



Presentation Society Justice Newsletter



Issue No. 3

Dear Sisters and Associates

As you know the Society Justice Committee decided that its priority for 2002 would be to urge the Australian Government to lobby the UN for the endorsement of the Earth Charter at the Johannesburg Summit. We have been encouraged by signs which show that this is part of a movement of the Spirit in our times, as a recent statement of the Pope and the changing focus of the Australian Bishops Justice and Peace Commission show. The Columban Mission has also given significant support to the Earth Charter Initiative.

All of this points to an increasing awareness of the interconnections between the various spheres of influence that make up the social, political, economic, ecological and religious/spiritual fabric of our lives. In our previous two newsletters we have placed the



emphasis on the connections between the social, political, economic and ecological aspects. In this and the next edition we are highlighting the strong links between the ecological and religious/spiritual spheres by considering how the key principles of the Earth Charter mirror our Catholic Tradition.

On pages two and three of this edition you will find the first eight Principles of the Earth Charter matched with statements from Catholic Social Thought. We have also included some points for reflection on these statements which can be used either by individuals or by groups.

Page 4 provides some updates on actions that have been taken since the April Newsletter and suggests possibilities for future action.

Carmel Boyle, Joan Power and Kathleen Tynan
Society Justice Committee

The Earth Charter Initiative website:
<http://www.earthcharter.org/>

Pope John Paul II calls for ecological conversion

In January 2001 the Pope stated: "We must therefore encourage and support the *ecological conversion* which in recent decades has made humanity more sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading."

In response to the Pope's call for 'ecological conversion' the Australian Bishops recently changed the name of the Bishops

Committee for Justice, Development and Peace (BCJDP) to the Bishops Committee for Justice, Development, Ecology and Peace (BCJDEP).

The Bishops also approved the formation of a national body of advisors on the environment. Named *Catholic Earthcare Australia*, it will be an advisory Council to the BCJDEP.

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Columbans also lobby for the Earth Charter

The Columban Mission recently sponsored a broadsheet entitled **The Earth Charter**. In it we are urged to the same sorts of action as we have been advocating in order to have our Government lobby the UN for endorsement of the Earth Charter at the Johannesburg Summit. Copies of this publication can be obtained from Angela Lecomber at Earth Charter Victoria:

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I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity

*Theology, philosophy, and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a “cosmos” endowed with its own integrity, its own internal dynamic balance. **This order must be respected.** The human race is called to explore this order... an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence... to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.*

[Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, 1/01/1990, #8]



2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love

Today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be the responsibility of everyone. There is an order in the universe which must be respected, and the human person, endowed with the capabilities of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order, for the well-being of future generations.

[Pope John Paul II, *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*, 1/01/1990, #16]

3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful

Those who are rich are bound to accept a less material way of life, with less waste, in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race.

[Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971, #70]

It is the duty of Christians and of all who look to God as the Creator to protect the environment by restoring a sense of reverence for the whole of God's creation.

Ecclesia in Asia, November 1999

4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations

... the natural beauty of Oceania has not escaped the ravages of human exploitation. The Synod Fathers called upon the governments and peoples of Oceania to protect this precious environment for present and future generations. It is their special responsibility to assume on behalf of all humanity stewardship of the Pacific Ocean, containing over one half of the Earth's total supply of water. The continued health of this and other oceans is crucial for the welfare of peoples not only in Oceania but in every part of the world.



[Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Oceania*, 23/11/01, #31]

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life

Delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources. It should be pointed out that all of this, even if carried out in the name of progress and well-being, is ultimately to mankind's disadvantage.

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 1/01/1990, #7]



6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach



... local or regional wars, however limited, not only destroy human life and social structures, but also damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning the soil and water.

[Pope John Paul II, *World Day of Peace*, 1/01/1990, #12]

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

At stake is not only a "physical" ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a "human" ecology which makes the existence of creatures more dignified, by protecting the fundamental good of life in all its manifestations and by preparing for future generations an environment more in conformity with the Creator's plan.

[Pope John Paul II, *General Audience*, 17/01/01, 4]

8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired

What must be brought, therefore, is a system of cooperation freely undertaken, an effective and mutual sharing, carried out with dignity on either side, for the construction of a more human world.

[Pope Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples*, 26/03/1967, #54]

SOME POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- How did you feel as you read these quotations?
- What did you learn?
- What can you (and others) do to put your new learnings into action? e.g. raising the issue with friends and relations.

The Earth Charter—Action Update

In the last edition several actions were suggested for urging the Government to include the Earth Charter as part of its submission to the Johannesburg Summit. Several sisters attended community consultations that were held by the Department of Environment and Heritage during April. Joan Power, Carmel Boyle, Marlette Black, Sheila Quonoey and Angela Cameron shared some reflections on their involvement.

While Sheila and Angela felt it would be easy to be disheartened by the Government's approach it was good to be part of the discussion and to find that other groups were also urging the Government to lobby the UN to endorse the Earth Charter in September. Carmel and Marlette, who had previously been to a similar public consultation on another issue, felt that it was encouraging this time to be invited to contribute. They also expressed reservation about whether our contribution would appear in the Government's final paper.

Joan attended the final consultation in Melbourne and was able to report that it was obvious by that stage that the Government bureaucrats were aware that the Earth Charter was "on the table". Joan said that during this final consultation it was pointed out that the Earth Charter offers unique ethical and spiritual perspectives on the issue of sustainable development.

From May 24 to June 9 Annette Shears and Carmel Boyle will be in Bali (Indonesia) representing IPA at the final Preparatory Commission for the World Summit. They have been sponsored by IPA and a report of this meeting will be in the next edition of *IPA Connections*.

West Papua—Action Update

Three issues continue to hold the limelight:

- 1) The investigation into the death of Theys Eluay.
- 2) The ongoing debate re the offer of 'special autonomy' and the desire for independence.
- 3) The opposition of the Australian and US governments to the idea of separation of West Papua from Indonesia.

Please continue to watch for news items and pray for a just and peaceful resolution.

Contact details for groups associated with the Free West Papua Movement were listed on the last page of the April Newsletter.

FURTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR ACTION

EARTH CHARTER

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is drawing closer – August 2002 – so the time is running out for urging the Australian Government to endorse the Earth Charter.

Write to Hon. David Kemp MP asking him to support the Earth Charter.

Some points to make:-

- 1) This is a critical moment in Earth's history and we, as human beings, must make a choice about its future.
- 2) The Earth Charter can be an important educational tool.
- 3) The Earth Charter presents an integrated definition of sustainability which is a worthwhile vision to promote at the WSSD.
- 4) The Earth Charter forms an ethical basis for ensuring sustainable development.
- 5) Australia could take a leadership role by advocating that the principles of the Earth Charter be adopted by the United Nations and its member States.

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Address: Department of the Environment and Heritage, GPO Box 787, Canberra ACT 2601

ASYLUM SEEKERS

While those who have contacted the Prime Minister, Phillip Ruddock and Simon Crean have received responses that offer little encouragement that any change in policy is likely to occur, there does seem to be a slowly growing groundswell of opposition to current policy. We can only encourage you and each other to continue to make your concern and your desire for change known wherever and whenever possible.

