

Global Poverty and Hunger

For the month of October we are invited to focus our prayer on global poverty and hunger, especially as it affects children.

11 – 17 October is Anti-Poverty Week.

In 1993, the UN General Assembly designated **17 October International Day for the Elimination of Poverty** to promote awareness of the need to eradicate poverty and destitution in all countries. Fighting poverty remains at the core of the UN development agenda.

The main aims of Anti-Poverty week are to **spread public awareness of the causes and consequences of poverty and hardship** around the world and in Australia and promote action to address the problem. *[ACSJC Social Justice Diary 2014]*



REFLECTION ONE

Everyone is encouraged to help **reduce poverty and hardship** which is **the principal cause of hunger**. In a country like ours where the majority have never experienced food scarcity, the statistics in developing countries are confronting. **842 million people struggle with hunger every day and 1.2 billion still live in extreme poverty – on less than \$1.25 a day. Each year 2.6 million children die as a result of hunger-related causes. A third of all deaths in children under the age of five in developing countries are linked to malnutrition.**

[About Global Hunger – Bread for the World]

Pope Francis said “poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many

hungry children, so many children without an education, so many poor persons. Poverty today is a cry... We cannot look the other way and pretend this does not exist."

[Pope Francis backs a Caritas campaign to end 'scandal' of world hunger. Carol Glatz]

Readers are invited to reflect on Matthew's Gospel: 'Feeding the five thousand'

Matthew.14:16-18; 20-21

...“They need not go away; **you give them something to eat.**” They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” And he said, “**Bring them here to me.**”

...“And all ate and were filled; and **they took up what was left over of the broken, twelve baskets full.** And those who ate were about five thousand men, beside women and children”



It is possible to reflect on these few short verses in the light of global hunger. Seen against the backdrop of this crisis, **food wastage** in countries like ours is totally irresponsible. There is also the reminder that turning away from any issue because it seems all is too hard is not an option for us as Christians. Jesus would not consider the disciples' solution to send the people away. Likewise we **turn to the compassionate Jesus in prayer**, confident that he will show us a way for he hears the cry of the poor. Pope Francis invites all people to “**act as one single human family to give voice to all of those who suffer silently from hunger, so that this voice becomes a roar which can shake the world.**” “Together we are in God’s hands in the world.”

[Pope Francis backs a Caritas campaign to end 'scandal' of world hunger. Carol Glatz]

United in Action supported by Prayer

REFLECTION TWO

“Prayer is Powerful. Lord hear our prayers.”

The food crisis is extreme in the developing world, but it also affects the developed world. *At present, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 13% of the population is living in relative poverty. This translates to almost 3 million Australians...Every day, people living in poverty have to overcome a number of structural and personal barriers that make surviving difficult, and thriving impossible.* [St Vincent de Paul Society, Two Australias: a report on poverty in the land of plenty (2013), p.5]

We ask ourselves: *Who is being left behind? Who are the poorest of the poor? Our faith calls us to look more closely at who is disproportionately affected by poverty, and to challenge ourselves and all global leaders, to bring about change with and for the poorest.*

[Australian Catholic Social Justice Council Social Justice Diary 2014]

While poverty and lack of fresh water are the principal causes of hunger, among others are **harmful economic systems** that widens the gap between rich and poor. **Escalation in conflicts** like those in Iraq, Syria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan and diseases like the **spread of Ebola** in Liberia and Sierra Leone all increase the number people needing humanitarian assistance worldwide. *[Our will to help those who need it is flagging. Matt Wade, SMH Sept 10, 2014]* **Climate change** is increasingly viewed as a current and future cause of hunger and poverty. Increasing drought, flooding, and changing climatic patterns, all require a shift

in crops and farming practices which present difficulties. [2013 World Hunger and Poverty Facts and Statistics]

You are invited to reflect on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31



“This story reminds us that on the streets and roadsides of every nation on earth, there are men and women like Lazarus. We sometimes walk past without seeing them. And that, it seems, is what the rich man in the parable did. He didn’t rob Lazarus or cheat him. Lazarus was just there, at the rich man’s gate, and he ignored him...” “**Indifference** is really what the rich man was guilty of and what we are often guilty of as **a society that is comfortable in its wealth...**”

Jesus expects more of us. We must ask “what is happening in our world that leaves so many people poor, excluded and powerless?” We are called to build a world where ‘Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man’.” [ACSJ C Justice Trends, No.151, December 2013]

Our region, the Asia-Pacific, is home to 3/5 of all hungry people of the world.

Lazarus is waiting at our gate.