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# JPIC

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## Special Interest Articles:

- Environmental Ponzi Scheme – a dangerous environmental game.
- Grim News for Our Reefs – New report.
- Peter's Report – Peter Gardiner fills us in on his work.



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## Environmental Ponzi Scheme

I am discovering that more and more people I talk to about the environment are giving into despair. They feel it is too late to change the disastrous course we have put the world on. The paradox of a high and rising average standard of living despite a mounting environmental toll is like humanity is running an ecological Ponzi scheme in which society robs nature and future generations to pay for boosting incomes in the short term. Some of the consequences are already appearing, like endemic hunger and malnutrition in parts of the world, along with conflicts and migration in countries that are under particular stress from climate change.

While the global awareness and concern about climate change has risen, an effective international response has yet to emerge. Governments are underestimating the challenges of avoiding a frightening future. The combined consequences of declining biodiversity (a contributing factor in pandemics), climate change, a still-

growing global population and increasing consumption that exceeds the ability of the Earth's natural system to regenerate, all mean that the longer we delay real action the more dire the shock will be.

The gravity of the situation requires fundamental changes to global capitalism, education, and equality, which include the abolition of perpetual economic growth, a rapid exit from fossil-fuel use, strict regulation of markets and property acquisition, reigning in corporate lobbying, and the empowerment of women.

At present, we have choices as to how we tackle these issues. They obviously will require difficult conversations and changes in life-style for first world populations, which explains the inertia around all of this. Governments fear that such hard decisions will be unpopular and will cost elections. But what is the alternative...?

*J.R. Sanchez CP.*

## Catholics for Refugees

For those readers of this newsletter who, like me, have had growing concerns about the treatment of refugees by our government, there is good news. In February a new website was launched for 'Catholics for Refugees.' This was developed by the Justice and Peace Office of the Archdiocese of Sydney. The project arose out of a shared felt need for some commonality of Catholic voices in the refugee space. Bishop Long says in his welcome video that the website and Facebook page have been created to ensure the enormous variety of work being done by Catholics, Catholic organisations, parishes, schools, universities and social justice groups and various campaigns underway

through civil society, are known about and people are able to organise and engage with them. It is hoped that acting together amplifies our advocacy voice. It is also hoped that the website will support individuals and groups who want to get active but need resources to do so.

If you want to visit the website, the address is:

<https://catholicsforrefugees.org.au/>

The website is a work in progress as the JP office discerns how to best bring as much solidarity, support and strategic knowhow to this ugly failure of our nation.

*J. R. Sanchez, CP*

## JPIC Happenings



In my last newsletter I spoke of the work of the Laudato Si committee. Well that work has been completed and Fr. Joachim Rego has announced the May launch of a series of educational programs calling us to an ecological conversion. The 6 segments of the program will be sent to our local communities and Companions groups for reflection and response. Having had a small part to play in the committee, I can testify to the fine quality of these educational units and look forward to seeing how things go on the ground as we begin to use them for our own education and action.

On another front, I wrote to Peter Gardiner CP to see how things are going in his JPIC ministry. He wrote back about how hard the people of Cambodia that he has worked with have been hit by COVID. He also told me that he is now teaching english twice a week to remote school children in China. See 'Peter's Report' below for more details on all this.

For myself my work with ACRATH has taken a new development. Sr. Janine Bliss, the head of Qld ACRATH, has been accompanying seasonal workers up in Bundaberg who were being exploited by their employer, and has had a lot of success in bringing this issue to the attention of the Australian Government. A group of these workers are now located at Cabulture and are working in an excellent farm situation. Janine asked me if I would be interested in visiting them once a month to keep contact, see how they are going, and, being they hail from East Timor, offer them pastoral and sacramental care. I have accepted this invitation and Janine is in the process of organising things to ensure all can proceed as planned. She was responding to my own reflection that I needed more hands on experience. I look forward to this new possibility.

*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)

## ARRCC

Tom McDonough CP, our Provincial, has been a supporter of the work of ARRCC (Australian Religious Response to Climate Change). This organisation, made up mostly of Catholic Religious orders, has been in the forefront of bringing a faith perspective to the issue of Climate Change. They aid faith-inspired volunteers to work for a post-COVID recovery based on investment in renewables. Much of their work has aimed at visiting local MP's, letters to local MP's, holding events to push renewables and to stop fracking in WA.

In 2020 ARRCC was an active participant in successfully stopping Adani campaigning, which had dozens of companies walk away from Adani. They also held a high-profile Press conference about the bushfires being a call to action. During 2020 they became one of 14 founding partners for the GreenFaith International Network which launched a radical "Sacred People, Sacred Earth" campaign on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November.

It is intended to be the beginnings of a powerful, multi-faith movement with compelling demands for ambitious climate action in response to the suffering being caused by climate related disasters globally.

This year ARRCC will be advocating that Australia should provide support for communities needing to transition away from relying on coal and gas, increasing its Nationally Determined Contributions in life with net zero emissions by 2030, and restart contributions to the UN Green Climate Fund, which supports poorer nations hit by climate impacts.

If you'd like to check out their website, make a financial contribution or get involved in their work, ARRCC's phone number in Sydney is (02) 9150 9713, their email address is [info@arrcc.org.au](mailto:info@arrcc.org.au) and their website is: [www.arrcc.org.au](http://www.arrcc.org.au).

*J.R.Sanchez CP*





## Watch the Banks

Professor David Kinley, of the University of Sydney, has spent months assessing the human rights performance of Australia's largest financial services companies, including the big banks, and has concluded that it was a fail grade across the board.

In a report published on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, Professor Kinley found that the major banks had failed their customers and society more broadly when it came to human rights, despite the Banking Royal Commission calling for a cultural overhaul.

Crucially, the report said banks were failing to deliver positive human rights outcomes – from failing to resolve customer complaints, having enough staff to deal with economic security, discrimination and WHS issues, to falling short on supporting the Uluru Statements From the Heart in reconciliation

plans.

Professor Kinley said the findings should act as a wake-up call for the federal government, which is currently trying to pass through the Senate the largest liberalisation in lending laws in a generation. Under existing responsible lending laws, banks are required to conduct extensive identity and credit checks to make sure customers are suitable for the loans for which they apply. The fear is that the banks will scale back their credit checks if the laws are repealed.

Professor Kinley's findings come after separate analysis found many of the Royal Commissions recommendations hadn't yet been implemented.

Ray Sanchez CP



## Grim News for Our Reefs

Unless we act now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the world's coral reefs will stop growing by the end of the century according to a new study published in the 'Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,' which analyzed how world's reefs would fare under a low, medium and high emissions scenario.

The work highlights a grim picture for the future of coral reefs. Scientists have long known that the climate crisis threatens coral reefs in 2 major ways: firstly by increasing CO<sub>2</sub> in the oceans leading to a process called ocean acidification, which makes it harder for corals to form calcium carbonate skeletons; and secondly increasing the risk of coral bleaching, as we've seen in the Barrier Reef, where corals expel the algae that give them food and colour.

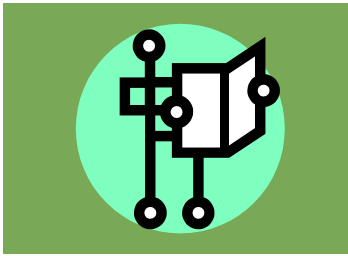
The study focused on 233 areas on 183 reefs worldwide. The research predicts that by 2100, the rate of carbonate production on reefs will decline by 76% under a low emissions scenario, 149% under a medium emissions scenario and 156% under a high emissions scenario. While 63% of reefs would continue to grow under a low emissions scenario by 2100, 94% of them would begin to decline as soon as 2050 in the worst-case scenario.



Under both the medium and high emissions scenario, reef growth would not be able to keep pace with sea level rise by the end of the century. This would be a devastating blow for marine biodiversity and human livelihoods that reefs support. Furthermore, the decline of reefs would deprive coastal areas from an important protection against rising sea levels and surges from more extreme storms.

The research found that Atlantic Ocean reefs, which already are more damaged, would be worse off compared to Pacific Ocean reefs. The research also predicted that coral bleaching would be the lead cause of these declines.

J.R.Sanchez, CP



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## Peter's Report

Peter has had to put on hold his teaching English into Siem Reap. As reported earlier, Peter was beaming into a home in Siem Reap where an unemployed tour guide was using school lockdowns as a chance to teach local children English. Covid, like many parts of the world, has now exploded again. They only had 500 cases last year, and no deaths. In one week alone recently, they had 1000 cases and 35 deaths. Considering the lack of medical infrastructure, they had been doing quite well. This has now led to major lockdowns, including this school, and the Volunteer Building Cambodia Community Centre (VBCCC), where Peter has volunteered, including leading two immersion experiences.

Kimheng, the tour guide, has found some work on a construction site, 35 kilometers away from his house. He travels each day, for a wage of just \$US7. VBCCC has also had to closed. This, too, has had a major funding crisis. The profits from building the houses for poorer Cambodians funded the

community centre. No travel means no volunteers, no volunteers means no money, no money means no school.

Fortunately, they have had some generous donors, mostly from the United States, who have kept the VBC staff employed. They have used the time for community health education. Peter has been asked to join the board to help them get through this difficult time.

The teaching of English into China continues. Peter teaches in two schools, one in Western China, near the Myanmar border, and one in an urban setting. The school in Western China looks after a local indigenous group, the Wa people. The Wa people are traditionally a rather brutal group, known for cannibalism. They were the narco police during the era of the Golden Triangle. Due to their propensity for violence, drug lords employed them for enforcement purposes. He hopes the kids he teaches don't follow in their footsteps! He may have a price on his head!  
J.R.Sanchez CP

## Politics Aside

India is now ground zero for COVID-19. In total, a staggering 22.6 million people in India have been infected, with 246,116 deaths, with around 300,000 new infections and 4000 deaths per day.

With 1.3 billion people, India is the second most populous country in the world. There are increasing demands that Prime Minister Narendra Modi order a lockdown of the country to help staunch the spread of the virus. But one can understand the reluctance to do it. When Modi enforced a 21-day lockdown last year, it helped squelch the spread of the disease but caused a 24% economic contraction in the first quarter of 2020 and widespread desperation among India's large numbers of migrant workers.

More recently, though, at the same time he put off another lockdown, he held a mass political rally with thousands of largely unmasked people crowded together and refusing to halt the huge Hindu pilgrimage of millions to bathe in the

Ganges River. To some extent, as The Lancet, noted, this is a "self-inflicted catastrophe."

Last week, the Biden administration finally challenged the U.S. drug industry, announcing that the White House would support an international waiver of intellectual property protections on COVID-19 vaccines during the pandemic. This is a long overdue measure, but if the industry continues to resist, the negotiations are likely to take months that the world can ill afford. Though the companies benefited greatly from government subsidies and guaranteed purchases — and have seen their profits and stocks soar — they have a large stake in controlling production to ensure continued profits over time. If the Biden administration decision aggressively enforces this it will be putting public health over private profit. If we are to meet global threats, be they pandemics, climate change or nuclear war, we must develop a global perspective and put politics and profits aside.

*J.R.Sanchez CP .*