



Social Justice Statement 2024

In a tradition reaching back to 1940, each year the Australian Catholic Bishops publish a social justice statement. Through this statement, the bishops offer reflections on some current issue of social justice.

This year the statement is called “Truth and Peace”. The message is that truth provides a foundation for peace. When people are truthful with one another, this builds up trust and when there is trust, this promotes peace between them. By contrast, when people are not truthful, this breaks down trust, and when there is no trust, there is likely to be conflict.

Sadly, in our world today, there is a lot of conflict. There are conflicts between individuals and between groups of people. There are conflicts in the home and many cases of domestic violence. There is daily news of wars, in Ukraine and in Gaza and in many places around the world. Such conflicts are often fuelled by lies. One person tells lies about another and they no longer trust each other and this quickly leads to clashes. One government tells lies about another and they no longer trust each other and this can easily lead to war.

To break such a vicious cycle, we need to turn from lies to the truth. We need to speak the truth to one another. This will gradually build up trust between us and this will be a basis for peace.

St Augustine describes peace as “the tranquillity of order”. Real peace requires that people recognise the proper order of justice. It requires that people show respect for one another. It requires that people speak honestly to one another. To speak the truth is already the beginning of peace-making.

Pope Francis highlights the role of dialogue. We can see this in personal relationships and in relations between countries. When two people or two groups of people are willing to have an honest dialogue, they have the chance to understand one another better. This builds trust and trust builds peace.

In April this year, Pope Francis met with 6000 children from the Italian Network of Schools of Peace. The Pope encouraged them to be “artisans of peace”, not war-mongers but peace-builders. The Network educates the young people of Italy about human rights, justice and peace. I have been pleased to see such lessons being taught in our schools in Australia as well. I hope we all learn such lessons – adults as well as children.

You can find the bishops’ statement online by simply googling “Social Justice Statement 2024”. I encourage you to read and reflect on the statement. The more we are honest, the more we speak the truth, the more we will build trust and this will help to build peace.

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