

THOMAS MORE SOCIAL ACTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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Volume 2 - No.1 February 2002



Editorial
Issue
IDENTIFICATION

Be like YEAST for Australia!

This is the vision of the Thomas More Social Action Groups, wherever they are.

The call to transform ourselves, our communities, our country, was spoken out by Pope John Paul II when he wrote his Apostolic Exhortation to the Church in Oceania late last year. He said:

"It is the fundamental call of lay people to renew the temporal order in all its many elements.... In this way, the Church becomes the yeast that leavens the entire loaf of the temporal order." (Ecclesia in Oceania 43)



Yeast isn't any good unless it is mixed into the flour, and neither is our faith and our Catholic social teaching, unless we mix it into the life of Australia. The call of God to transform Australia needs to be heard by others.

The Summer School will kick off the year for us. It is a great chance to grow in understanding of Catholic social teachings and to appeal to others who are not yet in our TMSAGs to join us and share their talents with us.

Michael Casanova.

Catholic Social Teachings APPLICATION

Usually we read words from the Pope that concern the whole world and we have to figure out how they apply to Australia. So it's great to have the Pope's writing about our own area of the world.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it the job of us lay people to renew the temporal order (human society)? Why does God care about the temporal as well as the spiritual order? (*Church in Oceania, 43*)
2. How can we mix the yeast of the Gospel into society?
3. What does the Pope mean about the Church inserting herself fully into culture? (*Church in Oceania, 16*)
4. What are the areas of concern that the Pope sees for Australia?

TMSAG meetings:

Hawthorn
Mon 4th March
7:45 pm
Corner House - 182
Power St

Ballarat
Sun 24th Feb
NCC / Thomas More
Regional Conference
Immaculate Heart
Mission House
10am to 4:30pm

Hoppers Crossing / Werribee

Fri 22nd Feb 7pm
St Andrew's
Presbytery

Doveton
Sat 2nd March, 7:45pm
Holy Family Presbytery
100 Power Rd

Preston
Tues 12th Feb,
7:30 pm
St Raphael's Pres,
17 Hardy St

Ringwood
Wed 20th Feb, 8pm
16 Leonard Street

Further details, phone 9326 5757

Catholic Social Teachings READINGS

Pope John Paul II to the Church in Oceania

URL: http://www.catholic.org.au/media/2001/2001_nov26.htm

The way of Christ cannot be walked without an ardent sense of mission. 8

The first communion, the first unity, is that of faith. Unity in faith is necessary and fundamental. The second aspect ... is that of charity. 12

It is vital that the Church insert herself fully into culture and from within bring about the process of purification and transformation. 16

The Church's social teaching needs to be taught and implemented still more effectively in Oceania. It is certain that commitment to social justice and peace is an integral part of the Church's mission in the world. 26

So-called "economic rationalism" is a tenet which tends increasingly to divide rich and poor nations, communities, individuals. 27

In the more secularised and affluent societies of Oceania, the right to life is the one most under threat. There is a profound contradiction in this, for these are often societies which speak insistently about human rights, while denying the most basic right of all. 30

The Christian concept of marriage and the family is being opposed by a new secular, pragmatic and individualistic outlook which has gained standing in the area of legislation ... 45.

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fundamental call of lay people
to renew the temporal order
in all its many elements...."*



*"In this way, the Church becomes
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of the temporal order."*

*(Pope John Paul II,
Ecclesia in Oceania 43)*

Catholic Social ACTION

FUNCTIONS

One of the principles of Catholic social teaching is SOLIDARITY – that sense of brotherhood, teamwork, of all being in the same boat and needing to help each other along. You know what it's like in the practice of your faith: you need others who are doing the same thing so that you don't have to struggle alone. That's how it is with Catholic social action: IF YOU TRY AND DO IT ALONE, YOU'LL STRUGGLE AND GET LESS DONE.

There are Catholics out there who, more or less, have a desire to take up the Church's call to "renew the temporal order", to change the Australian social landscape, but they don't know where to get started, or if they have started, they don't have the encouragement of being in a team.

That's where our TMSA Groups come in. We need to offer these people a place in our groups. To do this, we need to raise the profile of our groups by holding functions – talks and social events.

ACTION ONE

Brainstorm how you and your group can mix Catholic social teachings into Australian life. Think of the contacts, schools, workplaces etc where you and your group have possibilities already. Work out a function that your group will organise and invite all TMSAGers.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

The issue of refugees has come up again, with the Catholic Bishops of Australia releasing a press statement and Archbishop Pell appearing on TV. Now is the time for the insights of Catholic social teaching to be brought out to light up Australia's approach to refugees, immigrants and population questions for Australia.

The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has opened up an online discussion forum which closes on Friday Feb22.

ACTION TWO

After discussing with your group some of the Church's teachings on immigration and refugees, make a submission and post it on: <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/>

Try to make your submission preferably before, but even after, the cut-off date. Put in a simple letter with the same message to your local community paper.

Catholic Social Teachings on Immigration

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2241.

Two Essential Aspects:

One – Immigrants.

"The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him."

Two — governments.

"Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens."



Australian Bishops call for Action on Asylum Seekers

29 January 2002

The President of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis P Carroll, has called on the Australian Government to re-assess procedures dealing with the asylum seekers in the detention centres.

He said that while we can sympathise with the Government in dealing with the problems of asylum seekers arriving in unpredictable numbers without following proper procedures, ... "I urge the Government to respect the human dignity and rights of the asylum seekers, hear their cries for help... I also urge the Government to avail itself of the offers of practical assistance from the many groups that wish to assist in the care of the asylum seekers. The Catholic Community and its agencies are more than ready to work with Government and other bodies to bring relief and support".

While destructive behaviour and inflicting harm on children are repugnant, said Archbishop Carroll,

they must be recognised as the response of deeply traumatized people brought to a point of desperation. Children should not be in such centres in the first place and the causes of desperation much be addressed.

Archbishop Carroll welcomed the Government's decision to resume the processing of applications for residence, but pointed out the need for the process to be streamlined and expedited.

After the overthrow of the Taliban regime, the Afghan asylum seekers are in a special category. "Should not the Government consider giving them "safe haven" temporary visa arrangements similar to those extended to the East Timorese and Kosovars", asked the Archbishop.

"The tragic plight of the asylum seekers, especially the women and children calls for an immediate and compassionate response", concluded Archbishop Carroll.



Aid to Refugees Isn't Alms, But a Duty, Says Pope

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 12, 2001 (ZENIT.org).-

Aid to refugees is an act of justice based on the rights of the human person and the vision of religions, John Paul II said today ...

The Holy Father said: "I wish to invite you to an ever deeper awareness of your mission: to see Christ in every brother and sister in need, to proclaim and defend the dignity of every migrant, every displaced person and every refugee."

"In this way, assistance given will not be considered an alms from the goodness of our heart, but an act of justice due to them," he said. The Pontiff insisted

that this duty of justice is based on "inalienable rights which do not depend on any human power to concede or deny, for they are rights which have their source in God."

"This is a profoundly religious vision which is shared not only by other Christians, but also by many followers of the other great religions of the world," John Paul II said.

The Pope encouraged the Catholic Migration Commission to "search for new modes of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, which are needed now more than ever."

New Thomas More Social ACTIVATOR!

My name is Rosemary (Rosy) de Castella and I have recently joined the team at the Thomas More Centre. I am very excited to be working to establish Thomas More Social Action Groups in parishes and universities as well as working with the IT systems administration at the Thomas More Centre.

I previously completed a Bachelor of Engineering at Deakin University in Geelong and worked at Ford Motor Company and in the School of Engineering and Technology at Deakin. Having found that area of work not entirely satisfying, I decided to begin a Bachelor of Arts, which I am currently completing off-campus through Monash Uni. My major area of study is psychology, with studies in history-politics and media studies also.

In this age of abundant information (often missing or misguided information), I am crucially aware of the difficulties faced by young people in maintaining sound formation in their faith and broader issues. The constraints of work, study and other commitments combined with a lack of support on campus can lead to a lack of awareness and involvement in important political and social issues. As an undergraduate I became involved in the Thomas More Social Action Groups and was immediately impressed by the relevance of the topics addressed and the constructive approach presented, which includes guided discussion and encourages effective means of taking action.

We have heard the Holy Father's call to action: "It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle". I truly believe that we have an enormous capacity to educate and positively influence those around us through our words and actions. As Catholics we have a responsibility to be visible and active in the world, and through promoting Catholic social teaching we are able to invite others to open their hearts to the values of the Gospel. As well as the existing groups in Camberwell, Preston, the Western suburbs, Ballarat and Universities, we will be building new groups in various parishes and at Melbourne, Monash, RMIT and ACU-Patrick campuses. If you are interested in being a part of these groups or would like to see a new groups start in your area, please do not hesitate to contact me.

An important adjunct to being socially active is the need for support and encouragement gained through socialising. I look forward to helping organise more social activities to unite and inspire our work. I am delighted to be involved in the work of the Thomas More Centre and look forward to seeing this work continue to flourish through the groups around Melbourne and beyond.

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National Civic Council meetings near you.

The NCC has meetings every month in venues near our T MSAG meetings and in other areas too. There is a strong emphasis on action and understanding what we can do in a clever way to improve Australia's political and social environment. Highly recommended! Details: Anthony Cappello, 9236 5757.

Thomas More Social Action Group Newsletter

Editor: Michael Casanova. Sub-Editors: Rosy de Castella, Catherine Sheehan, Anthony Cappello, Eilis O'Reilly, M.J. Donnellan, Laura McCormick.

The Thomas More Social Action Groups are bringing together young people to be formed in the Catholic Social Teachings and to move on to activism and evangelisation.

If you are interested in knowing more about the work of the TMSAGs please call the Thomas More Centre on 9326 5757.

Please note: It is important to submit any published letters or any replies arising from the actions proposed in this newsletter. The editor also

encourages contributions and comments.

Hard copies of the Newsletter are also available – simply call the Thomas More Centre. Other journals available from the Thomas More Centre are: *AD2000*, *News Weekly* and the *Thomas More Bulletin*. Please call the Thomas More Centre for subscription details.

PLEASE NOTE: IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THIS WORK THE THOMAS MORE CENTRE WELCOMES DONATIONS- C/O The Director 582 Queensberry St. North Melbourne 3051