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Special Interest Articles:

- Holy Grail of Energy – First controlled Fusion reaction
- The Voice – Debate on an Indigenous voice to parliament.
- Peter Gardiner’s Sharing – Fruits of Peter’s English classes

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A Cancer on Our Planet

I am currently reading a book entitled, "Thank God for Evolution," by Michael Dowd. In it he describes an experience during a Q&A period following one of his presentations. Someone asked, "If we are Earth becoming conscious of itself, why are we spoiling the air, water and soil as if we knew nothing?" Another participant immediately raised his hand and asked if he could respond. The man said, "I am an oncologist. I work with cancer patients every day. From my vantage point, we are inadvertently destroying our larger body because we lack evolutionary guidance. We're acting like cancer cells, rather than immune cells."

He continued, "A cancer cell is a normal cell that, for one reason or another, loses its genetic memory. Cut off from the wisdom of millions of years of developmental guidance, it stops cooperating with the rest of the body. It

experiences itself as separate from the body, overpopulates, and proceeds to consume the very organism that supports it."

He went on, "We call our society a consumer society, and to consume something is to eat it up, right? I believe we are consuming the planet because, like cancer cells, we've been trying to live without evolutionary wisdom."

It is a powerful metaphor that suggests that the way to heal the cancer that we have become to our planet, people need to be educated to see themselves, not as separate from the rest of nature, but as an integral part of the living body that is our planet. Rather than a cancer, we can then see ourselves as an immune system, searching out problem areas and protecting our common home.

J.R.Sanchez C.P.

NSW Initiative

On the 27th of January, a post appeared on the ABC news website concerning a new initiative - an Australian-first. NSW drivers can choose to offset their vehicle's carbon emissions annually — at a cost of about \$80 — when registering their car. The transport industry is responsible for 22% of the state's CO₂ emissions. The scheme is optional for drivers, and the move is good for the environment and the economy.

Energy Minister and Treasurer Matt Kean said the money would go directly to projects which reduce or offset CO₂ emissions in the country. One of these projects involves a regeneration scheme in the Bourke and Brewarrina shires growing native forest on cleared land. It costs

about \$80 to offset emissions from an average car, but drivers can choose to donate \$5 to \$200 annually during the online registration process, he said.

Mr Kean said the new scheme would help Australians to reduce their carbon footprint in a practical way. "The transport sector is responsible for 22% of all NSW emissions, with almost 50% coming from passenger vehicles," Mr Kean said. "For those people that can't afford electric vehicles, they can choose to offset their emissions...It's an opportunity for people to do their bit for the environment and also deliver great things for our economy." The move is part of the government's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

J. R. Sanchez, CP



JPIC Happenings



Since our last newsletter in November, Peter Gardiner CP has again taken groups of volunteers to Cambodia, for a building project, and to Vietnam to volunteer helping out at places like the Francis Shelter for disabled kids as well as visiting and working with kids born with HIV, etc.

The trip to Vietnam was the first time members of the Passionist Youth Retreat Team have been able to go and share this life changing experience. It was a dream I have had since Peter started this project as part of the JPIC committee's work. The challenges of cost made it too difficult to be workable, until now.

Five members of the current team: Tom Warren, Harry David, Sinead Fitzgerald, Clare O'Donoghue, Chloe Chivers, and one ex-member of the team: Anna Jones, fund raised and joined Peter and other volunteers, to immerse themselves in sharing their love with the crucified of this world.



Our thanks go to Peter once again for sharing his passion, for being part of healing the brokenness in this world, with our wider Passionist family.

As we begin 2023, my work has been tied up with organising a mass with the Sudanese community here in Brisbane to celebrate the feast of St. Josephine Bakhita, who is both the patron saint of Sudan and of victims of modern day slavery. As a member of ACRATH Qld, it is an opportunity to raise awareness of the scourge of human trafficking, as well as a chance to support the Sudanese Catholic community.

J.R.Sanchez, CP

*Injustice anywhere is
a threat to justice
everywhere.
(Martin Luther King)*

Clarifying my Position

I noted in the last issue of the JPIC newsletter that, while most saw my article on batteries as a good corrective, not all agreed that it was wise to make that point. So let me clarify my position because I don't want people to conclude from my article that I am against working for change of our technologies to act against energy production that contributes to climate change. This is certainly not the case. There is no doubt in my mind that at this stage the overwhelming evidence supports the truth that the world is warming, and it is due to human actions (principally population growth as the root cause). As such, we should take actions to reduce carbon emissions in the hope that this works. However, if we simply say that any dissenting voice needs to be shut down and that therefore anything that involves fossil fuels or something that may help us **transition** by still using them is somehow disloyal or contra to the environmental cause, smacks of zealotry.

I think there is a danger in ignoring technologies that may help us to transition

faster because they may involve fossil fuels. The reality is that we would all move to a carbon zero world tomorrow if we could, but we don't know how to do that without radically changing out lifestyle (and, honestly, no one is going to change their lifestyle that much immediately). There are lots of statements and commitments from various countries and environmental activists, but they don't offer a practical roadmap to what they want to achieve. It's like the Nike slogan, "Just do it," as much as to say that then it will come true. The reality is what we have recently seen in Europe with the war on the Ukraine. European countries boasted about their successful and complete transition from fossil fuels. The truth was revealed that the removal of coal was simply a replacement of it with Russian gas.

The problems won't be solved by activists. The breakthroughs will be discovered by scientists and engineers.

J.R.Sanchez CP

A Reality Check

Konstantin Kisin, a political commentator, delivered a reality check recently at the Oxford Union Debating Society for those who think it is easy to switch from the current state of the world to zero carbon emissions almost overnight. He pointed out that Britain is responsible for 2% of Global carbon emissions (1.16% for Australia). That means that if you sank Britain to the bottom of the ocean it would make no difference at all to climate change. The future of Climate will be decided in Asia and Latin America by poor people who don't give a damn about saving the planet because they are poor.

There are 120 million people living in China who don't have enough to eat, meaning they are malnourished. You won't get them to stay poor for the sake of the climate.

Consider Xi Jinping. When he was 10 years old there was a cultural revolution in his country. His father was put in prison, his mother had to denounce him, his sister killed herself. And he,

no longer enjoying the protection of his formerly powerful father, was sent to a village where he lived in a cave-house. Now, decades later, he has clawed his way up the greasy pole that is Chinese politics to become the supreme leader of the very communist party that destroyed his family. And he knows that the main thing he has to do to survive and to stay in power is to deliver the one thing that the people of China want – prosperity, economic growth. Where do you think climate change ranks in his list of priorities?

We are not going to get these people to stay poor. We are not even going to get them to not want to be richer. We are not going to get people in our own country to change their way of life for the sake of the climate. Complaining and protesting is not going to change the situation. There is only one thing we can do and that is to make the scientific and technological breakthroughs that will create the clean energy that is also **cheap!**

Konstantin Kisin.



Holy Grail of Energy

For the first time ever, US scientists at the National Ignition Facility at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California successfully produced a nuclear fusion reaction resulting in a net energy gain. The result of the experiment would be a massive step in a decadeslong quest to unleash an infinite source of clean energy that could help end dependence on fossil fuels. Researchers for decades have attempted to recreate nuclear fusion – the fusion that powers the sun – but have not had success.

Unlike nuclear fission, which powers electricity all over the world, nuclear fusion doesn't generate long-lived radioactive waste. Nuclear fusion happens when two or more atoms are fused into one larger one, a process that generates a massive amount of energy as heat.

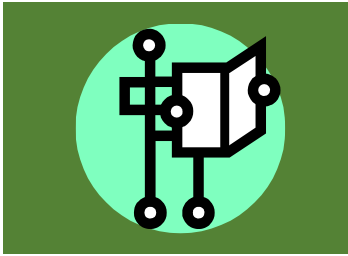
Nuclear fusion has been hard to reproduce because of the challenge of containing the reaction. A fission reactor uses uranium for nuclear fuel. The uranium is processed into ceramic pellets and stacked together into sealed metal tubes called fuel rods. Inside the reactor, the fuel rods are immersed in water, which acts as both coolant and moderator and helps slow down the neutrons produced by



Fission to sustain the chain reaction. Control rods can be inserted into the reactor core to reduce the reaction rate or withdrawn to increase it. The heat created turns the water into steam which spins a turbine to produce electricity.

With the recent fusion reaction, it was contained by bombarding the outside with lasers. Fusion reactors would contain the reaction using giant magnets. But we are a long way from being able to safely do this on a scale to answer the world's energy needs. Of course, if the reaction is not contained...you get the Sun.

J.R.Sanchez, CP

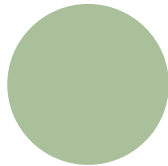


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Heng in 2019

The Voice

The Uluru Statement is an invitation from First Nations Peoples issued to all Australians on the 26th of May, 2017. It calls for legal and structural reforms to reshape the relationship between them and the Australian population. A First Nations Voice to Parliament is the first reform called for in the Statement. This is a Constitutionally-enshrined body of First Nations with a direct line to Federal Parliament, able to influence laws and policies that affect First Nations Communities first hand – at the point they originate. A constitutional Voice is both symbolic and substantive recognition that needs to be enshrined in the Constitution to ensure it remains a permanent part of our democracy.

Polling over 5 years show a majority of Australians support a Voice to Parliament, and more recent polling shows 65% of Australians surveyed would vote 'yes.' But there are those who are against the voice wanting details as to what this would actually look like in reality before deciding

for or against it. Some have criticised the voice as hardly representative, given the lack of unity amongst indigenous groups. At the recent Invasion Day march, some First Nations speakers voiced their preference for a Treaty rather than a Voice. Linda Thorpe, of the Greens, signalled she would oppose the reform unless Labor provided guarantees that First Nation sovereignty would not be ceded.

Tom Calma, Senior Australian of the year and co-chair of the Indigenous Voice to parliament co-design group, said it was a critical step in maintaining progress. "It's important that we as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have an opportunity to be able to contribute to policies that impact us, and programs and legislation – and that's the first step," Calma said.

This dialogue is important. At this point I personally prefer to err on the side of support for the voice, and hope that the referendum process, and the dialogue it engenders, may bring us closer to true reconciliation.

J.R.Sanchez CP.

Peter Gardiner's Sharing

I first met Mengheng when I was in Cambodia in 2019. He was a standout student. He had a great work ethic, studied hard, and was a good decent young man. I remember thinking at the time that this young man could be anything, maybe a doctor.

I returned recently and found that this was his chosen path – he was studying medicine! With COVID restrictions, he was doing his study online. While he is free during the day, he volunteers teaching at VBC community centre. He is giving back to the community that helped him along the way. I sat down with him for a chat.

I asked him to tell me about himself. Heng replied, "I live here in Kroper village. I was born in Kandal Province, and when I was a young child, my father took up a business opportunity in Siem Reap. I live with my father, mother, a housewife, and a younger brother and sister. I am studying medicine because it has always been my big dream, ever since I was very young. I always felt it was within my capabilities, and my parents have always been very supportive and encouraging. They have

been an inspiration to me. I want to be a doctor so I can help many people in my country who are sick or suffering some disease. I'm a person who has a high empathy to people around me, especially when they are sick or have problems. It gives me the opportunity to help the poor people, especially in my area.

"I'm teaching here at the VBC Community Centre as this will give me experience in this area. It also helps me improve my own English skills, especially with people who visit us from other parts of the world. This is the place that taught me English, and I want to repay all they have done for me."

Peter sat in on a class Heng was running at the centre and saw the compassion and goodness in Heng as he encouraged a very frightened and shy boy to give an answer in front of the class, the result of which built the student's confidence when he gave the correct answer. When Peter asked Heng if he could give any advice to those reading this article, he said, "Try harder, and you will be successful."

Peter Gardiner CP.