

February 2021
Volume 15, Issue 1

JPIC

Committee Desk (mobile): 0481 047 390

Special Interest Articles:

- A Basic Human Right – Abortion double standards.
- The Battle for Democracy – Democracy tested.
- Education and COVID – Impact on the poor.

Ecological Conversion

If someone who loves you gives you a beautiful and valuable gift, how do you handle it? To treat it with contempt is to treat the giver with contempt. If you value it, you admire it, look after it; you do not disdain it; you respect it and are grateful. The damage to our planet stems from the loss of this awareness of gratitude. We have grown used to owning, but too little to thanking. My own awareness of this truth began to take root during a meeting of the bishops of Latin America at the shrine of Aparecida, Brazil, in May 2007. I was on the committee drafting the concluding document of the meeting, and at first I was a bit annoyed that the Brazilians and bishops from other countries wanted so much in there on Amazonia. It struck me as excessive.

started to see the harmonious unity of humanity and nature, and how humanity's fate is inseparably bound up with that of our common home. *Laudato Si'* is not a green encyclical. It's a social encyclical. The green and the social go hand in hand. The fate of Creation is tied to the fate of all humanity. Humanity is getting ever sicker along with our common home, with our environment, with Creation. *Laudato Si'* links the scientific consensus on the destruction of the environment with our self-forgetting, our rejection of who we are as creatures of a loving Creator, living inside His Creation but at odds with it.

I think COVID-19 is making this apparent, for those with eyes to see. This is a time for integrity, for exposing the selective morality of ideology and to embrace the full implications of what it means to be children of God.

Pope Francis
(December 5, 2020)

In the night you see nothing, but little by little dawn breaks and you see the day. That's how my ecological awareness came about. Slowly, like daybreak, an ecological vision began growing in me. I

Not Enough!

The world is on track to warm by more than 3 degrees by the end of the century, despite the coronavirus pandemic prompting a record drop in global emissions, a UN report warns.

For Australia, CO₂ emissions have dropped to their lowest levels since 1998 in the past financial year. But 2020 was one of the world's three warmest years on record, and Australia is one of five G20 members whose climate ambitions are expected to fall short, according to the UN Emissions Gap Report 2020. The report found that the world was still headed for a temperature rise of 3.2 degrees this century, far beyond the 2015

Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees.

The COVID 'dip' means only a 0.01 degree reduction of global warming by 2050, meaning that it won't be enough to keep warming well below 2 degrees. The UN is urging governments around the world to boost emissions reductions goals and focus on green recoveries from the pandemic. "The pandemic is a warning from nature that we must act on climate change. It provides an opportunity for a recovery that puts the world on a 2-degree pathway," the report said.

J. R. Sanchez, CP

LAUDATO SI'

ON THE CARE OF
OUR COMMON HOME



Contents:

Ecological Conversion	1
Not Enough!	1
JPIC Happenings	2
A Basic Human Right	2
The Chinese Bully	3
The Battle for Democracy	3
Education and COVID	4
Largest Protest in History	4





JPIC Happenings



This is the first issue of our newsletter for 2021. What a tumultuous finish we saw to the end of 2020 and the start of 2021 with the first releases of the new vaccines and the turn over of the presidency of the USA. While these developments have given us renewed hope for a better future, there is much to do in this fractured world.

A specific sign of hope for our Passionist family developed over the period of my holiday through January. I was contacted by Gwen Barde CP about being part of an international committee that met a few times via zoom to look at developing a program for the congregation and wider Passionist Family, as part of our Jubilee celebratory year, that would enable us to engage with Laudato Si'. Its aim would be to provide us with a program to renew Passionist formation in the Spirituality of Laudato Si', emphasising the responsibility of the Passionists to care for creation and the

crucified of today and reimagining the Passionist Charism for the 21st century. The core members of the committee were connected to the North American Passionist JPIC committee and included David Horvath, Patty Gillis, Joe Mitchell CP, Lissa Romell and Paul Wadell. I, and others, were asked to be part of discussions so as to bring an international representation to the committee. The core group have done an excellent job, and while there were some communication problems to begin with to discern what exactly the Generalate was asking of us, consensus was reached and the core group got to work, producing a first of 6 sessions that will be imparted to the Passionist family this year. It is an exciting initiative and very much at the heart of the vision our Fr. General has for our Jubilee year and beyond.

J.R.Sanchez, CP

"If we deprive the weakest among us of the right to life, how can we effectively guarantee respect for every other right?"
(Pope Francis)



A Basic Human Right

If I were a citizen of the USA I would be a democrat as opposed to Republican. It is because I see them as much more concerned with issues of human rights, social justice and concern for the environment. That is why I truly struggle with how they can have such a blind spot when it comes to the issue of abortion.

On the 8th of February this year Pope Francis told diplomats at the Vatican that it was painful for him to see more countries move away from their inalienable duty to protect human life from conception to natural death. "It is painful to note that under the pretext of guaranteeing presumed subjective rights, a growing number of legal systems in our world seem to be moving away from their inalienable duty to protect human life at every one of its phases," the pope said.

The right to life is a foundational human right because each person is an end in

themselves and never simply a means to be valued only of their usefulness. "If we deprive the weakest among us of the right to life, how can we effectively guarantee respect for every other right?"

I was stunned by the blatant double standard, here in Queensland recently, when a young man, high on drugs and driving a stolen car, crashed into a killed a young couple as they were walking their dogs. The media put a lot of attention was given to the fact that the woman was pregnant. The news reports spoke of the anger of the people of Brisbane and of the Police and that they were exploring charging the young man with 3 counts of murder, one being for the unborn child. Why this sudden recognition that an unborn child could be a murder victim, killed in this way, but is not a human being if aborted?

J.R.Sanchez CP



The Chinese Bully

While I thank God everyday that Trump is no longer president of the USA, one thing he got right, if not how he approached the issue, was standing up to China. We may have concerns about the tension that has developed between China and our country, but there is no question that China is guilty of serious human rights abuses, particularly with its treatment of the Uighurs, the Moslem minority group from the Xinjiang province.

Uighur women held at internment camps have been subjected to systematic mass rape, according to claims by former prisoners and staff. Two former prisoners and two teachers who had worked at the camp described a culture of gang rape and sexual torture in interviews with the BBC.

Chinese officials deny allegations of

mistreatment and say the camps are educational facilities designed to combat religious extremism and terrorism among the predominantly Muslim Uighur minority. The Chinese government has also denied that Uighur women were being sterilized and insisted that their rights are protected. The US, UK and other foreign governments have repeatedly called on China to close the camps.



Everyone remembers the Tianamin Square massacre in 1989. It leaves us in no doubt what China is capable of. There are risks involved in standing up to a bully, but we must be in no doubt that to do so in this case is morally right. To keep silent out of fear for economic consequences is to be complicit in evil.

Ray Sanchez CP

The Battle for Democracy

The US elections revealed the weaknesses in democracy. The process relies on the people's vote, but we saw that by finding ways to limit who can vote, by using the media to question the authenticity of the voting system and labling any news item contrary to favouring his position, Donald Trump manipulated millions of people so that even though he lost the election, the credibility of the democratic process has been seriously damaged. Joe Biden's win, and the confirmation of his win, have not been enough to convince Republican voters that the Democrats won the election fairly and squarely. Now the Republican Party's has begun its post 2020 campaign to further suppress votes with the demand that all mailed-in paper ballots include photo ID. Of course this undermining of democracy has played into the hands of China's assault on pro-democracy demonstrators in Hong Kong, ridiculing the legitimacy of US questioning of its right to do so.

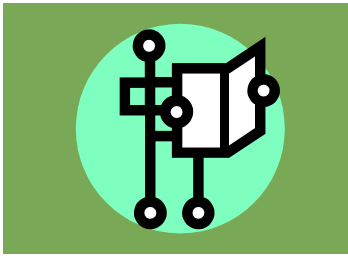
With Biden's win, however, hope in the democratic process has revived in the USA. Now the battle lines have shifted to Russia and Myanmar. The arrest of Alexie Navalny on his return to Russia after his assassination attempt has sparked mass protests. The military coup in Myanmar, with the arrest of its political leaders has also led to huge



demonstrations, despite the military's attempt to control and suppress social media.

Democracy is a system not without its flaws. Trump's use of the media to manipulate public opinion shows that because parties stay in power by the will of the people. If political leaders or parties do not give people what they want, they will not stay in power. That means that a party stays in power by giving the people what they want, not what is right or socially just, or by manipulating public opinion. But for all its flaws, it is the best and potentially fairest system of government we have. It is important, then, that we support pro-democracy movements, wherever they emerge.

J.R.Sanchez, CP



passionists

'The Fort'

P. O. Box 1145
Oxley, Q4075

Phone:

(07) 3375 7640

Fax:

(07) 3375 5139

E-Mail:

sanchez346@ozemail.com.au

Blog:

jpiccp.wordpress.com

Education and COVID

Education is a gift and an important focus for world development because it contributes to a better life for all by reducing poverty, making people healthier, reducing child mortality, and increasing gender equality.

1. Education reduces poverty: if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty. This is equal to a 12% cut in global poverty.
2. Education makes people healthier: a child whose mother can read is 50% more likely to be immunized, and twice as likely to attend school.
3. Education promotes gender equality: One additional school year can increase a woman's earnings by 10-20%.
4. Education fosters peace: Literate people are more likely to participate in the democratic process and exercise their civil rights.
5. Education saves children's lives: Educating girls averted more than 30 million deaths of children under 5.

But the COVID pandemic has caused unprecedented disruption to the education system, worldwide. While in our country this has meant an inconvenience to parents and a disruption to the lives and education of students, in developing countries the consequences are more severe. Pandemic related school closures forced governments, worldwide, to struggle to implement forms of remote learning, but access to such resources are not equally distributed around the world. There is not an equal access for all to online learning between first world and developing countries. However, the greatest long-term impacts on learning will likely be due to the ensuing financial crisis, with rising costs for the education systems at a time when both domestic finance for education and international aid are at high risk of being cut. So it is a time when donations to organisations that work to help education in developing countries will be a great way of making a difference for our world's future.

J.R.Sanchez CP

Largest Protest in History

You may have seen some items on the news about it, though with the US elections and the ongoing battle against COVID-19, you may not have given it much attention, but currently the largest protest in human history is taking place in India. Protests, violence and death are shaking India to its core, as the government tries to bring in legislation that will scrap minimum produce prices for farmers.

Farmers make up 60% of the country's population, and they say these changes will rob them of any livelihood they have left. Meanwhile, the Indian government has stepped in, ordering Twitter to block content that alleges Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trying to 'wipe out' protestors, according to ministry insiders. Of course, Mr. Modi's government claims farmers will benefit from the changes and draw more investment.

The protests come as coronavirus cases continue to leap in the densely populated

country, which trails the USA as the world's second worst-hit nation. More than 154,600 Indians have now died from COVID-19, and at least 10 million have been infected.

For months, hundreds of thousands of farmers have been protesting in India, fearing the new laws will clear the way for big agribusiness corporations to take over and price ordinary producers out of the market. Farmers have been fighting for years to get the minimum guaranteed prices increased. At least 10,281 people involved in the farm sector ended their lives in 2019, accounting for 7.4% of the total number of suicides in India.

Rising temperatures, drought and storms have destroyed crops and reduced farmers' income even further. Add to that economic pressures related to COVID and it's a lethal mix of problems, and one that needs us to raise our awareness and consider a response.

J.R.Sanchez CP .

*For International Justice
issues,*

See us at:

***www.passionistworld.
org***

