

Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission Report of Meeting 27 October 2018

The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission met on the 27th October 2018 in the Gathering Space at St Mary's Catholic Church, Colac. Members of the Colac community involved in social justice met with the Commission. These included students from Trinity College and Young Vinnies. A vibrant discussion between members of the Commission and this active community gave inspiration and joy to all involved. Together they discussed the Australian Bishop's Statement addressing homelessness.

Fr Chris Baker, a retired Columban Missionary priest who spent over forty years living in Peru, spoke of some of the social justice issues faced by South American nations. He particularly highlighted issues of corruption and the plight of the Indigenous peoples of the Amazon – and the plight of the Amazon basin in general. Fr Chris is a very sprightly 90 year old and is brother to two other Columban Missionaries who have served communities in Africa and the Philippines. What an amazing family! Cobden should be proud!

The Commission has submitted a report of its activities during the last five years for the Bishop to take to Rome on his Ad Limina visit.

Rachel spoke of her research on ethically sourced fair trade products as part of her involvement in Victoria-Tasmania Catholic Anti-Slavery Task Force. Rachel will publish her results but the Commission were surprised to note that labelling was not regulated or compulsory. One area where we could all look for ethically sourced fair trade ethics is when we purchase chocolates for Christmas and Easter. Parishes will be invited to highlight the issue of slavery in Australia and the world on the Feast of St Josephine Bakhita on February 8. The Commission were told that Colac has a Fair Trade Cafe.

The Commission were delighted to hear how schools are promoting environmental sustainability through recycling, reducing waste practices, the development of sustainable gardening and the use of solar cells for electricity.

Concern was raised over the continuing issue of treatment of refugees and lack of Government support in addressing the issue.

The Commission thank Colac for their wonderful hospitality, excellent catering, and fantastic outreach to the community from all age groups.

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