisations which work for structural change.
4. We are committed to solidarity in mission through the sharing of personnel, finance and other resources.

West Papua Issues

Disturbing reports continue to reach us about West Papua. Most recently came the news that Justinus Murib, an independence leader, was murdered with nine others of his clan by Indonesian Kopassus troops in early November. On the previous day Murib had been featured on *Dateline* in a video smuggled out of West Papua in which he called upon both the Indonesian Government and the Papuan Liberation Army (OPM) to stop fighting and to seek a peaceful solution to their problems. For his bravery and his preparedness to tell the world of the Papuan people's desire for peace, he and nine other villagers were slaughtered when the village was stormed by several hundred Kopassus troops.

Thank You from West Papuans

Warmest thanks are conveyed to all who contributed to the total of \$1,172.80 which was collected for the West Papuan students in Victoria. Louise Byrne, on behalf of AWWPA Melbourne expressed her sincere thanks and asked our continuing efforts on behalf of the people of West Papua.



These hopes of the West Papuans for peace may seem futile when measured against the fact that over the past six months there has been a rapid increase in the number of soldiers in West Papua. The daily practising of the troops using thousands of rounds of ammunition causes local West Papuans to ask, "Who are they planning to shoot?"

Another cause of grave concern is the continuing harassment and violation of women. Kel Dummett, a Melbourne academic and writer who visited West Papua with his wife some time ago, said, "In Biak perhaps more than any other place I visited in West Papua, the fear of Indonesian intimidation and violence is palpable. As I travelled around Biak with my wife, I felt it was

eerily unlike any other places we had been. Teenage girls and young women did not engage us with their eyes or smile. Fear and shame were written on their faces."

At our September meeting the Society Justice Committee wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer, expressing some of our concerns about West Papua. We received a lengthy reply from a member of Mr Downer's staff addressing the issues we had raised. He described how the Minister had been in dialogue with the Indonesian Government in relation to the violation of human rights. He outlined the Australian Government's position on the territorial integrity of Indonesia, the Government's support of the Irian Jaya Special Autonomy Law and the Government's caution about training the Kopassus.

In the light of the stories above and the information that continues to reach us from West Papua, we need to keep a close watch on these matters and invite you to do likewise.

Aboriginal Reconciliation

In a recent statement Patrick Dodson expressed the view that Aboriginal reconciliation needed a new direction, a new approach and new people. He also emphasised that there was a need to move forward, keeping in mind the worth and value of what has been achieved and the contribution that the reconciliation movement has made. From Patrick's perspective the future life of the movement depends on increased participation by young people and by direction-setting that is innovative, courageous and adventurous.

The department of secondary education in Victoria has made a landmark decision in introducing "indigenous languages" as a subject for the Victorian Certificate of Education in 2004. The decision comes after ten years of pilot studies and is intended to be another step in recognising Koori culture and languages.

Those of us who watched the *Dynasty* program on ABC early in December may want to congratulate the ABC in its exploration of the "Marika" dynasty. This is the first time that an aboriginal dynasty has featured on Australian television and may have come as a surprise to those of us who associate the word "dynasty" with mainstream, wealthy families such as the Boyds, the Wentworths and the Downers.

At the IPA Assembly Joan Hendriks from Stradbroke Island spoke of the need for all of us to find a way "to move towards the vision of a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and provides justice and equity for all". Hopefully the changes reflected in the projects outlined above are contributing to fulfilling this vision.

Refugees



10 December—Human Rights Day

People who have been persecuted or who have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion or political opinion have the right to seek asylum in another country.

Australia has a responsibility to uphold the United Nations conventions that we have signed. Following from this, asylum seekers have a right to seek safety in Australia; asylum seekers have a right to remain in Australia while their applications for refugee status are being determined. As they have not committed any crime in seeking asylum, they also have the right not to be locked up in Detention Centres.

Many Australians do not have access to correct/true information about asylum seekers and refugees. They do not realise that the term “queue-jumper” is completely irrelevant – there is frequently no queue because there is no Australian Embassy in the country of the people who are seeking asylum. In one country, there was a sign on the Australian Embassy door advising callers to contact the Australian Embassy in Bangkok – thousands of kilometres and several countries away. For refugees in many African countries, the closest embassy at one point in time was Cairo. Perhaps it still is!

What do refugees have to offer Australia? They are people of courage and determination. To survive the conditions in their country and the dangerous journey, they had to be. They have a wealth of experience that we could not begin to dream of. If we are open, they will share this with us. Refugees are the most motivated citizens we can have. As well as all this, they make a significant contribution to the economy.

To help our Government understand this, there are a few simple things we can do, such as visit our MP’s office, send an email or write a letter. The letter needs to be just one paragraph in length and to ask only one or two questions. If you receive a reply that does not answer your questions, write a **follow-up letter**. Examples are given below.

Here are some sample questions:

- Do you believe that people commit an offence by arriving in Australia without permission and seeking asylum? If Yes, what offence do they commit?
- Do you believe that people who arrive in Australia informally and seek asylum should be detained?
- Do you believe that people who arrive in Australia informally and seek asylum should be detained indefinitely?
- Do you believe that Courts should be denied the power to order the release on bail of people who arrive in Australia informally and seek asylum and who are detained?
- Do you believe the Refugee Review Tribunal should be legally required to determine cases fairly?
- Do you believe Courts should be prevented from overturning unfair decisions of the Refugee Review Tribunal?
- Do you believe Australia’s policy of indefinite mandatory detention of asylum seekers is:
 - o necessary?
 - o humane?
 - o decent?
 - o fair?

Sample Initial Letter

Dear

I am concerned about Australia’s refugee policy and human rights record. I am a voter in the electorate of I have two questions: (insert chosen questions) I would be grateful for your response.

Yours faithfully

_____(Name)

_____(Address)

Sample Follow-up Letter

Dear

Thank you for your letter of(date)
Unfortunately, it did not answer my questions. My questions were: (insert original questions) I would be grateful if you could answer them.

Yours faithfully

_____(Name)

_____(Address)

Let there be Peace on Earth and let it begin with me

The way of peace needs a culture of nonviolence. To build a culture of peace we need to change the prevailing culture of retaliation - 'getting even' - to a culture which acknowledges pain and a willingness to deal with it.

We sometimes think that violent thoughts and behaviour are natural. Think about a situation where someone cuts you off in traffic when you are driving. Often our negative reaction is so instantaneous it feels normal or natural. We can believe that this reaction is part of being human. What may seem 'natural' is in fact the product of the processes in which we have been trained. To become people of peace and nonviolence we have to unlearn the old way and learn the new way of nonviolence. It is a matter of seeing that we have a choice of whether to perpetuate the violence.

Peace and Forgiveness

*Be the change you wish
to see in the world.*

M Gandhi

The pillars of true peace are justice and that form of love which is forgiveness. There can be no peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness. Forgiveness, as a fully human act, is above all a personal initiative. But we are essentially social beings. Consequently, society too is absolutely in need of forgiveness. Families, groups, societies, States and the international community itself need forgiveness in order to renew ties that have been sundered, go beyond sterile situations of mutual condemnation and overcome the temptation to discriminate against others without appeal. The ability to forgive lies at the very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity. Forgiveness is in no way opposed to justice, as if to forgive meant to overlook the need to right the wrong. It is rather the fullness of justice, leading to

that tranquility of order which is much more than a cessation of hostilities. [c/- *Message for World Day of Peace 2002*: John Paul II]

The call to be peacemakers is integral to the Christmas message. One of the challenges for us at Christmas is that *we must be the change we wish to see in the world* [M Gandhi] - to be people of peace and people of good will. The Otherway Centre in Adelaide (ph 08 8232 1001) has recently published a nativity poster that depicts an Afghani family and poses the question: *Is there room in Australia for this Afghani family?* If every pbvm Sister and Associate resolved to place a copy of this poster in a suitable venue we may be instrumental in increasing awareness of a significant national dilemma at Christmas time.

At Christmas we need to take time to reflect on where we (as individuals and as a country) need forgiveness and whom we can choose to forgive so that we can be people of peace. We can be the

Let there be Peace ...

