

Special Interest Articles:

- The Razor's Edge – living with uncertainties.
- A New Resource – The Moment of Lift.
- A New Hope – Joe Biden & the Environment.



The Razor's Edge

As we watch 2020 coming to an end, I can't help but feel like we are living on the razor's edge. So many uncertainties confront us:

While the pandemic seems to be under control in this country, world wide it is a disaster. Even if we do get this pandemic under control, the WHO has been weakened with Donald Trump's withdrawal of US support. Earlier this month, in an article in The New Daily, an expert from the CSIRO warned that, if we do not invest significantly in upgrading our biosecurity, we will face further pandemics due to the ability that viruses have shown of transferring from animal to human populations.

The economic impact of COVID has destabilised many countries such that cracks, that were always present in the veneer that is civilization and democracy, have widened. The most glaring examples have been the civil unrest and protests against lockdowns in Europe, and the BLM

movement in the USA. Last week a UK armed forces representative warned that this destabilisation could cause localised conflicts to escalate into wars dragging other countries in.

Then we have the threat of Climate Change. This year's bushfire season raised calls for our government to do something about changing our country's direction. The Deloitte Access Economic report, at the beginning of November, warned that Australia risks economic losses of \$3.7 trillion in GDP by 2070 unless it acts on climate change. Not only would inaction devastate Australia's bottom line, but also the report estimates nearly 900,000 jobs will be shed from at-risk-industries within 50 years.

We are living on the razor's edge – a time of danger indeed. But also a time of opportunity. We have a chance to make changes for the better. We must read the signs of the times and act accordingly or face the consequences of our inaction.

J.R.Sanchez CP

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23% Habitat Loss

Climate change and global food demand could drive a loss of up to 23% of all natural habitat in the next 80 years according to new findings published in *Nature Communications*. Habitat loss could accelerate to a level that brings about rapid extinctions of already vulnerable species.

Global food demand currently fuels agricultural sectors to increase land use, moving into habitats previously untouched. The resultant deforestation leaves more CO₂ in the air increasing greenhouse gas emissions, the main driver of climate change. Deforestation and habitat loss also harms the natural cycles of ecosystems,

affecting all stages of animal life from reproduction, to migration to mating. Because of this, the study found, more species will die sooner than previously expected.

In many ways, the conclusions of the study are already playing out in real time. Whether these trends continue or not will depend on future global carbon emissions and societal choices in the coming years. The report is one more substantiated piece of evidence to push for the reversal of the current conversion of natural habitat to land used for resources.

J. R. Sanchez, CP





JPIC Happenings

The work I've mostly been involved in has not changed greatly since our last newsletter. I continue to be involved with Queensland ACRATH, though there have been challenges at times getting together on Zoom. Of course the work of education and collecting resources continue, and in particular keeping up the blog.



This last quarter's blog articles saw great contributions from fellow Passionists around the province. August's article was contributed by Ron Davoran CP regarding his reflections on the history of slavery, based on his trip to Ghana in 1999 and then to New Orleans in 2018. The article for this last October was contributed by Brian Gleeson CP that reminded readers of East Timor's struggle for independence, lest we forget.

September's blog article focused on Peter Gardiner's current project for JPIC. Br. Jim Coucher CP drew Peter's

attention to a video he had seen on the BBC news site concerning Cambodia's "Rubbish School," where kids pay their tuition with plastic (see: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-asia-53689175>.) With the pandemic shutting down his job in tourism as well as schools, Kimleng Sang decided to use his free time to start up a little school in his home, offering English lessons to local kids. The kids pay for their fees by collecting plastic, thereby cleaning up the village. This way the kids learn about recycling and repurposing plastic. Peter Gardiner contacted Sang and now teaches the children English online 3 days a week.

If you haven't checked out our blog you can do so to read up on these and other stories (a new article appears each month) at jpiccp.wordpress.com.

J.R.Sanchez, CP



*A strong woman
stands up for herself.
A stronger woman
stands up for
everybody else.
(Women
Empowerment)*



A New Resource

I've picked up a new resource for our JPIC library. It is a talking book (CD) entitled, "The Moment of Lift," by author, Melinda Gates (wife of Bill Gates). The book is read by Melinda and tells her story of the last 20 years as co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Foundation's mission has been to find solutions for people with the most urgent needs, wherever they live. Throughout this journey, one that that became increasingly clear to her – that if you want to lift a society up, invest in women.

The book is candid and inspiring as Melinda traces her awakening to the link between women's empowerment and the health of societies. She shows some of the tremendous opportunities that exist right now to fast track change. It provides simple and effective ways each one of us can make a difference.

The greatest impact the book had for me

were the 'heroes' Melinda introduced throughout the book who battled against cultural expectations to bring about real change in the lives of women, especially in wining for them equality. Melinda offers some startling data and shares moving conversations she's had with women from all over the world and shows how we can get involved.

As with any of the resources in the JPIC library, all you need to do is get in touch with me about a loan and I can send it to you via post. If you would like to find out what other resources we have in the JPIC library, just email me, in particular if you have an area of interest, and I can give you details on what's on offer including books, CDs and DVDs. I can highly recommend Melinda's story, which I've found truly moving and inspiring.

J.R.Sanchez CP



Opportunity to Reset

In a time of crisis, where COVID-19 has put a huge dent in our the economy, there is an opportunity to reset the economy along better ethical lines that really serve the good of humanity.

We've known for some time that our current economic model is unsustainable, due to a limited supply of resources, and due to the fact that while, theoretically, a free market model is the fairest system, there is no equal playing field. Because the world doesn't play by the same rules, nor sticks to any rules, the net result is that rich countries stay rich at the poor countries' expense.

There are other ways of conceiving of the economy that better correspond to the kinds of worth and value that we are interested in. The current crisis presents us with an opportunity to ask, 'where

can we cancel debts so that people are able to begin again?'

Likewise, we have an opportunity to reset to a 'green economy.' This is defined as an economy that aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and that aims for sustainable development without degrading the environment. The 2011 UNEP Green Economy Report argues that to be green, an economy must not only be efficient, but also fair. Fairness implies recognizing global and country level equity dimensions, particularly in assuring a Just Transition to an economy that is low-carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. This is not an easy road, especially for developing countries, but the benefits in new jobs and technologies could be a game changer.

J.R.Sanchez cp



The EU Solution

It would appear that the EU have learned a lesson from Australia. Just as our government has used the strategy of indefinite detention to discourage asylum seekers from entering the country by boats from Indonesia, the EU and the Italian government both have poured money into supporting the Libyan Coast Guard to intercept and keep African refugees and migrants out of Europe.

The UN Mission in Libya has stressed that Libya is not a safe port for the return of migrants and asylum seekers. Even the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights called on Italy to urgently suspend cooperation with the Libyan Coast Guard until clear guarantees of human rights compliance are in place.

As it stands, thousands of these men, women and children, fleeing for their safety, are being rounded up and thrown in appalling detention centers notorious for forced labour, human trafficking, torture and rape.

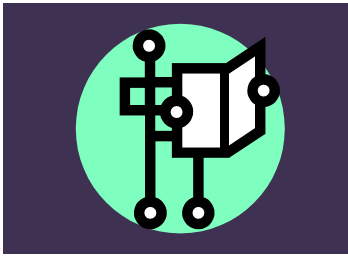
Human Rights Watch has consistently reported that humanitarian assistance from the EU and Italy has failed



to eradicate systemic exploitation. EU leaders know how bad things are in Libya, but continue to provide political and material support to prop up a rotten system.

If you wish to take action, go to freedomunited.org where you can sign a petition or make a donation or post this petition on your Facebook page to raise awareness.

From: Freedom United



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Called to Discern

The current political crisis in the US, with the pandemic, have plunged us into a time of great uncertainty. Little wonder that mental health issues are front and centre of the public consciousness. We all hope that the world that emerges from this crisis is a better one, but how do we plot our own personal course through it?

For us, as Christians, our call is to discern God's will for us as we read the signs of the times. We have to allow room for the Spirit to guide us in the choices we make, politically or socially, where to engage or where to disengage.

But we don't come to the discernment without resources. Our body of Catholic Social Teaching is there to offer us a sound approach to understanding the human person and society in light of the Gospel message. It is founded on 7 principles that can enable us to 'critique' social, economic and political matters. These 7 principles are:

1. Life and the Dignity of the Human Person, which states that our basic

dignity comes from God due to being created in God's image and likeness.

2. Rights/Responsibilities of the Human Person, which states that because of our God given dignity, each person has basic rights and responsibilities.
3. Family, community and participation, which states that we are social beings who realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others in community, the basic cell of which is the family.
4. Dignity of Work and the rights of workers, which states that an expression of our dignity and participation in God's creation is our work.
5. Option for the poor, which states that the basic test of a society is how its most vulnerable are faring, and that we are called to respond to these needs.
6. Solidarity, which states that we are one human family and therefore we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.
7. Care of God's Creation, which states that what we have been given on this Earth is a gift, and we have a responsibility to care for what we have received.

J. R. Sanchez, CP .

A New Hope

When President Donald Trump announced in 2017 his intention to make the USA the first and lone nation in the world to withdraw from the Paris Agreement on climate change, he justified the move by saying he was "elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris."

But 3 years later, it was voters in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and across Pennsylvania that delivered the presidency to Joe Biden, who has vowed to immediately re-enter the global climate accord as the first step in enacting his ambitious environment platform.

Early reactions from Church and environmental activists expressed a guarded optimism that the Biden administration will reorient the country on climate after 4 years of inaction, but they were well aware of the hurdles he faces – none greater than the potential legislative impasse should Republicans retain control of the

Senate.

Over 4 years in office, the Trump administration has dismantled major climate policies and rolled back more rules governing clean air, water, wildlife and toxic chemicals. In all, a New York Times analysis, based on research from Harvard Law School, Columbia Law School and other sources, counts more than 80 environmental rules and regulations officially reversed, revoked or otherwise rolled back under Mr. Trump, with another 20 rollbacks in progress.

Biden has signaled climate change will be a top priority for his administration. His victory speech listed climate among four crises facing the nation that will direct his attention when he takes office. It begins with re-entering the Paris Agreement. Let's hope and pray he succeeds.

J.R.Sanchez, CP.