



## Reflections on the Social Justice Sunday Statement 2009

### ***Introduction***

These reflections are designed to be used with the 2009 Social Justice Sunday Statement “And you will be my witnesses: young people and justice”. We hope they might help you unpack the Statement and reflect on its relevance in our communities and journeys.

### ***Background***

The reflections were put together by a group of young adults who were part of the Vinnies Youth NSW pilgrimage group for World Youth Day in Sydney in 2008.

As part of their reunion and reflection day to celebrate a year since WYD08, the group read through the Statement and reflected on the themes it presented for them as young people. In small groups they then prepared the following reflections, based on the format of the Discussion Guide that was provided for last years Social Justice Sunday Statement.

### ***Acknowledgement***

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## Young People: Witnesses to Justice

### **Prayer**

God our Father,  
Help us to be your witness in the world.  
Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may see the injustices in our own midst  
and the courage to ask those in power, "Why?"  
Do not let us become complacent or accepting of the status quo and help us to cry  
out for change and empower the voiceless. Amen.

### **Reading**

Mt 13:13-16

*This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: 'You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.*

### **Reflection**

Christ encourages us to keep our eyes and ears open and to be receptive to the challenges that are around us. To know Christ is to know those in our world who are suffering due to the consequences of unsuitable policy, wrong choices and the inaction of those in power.

"Faith grows through action for justice", however our faith can also be challenged by what we witness. Through young people putting their faith into action and accepting their responsibility of being advocates for human rights, they are truly 'understanding and perceiving', taking up the call and leading others to faith.

We are challenged to see and hear with an open heart the needs of others around us and to "take up and share in the ministry of Christ".

### **Discussion**

1. Have you ever found yourself closing your eyes and ears to the needs of others? What have you learned from this experience?
2. We often hear media reports that influence our thinking and opinion. How many times have we ignored the human story behind what we hear and see?
3. The Social Justice statement highlights the plight of those in detention at Woomera. As a community of young people in Australia what is our responsibility to ensure the rights and dignity of all peoples are upheld?

### **Blessing**

Dear God, Bless us with a hunger for justice. May we advocate for change and a restitution of wrongs. May we have a burning fire for justice and let that fire spark in the hearts of all around us. Amen.



## Young People: **Ambassadors for Justice**

### **Prayer**

Lord you sent your son Jesus to challenge the norms and social structures that oppressed, alienated or undermined the dignity of your people. We are now called in Christ's image to do the same. Lord, give us the courage, strength and passion to carry out your will. Not only as witnesses but as a force of change and to empower the voiceless. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

### **Reading**

*As they stood there asking him questions, he straightened up and said to them, "Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her." Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground. When they heard this they all left, one by one, the older ones first. Jesus was left alone with the woman still standing there. He straightened up and said to her, "Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?" "No one sir," She answered. "Well then," Jesus said, "I do not condemn you either." John 8:7-11*

### **Reflection**

Here we see Jesus challenge the law of the time, both a religious and secular law. He stood up for the voiceless, the woman and challenged both those who were about to break the commandment, "Do not commit murder" and those who were going to stand by and witness the injustice.

Unfortunately this story is not unique to Jesus' time but can be found in societies around the world, today.

### **Discussion**

1. Can you identify injustice in our world which needs to be addressed?
2. How are we called to challenge the injustice in our world?
3. How do we respond to the call of the challenge?
4. What barriers can you come up against when carrying out the work of Jesus? What do you need to overcome these?
5. Why do you speak out against injustice?

### **Action**

Working with the idea of from little things big things grow

Can you take an example from your own life where you can change something to challenge an injustice, say hello to someone as you walk past them on the street, engage in conversation with someone who is marginalised.

### **Blessing**

Bless us with the privilege of being Your ambassadors for justice. May we be blessed with the ability to recognise injustice, may we be blessed with the confidence to speak out against injustice and may we be blessed with the strength to act on these injustices where others will not.

Amen



## Young people and Justice: **Ambassadors for Peace**

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you gave us your Holy Spirit to enable us to spread your love in the world, especially to those who are disadvantaged and forgotten. Nourish and guide us as we continue on our journey as messengers of hope, peace, faith and justice. Amen.

### **Reading**

*The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the down trodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.... Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen." Luke 4:18 – 21*

### **Reflection**

As Christians, we are challenged to live out the message contained in the Gospel. Living out these ideals in today's world can be difficult, as there are competing pressures and obligations on our time.

In the year following World Youth Day 2008, where Pope Benedict called us to be ambassadors of "hope, peace, healing and harmony", our global community experienced the devastating impacts of social, financial and environmental crises. The way that we respond to these crises will define our commitment to being ambassadors, to restoring justice and compassion to the marginalised members of our communities.

### **For discussion**

1. Who are the captives, the blind and the downtrodden in our community?
2. How do we recognise the call to be an ambassador for peace?
3. How do we make the time to answer the call to be ambassadors for peace?
4. What can we do as ambassadors to shape the society we want for now and for future ambassadors?

### **Action**

Engage in your local community - this could be as simple as talking to your neighbours, joining a local volunteer organisation or becoming involved in the ministry of your Parish.

Educate yourself about justice issues in your community and ways that you can make a difference!

### **Blessing**

May we be blessed with renewed vigour and passion to shape the world around us. We pray for the disadvantaged members of our community that they may be comforted by Gods love. We pray that people will respond to the call to be ambassadors of your faith, hope, peace and justice. Amen.



## Young people and Justice: **Ambassadors for Hope**

### **Prayer**

Gracious God,

You have blessed us with many gifts, passions and skills to contribute to the world you have entrusted to us.

When we are overwhelmed by the many injustices and challenges in our world may we always find hope in your presence and the examples of those around us.

May Australians always remain young in spirit and young in hope.

We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Reading**

*Matthew 25:35-40*

*I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you made me welcome, naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you came to see me.*

*As long as you did this to one of the least of my brothers, you did this to me.*

### **Reflection**

*Aspects of the World Youth Day festival showed how the quest for true justice looks and feels. Like Pope Benedict, we the Bishops of Australia see young people as ambassadors of hope and find ourselves constantly amazed, energised and inspired by their honesty and vitality. They demand a just world and a fair society, but they also commit themselves to this quest and often show us new paths and initiatives. They bring fresh compassion and new hope.(from the Statement)*

We are invited to be ambassadors of hope through the challenge of Matthews Gospel. We seek to be provided with examples of hope but also to be examples of hope for others. When hope inspires action we have the power to shape a more just world. Action + Hope = Joy + Justice

### **For Discussion**

1. Where do you find hope? Where do you provide hope?
2. What inspires you to engage with the challenge of shaping a more just world?
3. As young, and young at heart, Australians, how do we ensure that our actions are infused with hope and joy?
4. Are our good intentions sometimes actually disempowering for the people we try and assist?

### **Action**

Recognise that even the smallest of actions can be sources of hope.

Perform your acts of service with joy.

### **Blessing**

May hope allow us to serve with joy and see the face of Christ in those around us.

