



I Keep Trying

a reflection by Peter Thomas,
member of the JPIC Team



My octogenarian neighbour, a woman who as a child fled to Australia seeking refuge from the murderous Nazi regime has worked tirelessly both at a local and national level in the cause of justice. I applaud her humanity and feel inadequate in her presence. She prompts me to ask myself whether in my life-time I have been too cautious, too proper and too self-obsessed. *“It is when we all play safe that we create a world of utmost insecurity”* says the Dalai Lama. And *“never see a need without doing something about it”* is one of the most motivating and well-known sayings of Mary MacKillop. Most people like me stand in awe in the presence of greatness, in the presence of those souls that untiringly give their lives in the service of others. Yet I console myself knowing that perfection is a myth... This is good to know, but is never an all-embracing excuse!

Oblate priest, Ron Rolheiser shook my complacency recently when he wrote, *“The Jesus who invites us into personal piety and church doctrine is the same Jesus who tells us that nobody will get to heaven without a letter of reference from the poor.”* Rolheiser quotes Jim Wallis, the founder of Sojourners a magazine, a peace movement and spirituality. Wallis is a layman, an US evangelical with deep catholic and ecumenical sympathies. Wallis suggests seven principles of engagement for Christian ‘political’ involvement in the world....

- ✚ God hates injustice.
- ✚ The kingdom of God is a new order.
- ✚ The church is an alternative community.
- ✚ The kingdom of God transforms the world by addressing the specifics of injustice.
- ✚ The church can be the conscience of the state, holding it accountable for upholding justice and restraining its violence.
- ✚ Take a global perspective.
- ✚ Seek the common good.

In these seven principles Jim Wallis is sharing with us what he sees as the intersection of social justice and the gospel. He’s also highlighting for me how often we are seduced into reading scripture as a story addressed to me rather than to me and to others, the community. Hence individualism reduces the gospel to a privatized relationship between ‘Jesus and me’ and sin is personal and rarely communal or societal. When I fall into this way of thinking it prevents me from seeing generational sin and systemic injustice.

My church has given me a number of social justice themes that encompass the whole of living. First and foremost is the proclamation that human life is sacred and the dignity of each person is the foundation for building a moral vision for society. You could say that this belief is the foundation of all the principles of Catholic social teaching. But lest I fall into that trap of ‘individualism’ it also tells me that the



person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize society in economics and politics, in law and policy as these things affect human dignity and the

capacity for each of us to grow in community. It reminds me that I have a right to participate in society seeking always the common good, especially for the poor and vulnerable.

Creating the circumstances that help me to exercise my rights and responsibilities is complex but fundamental is the issue of human rights. Human dignity can only be achieved if human rights are protected. Of course rights come with duties and responsibilities---to one another, to our families, and to the larger society. And then there's the issue of the dignity of work and the rights of workers. The church emphatically tells me that work is more than a way to make a living; it's a way in which I participate in God's creation! With that lofty notion I need to be mindful of things like the basic rights of workers, the right to productive work and the right to decent and fair wages.

We are rightfully proud in Australia to call this nation multicultural and to rejoice and respect the traditions and culture of our First Nations peoples. My church unequivocally says we are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, religious and

ideological differences. Loving my neighbor has a global dimension and at the core of this solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. When 17 year old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg began protesting holding world governments to their promise to meet the carbon emissions target agreed in Paris, in 2015 she was demonstrating her stewardship of creation. My church asks the same of me. Care for the Earth is not just a slogan, it's a requirement of my faith; it's an environmental challenge that has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

My neighbour belongs to no church, synagogue or temple but her many acts of goodness and her passionate action to bring about justice in areas where injustice prevails is a shining example of a life that promotes virtue by the doing of good deeds. I must do the same. My church tradition, inspired by the gospel has a rich treasure trove of wisdom about building a just society and living a life of holiness amidst the challenges of our modern society. It's up to me, it's up to you, it's up to all of us.....



Ref: 'Jesus and Justice', Ron Rolheiser OMI, Feb 10, 2008
United States Conf. of Catholic Bishops 'Themes of Catholic Social Teaching' 2021

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER (from ACSJC)

**Spirit of God,
We have heard your call to share in building up the Kingdom of God.
Fill us with the desire to change ourselves and to change the world.
Enflame our passion for justice into a commitment to address unjust situations and structures.
Deepen our concern for our sisters and brothers throughout the world who are enduring the burdens
of poverty, war, exploitation and persecution.
Let us enthusiastically play our part in the mission of the Church in the modern world.
Banish any complacency in our hearts and minds. Teach us to recognize the lack of justice.
May we envisage, pray about and create a different sort of world
in which injustice is replaced with a renewed sense of solidarity and care.
Enlivened by the Spirit, may we go forth in the peace of the Holy Spirit to love and serve the Lord.
Amen**



CLIMATE CHANGE

His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Conversation with Greta Thunberg and Leading Scientists

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9GXqOMMeTg>

Climate Emergency: Feedback Loops: Part 1 Introduction

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hX8HBiB65I>

IWD - 8 March 2021

Pope Francis is making small but significant steps towards greater inclusion of women in decision making and leadership roles in the Church. He has amended Canon Law so that women may be officially recognized as exercising the ministries of Lector and Acolyte. And he has appointed a woman as Under-Secretary to the Synod of Bishops – with the right to vote. This is a good day to pay attention to women's contributions in our local Church too. For a list of 160+ Australian and New Zealander Women in Theology you should know about: Go to <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/event/international-womens-day/2021-03-08/>



World Water Day 22nd March 2021

World Water Day seeks to raise awareness about issues relating to water such as water shortages and sanitation problems. This day aims to provide people with access to safe and clean water. It encourages countries to implement better infrastructure and water management. According to the UN, more than 2 billion people live without access to clean and safe water. World Water Day was established in 1993 by the UN General Assembly. It is observed annually on March 22nd.



FIVE TOP WAYS OF USING WATER TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE: Go to: <https://www.iso.org/news/ref2492.html>



STATEMENT FROM THE HEART © Illustration by Sarah Keane Designs

Can you show your support for The Uluru Statement from the Heart Canvas, if you have not already done so. It is a very simple process. Simply go to:

<https://fromtheheart.com.au/signtheulurustatementcanvas/> and follow the instructions. Our First Nations People are looking for support from their non-Indigenous brothers and sisters. Please register your support by this simple action.

HARMONY WEEK - 15-21 MARCH

It is a time to celebrate cultural diversity and share the message that everyone belongs. It is a great time to reflect on Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* on fraternity and social friendship.

“The image of a polyhedron can represent a society where differences co-exist, complementing, enriching and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations. Each of us can learn something from others.”

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, n 215

