

Catholic Women's League Australia Inc.

"IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO TOUCH THE HEART OF ANOTHER, NOR IS IT EVER IN VAIN" *Pope Benedict XVI*"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" *John 10:10*

National Newsletter Issue 1 March 2010

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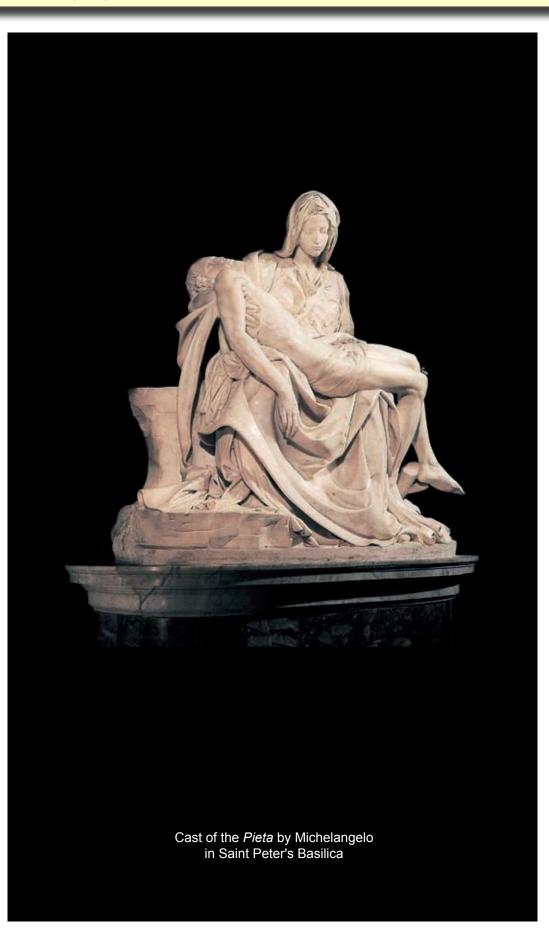
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From the National President



In his book *Life in Christ*, Fr Benedict Groeschel, CFR says that: "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the very foundation of our faith. His crucifixion and death only have meaning insofar as [His] victory over death and the forces of Hell." Facing "the challenges, difficulties and the sufferings of life help us to always keep before our minds [His] glorious Resurrection." We are called to be "witnesses to that Resurrection and to eternal life to those whom we meet along the way."

How beautifully these words reflect our theme for the next two years: "It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain."

With Easter fast approaching, maybe it is time for us to stop and take time out to reflect on our own challenges, sufferings and difficulties both within family and society. Try to imagine how you would cope if you did not know Christ.

In his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of the many issues that we are faced with today. Quoting from his Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, the Holy Father noted that "integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from man's relationship with the natural environment which must be seen as God's gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity." He went on to state that "when nature and human beings in particular, are seen merely as products of chance or an evolutionary determinism, our overall sense of responsibility wanes." The Holy Father also strongly reaffirmed the inviolability of human life at every stage and in every condition.

If we, as members of the Catholic Women's League, reflect upon our history we will find that the amazing work done by our forebears continues to this day. Having just re-read much of our history, I commend the various books about the histories of the various member organisations to you again. We sometimes think that we are living in bad times but the founding

women of the League also lived in hard times. These women were ablaze with love for God and worked tirelessly to build His Kingdom on earth.

As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of WUCWO this year, it is important to remember what can be achieved when we work together to promote the teaching of Christ and the Church. In 1932, more that 26 million Catholic women signed a petition for peace. This remarkable feat was all achieved by 'snail mail' and some very determined women. WUCWO presented this petition to the League of Nations during the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Sadly, the united voice of women from all around the world was ignored.



Presentation of the Petition for Peace by the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues (now WUCWO) to the League of Nations in 1932

We are called to spread the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ through our work within the Church and society. We are called to be witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ to the world. Let us pray that our voices are heard. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us.

Madge Fahy National President

Hope in Action

What matters most is that you develop your personal relationship with God. That relationship is expressed in prayer. God by his very nature speaks, hears, and replies. Indeed, St Paul reminds us, we can and should "pray constantly" (1 Thess 5:17). Far from turning in on ourselves or withdrawing from the ups and downs of life, by praying we turn towards God and through him to each other, including the marginalized and those following ways other than God's path (cf *Spe Salvi* 33). As the saints teach us so vividly, prayer becomes hope in action.

Pope Benedict XVI, St Joseph Seminary, Yonkers, New York, 19 April 2008

Introducing the New Leadership Team

Each woman in the new leadership team brings unique gifts to the challenging task of enabling women to participate more effectively in working for and building the Kingdom of God on earth. A mother of five children and grandmother of eight, Madge Fahy has the privilege of being the President of the Burwood Branch, the past General President of CWL Victoria and Wagga Wagga, a past National Social Issues Convenor and National International Secretary where she represented the League at the United Nations for six years. As the National President of CWLA, her prayer is that the extraordinary work of the League will become better known by priests, bishops and the laity. It is also Madge's hope that younger women will be encouraged to join the League and help to promote the 'feminine genius' as enunciated by the Venerable Pope John Paul II.

Pat Coloe and Gertie Mangan are the new Vice Presidents of CWLA. Pat has great love for the League and has been inspired by the dedication, encouragement and support of CWL members over the years. Pat feels that the CWLA theme for the next two years, "It is never too late to touch the heart of another, nor is it ever in vain", is exactly what the League is all about and her hope is that we all endeavour to keep it in mind and grow spiritually as a result. Pat is also the Branch President and convener of the League's Social Questions Committee for the East Gippsland region. As a mother of six with grandchildren aged from 32 to 10, she is committed to supporting women and families, especially those who have suffered abuse of any kind, including the families of the perpetrators.

Gertie was born near Tralee, in County Kerry in Ireland. She trained as a teacher in Dublin and migrated to Australia with her husband and three children in 1969. Gertie's vision for the future of the League is focussed at the branch level, the foundation on which the whole organisation depends. One of her goals is to ensure that our members will continue to develop a better knowledge and understanding of authentic Catholic teaching pertaining to their daily lives in matters of faith, ethics, justice and morals. Gertie also believes that we need to be mindful of our existing members who have given dedicated service to the League over the years. We need to ensure that they are never made to feel redundant, just because they are no longer able to be actively involved.

Ann Robinson, Louisa Ashton and Robyn Fahy are three younger members of the League. Ann is the new National Secretary. She has a Masters of

Theology and works as a pastoral associate.

Robyn is undertaking the Juris Doctorate program at Monash Law and also works as a management consultant. She brings extensive experience in project management, risk management, corporate governance, marketing and public relations, as well as a passion for social justice, to her role as the CWLA Public Relations Officer.

Louisa is the new National Treasurer. She works as a full-time accountant, is a member of the Emmanuel Community in Melbourne and has been an active volunteer for the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne for many years. Louisa has led young people on pilgrimage to the 2002, 2005 and 2008 World Youth Days, is the current co-ordinator for the Six30 Holy Hour for young people (held each Thursday in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne) and is the Honorary Treasurer for the Anima Women's Network. Louisa says: "The charisms of the Emmanuel Community of Adoration, Compassion and Evangelisation are the way I try to live my call to holiness which is the vocation of every baptised Catholic. Through Adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament we grow in compassion for our brothers and sisters in the world and desire to evangelize so that all might come to know the saving love of Jesus. I hope the little I can do for Our Lord in prayer and action will bear great fruit."

The new National Spiritual Director is Rev Father David Cartwright. The parish priest of St Fidelis, Moreland, grew up in Burwood and first sensed his vocation when he was a student at St Dominic's Primary School, Camberwell. Fr Cartwright's understanding of the priesthood is continually evolving. "The wonderful thing about the priesthood is that you can never say 'I now fully understand it and I know what it's about'," he said. "There's always something new: another aspect or dimension, a greater unfolding of the mystery, whether you're a priest for one year or 50, because we are trying to be Christ. We can't fully understand the Lord until we see Him face to face. Whatever we do on Earth is trying to bring the presence of the Lord to people." He said his commitment to a daily hour of prayer had also been essential. "I know if I don't spend the hour in adoration and prayer then life just doesn't quite seem right. It really gives meaning to what I am doing and I draw strength from that every day. I have been very constant in prayer since seminary times. Since becoming parish priest, I have been even more aware of the need for it. The busier you are, the more prayer you need. It's the Lord's work we are doing."

All for the Honour and Glory of God

On behalf of the Bishops of Australia, Archbishop Denis Hart installed the new National Executive of the Catholic Women's League Australia in a beautiful and moving Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. A great chorus of women from the League, who had journeyed from all parts of our country in support of the new National Executive, joined with the Archbishop in prayer as he asked the Holy Spirit to enlighten the minds of the new leadership team and to guide all their actions so that they may be strengthened in faith, sustained in hope and united love.



Following the Mass, a celebratory luncheon was held at the Australian Catholic University with League members, family and friends. The new National President, Madge Fahy, welcomed all those who had travelled great distances to share in this wonderful occasion. She also took the opportunity to thank members of the outgoing National Executive from Western Australia who have been led by Karyn Kammann during 2008-2009 and supported spiritually by Fr Laurence Murphy SDS.

During the luncheon, Brenda Finlayson presented a gift of a relic of St Maria Goretti to CWLA. The relic of St Maria Goretti had come unexpectedly into the possession of Gillian Badcock, the then WUCWO General Secretary, in 2006. Because of the deep friendship that had evolved between Gillian and Brenda (in her capacity as WUCWO Board Member Australia 2001-10, WUCWO Vice President General 2006-2010 and editor of Women's Voice), Gillian decided to gift this important relic of St Maria Goretti to the Catholic Women's League of Australia in recognition of their devotion to this beautiful young saint.

A condition of the gift is that the relic be held in perpetuity at Mary Glowrey House in Fitzroy and that the Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga be appointed as the 'custodian' of the relic. The relic will be housed in a special display box next to a framed letter from Gillian Badcock which says:

At the time that CWLA presented a resolution to WUCWO asking for St Maria Goretti to be proclaimed Patroness of the Innocence of Children, this relic came into my hands.

When Miss Winifred Cobb, a lifelong member of the Parish of the Virgin Mother of Good Counsel in Hythe, Kent, England, died, her relatives sadly had no interest in the many holy objects this lovely lady had gathered and everything was about to be thrown out when the Executor invited me to "take a look". The result was the rescue and redistribution of numerous books and holy objects which are surely carrying on our dear Wyn's lifelong work of faithful and joyful service to God.

For many years she ran the best repository in the Diocese and devoted every penny raised to the Missions. As one who knew and loved her for the last twenty years of her long life, and had the privilege of kneeling beside her as our priest prayed over her peaceful form in the hour after her death, I know she would be delighted to think that one of her treasures would become an object of veneration on the opposite side of the world.

St Maria Goretti, Protector of Innocence, pray for us.

Please remember Wyn and all the good causes she worked for in your prayers.



Winifred (Wyn) Cobb pictured sitting between two friends in Walsingham, a place of pilgrimage in Norfolk, England



L-R: Ann Robinson, Robyn Fahy, Anna Krohn (National Bioethics Convenor), Louisa Ashton, Fr Cartwright, Madge Fahy, Brenda Finlayson, Thora Regan, Pat Coloe, Gertie Mangan



St Patrick's Cathedral Choir



Madge Fahy



Past CWLA National President, Karyn Kammann, and new CWLA National President, Madge Fahy



Past CWLA National Executive from Western Australia

NEW SOUTH WALES

Installation of National Executive - 31 January, 2010 marked the installation of the Victoria and Wagga Wagga National Executive 2010/2011. Celebrations took place in Melbourne, Victoria, where representatives from all states attended a traditional Pontifical High Mass celebrated by Archbishop Denis Hart. State President Catherine McGrath was joined by representatives from Sydney Archdiocese, Broken Bay and Wollongong Diocese. A wonderful occasion and we pray for the members of the National team.



L-R: Carolyn Metcalfe, Gertie Mangan, Catherine McGrath, Moya Potts, Brenda Finlayson and Jacqueline Kemp

Launch of Project Compassion - The Sydney Archdiocesan Caritas Committee with His Eminence Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, hosted the Caritas Launch of Project Compassion with a Luncheon at NSW Parliament House on Monday 15 February. The luncheon highlighted the importance of financial support for Project Compassion in order to make a difference to the lives of many. This also provided an opportunity to raise the profile of Caritas and its work as well as promote their 'Blueprint for a Better World' campaign.

Minister for Juvenile Justice, Graham West MP, was the parliamentary host in the absence of The Honourable Kristina Keneally MP, Premier of NSW. The Minister spoke passionately of the work of Caritas. The occasional address was given by Lulu Mitshabu, Africa Program Coordinator - Caritas Australia. Lulu's personal account of the unrest in her homeland, the Democratic Republic of Congo, was both moving and inspiring.

Caritas focuses on empowerment at a local level. Jack de Groot, Caritas Australia CEO, believes that

when you support Project Compassion you promote change.

Cardinal Pell stated 'We are a blessed society. For those that have more, much will be asked.' Together we can create a better world.

CACW International Women's Day - CACW International Women's Day will be celebrated on Sunday 7 March 2010. The theme this year is "Empowering Women to end poverty by 2015". Please access the CACW website for more information including the Bishops letter to Australian Catholic women: www.cacw.catholic.org.au

Bathurst Conference - Catholic Women's League Bathurst Diocese will be holding their 'one day' conference on 14 March at Fatima Hall, Lithgow. Retired Bishop Patrick Dougherty will celebrate Mass at 9.30 at St. Patrick's Church, Mort Street, Lithgow. The theme of the conference is "The Journey of Life" and the guest speakers will be Maree Statham and Margo Nancarrow.

Vote of Thanks -Thanks go to Noeline Kelly for her contribution of many years as Editor of The Vine. Her editorial prowess and wit will be sadly missed.

CWLA-NSW State Council Meeting - CWLA-NSW State Council Meeting will be held on 26-28 February 2010 at St. Joseph's Centre Baulkham Hills. All Diocesan representatives will be in attendance and report on activities for 2010.

Emily Potts CWLA-NSW Communications Officer

The Year of the Priest

"The fruitfulness of our efforts to promote vocations depends primarily on God's free action, yet, as pastoral experience confirms, it is also helped by the quality and depth of the personal and communal witness of those who have already answered the Lord's call to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life, for their witness is then able to awaken in others a desire to respond generously to Christ's call."

Excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI 47th World Day of Prayer for Vocations

QUEENSLAND

Happy New Year to all. Christmas celebrations have come and gone and we are now back to business after an enjoyable break over the Christmas and New Year period.

On the weekend of 30 and 31 January, I was fortunate to be able to attend the Commissioning of the National President Madge Fahy and her team held in St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne. It was a beautiful Mass celebrated by the Archbishop and the boys' choir was like a choir of angels. It was so nice to meet up with members from other states throughout Australia and enjoy lunch with them at the Catholic University. Although a very hot day, it was very enjoyable. On behalf of the members in Queensland, I wish Madge and her team a very successful term over the next two years. Our prayers will be with you all the way.

The State Council meeting will be held at Indooroopilly on the weekend of 13 and 14 March. Two delegates from each diocese of our five dioceses will be in attendance as we come together to discuss plans for the coming year.

Plans have commenced here in Queensland for our state conference this year, which will be held in St George in the Toowoomba diocese from 14-17 September 2010. Even though Toowoomba diocese only has four branches, these ladies, led by Diocesan President Rhonda Barbe, are prepared to host our conference so we need to give them as much support as we are able throughout the year.

This year on 9 March, the Maryborough Branch of CWL in the Brisbane Archdiocese will be celebrating its 60th anniversary. Maryborough is a very vibrant branch with a membership of 61 plus. I have heard only today that they have a few new members this year. This branch is supported by the whole community in Maryborough.

Joan Armstrong State President - Queensland

CANBERRA & GOULBURN ARCHDIOCESE

Greetings one and all. In commencing this report, I wish to extend, on behalf of the Catholic Women's League members in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, congratulations and good wishes to the newly commissioned CWLA National Executive. We assure you of our interest and support at all

times and wish you an interesting and successful term of office.

This seems an opportune time to extend greetings and every good wish to fellow league members within the various member organisations around Australia.

It was a great joy to attend the CWLA Installation Mass held in St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne, on 31 January 2010. A moment on that occasion that will linger long in my memory, was the sight of the two 'angelic' choir boys 'elbowing' each other in the centre of the choir during the truly beautiful service. We thoroughly enjoyed a pleasant luncheon at the Catholic University and the speeches that followed. I enjoyed the opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones.

The League in the Archdiocese is presently in the throes of conducting AGMs at branch and regional levels. In addition, plans are well in hand for the Archdiocesan 60th AGM/Conference to be held on 22 May. Sadly one branch has recently closed and a second has gone into recess. An attempt is being made to enlist new members into the Catholic Women's League.

As this will be my final contribution as Archdiocesan President, I wish to thank you all for your friendship, assistance and encouragement during my four-year term of office. Thank you most sincerely.

Jacqueline Hipwell
President – Canberra and Goulburn

Vocations to the Priesthood

The Missionaries of God's Love (MGL) was founded by Father Ken Barker in Canberra in 1986. As well as working with the poor and marginalised in our society, the MGLs have a particular calling to youth ministry helping, amongst other things, to conduct the Disciples of Jesus' Summer Schools of Evangelisation throughout Australia.

The MGLs are racing the clock to raise \$1 million to construct a new building in Melbourne to accommodate their burgeoning numbers of seminarians by the end of this year. They have already outgrown the current seminary with the overflow of young seminarians living in the presbytery next door and a rented house nearby. Donations can be sent to the MGL Seminary Building Appeal at 6 Boake Place, Garran, ACT, 2605. All donations over \$2 are tax deductable.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In December last year, we received some exciting news from the Federal Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, informing us that our application for a **Volunteers Grant** was successful.

Our plan for this grant is to visit branches in regional areas for workshops on our financial accountability and reporting for Catholic Women's League. A large part of the grant is a fuel subsidy, which will be paid to participants for their travel costs. Workshops are to be held in the South East, Riverland, Eyre Peninsula, Port Pirie, Yorke Peninsula and Adelaide. Dates and venues are now being negotiated and we believe that this could be a great venture for CWL in South Australia.

We are hopeful that at least all of our Branch Treasurers will take part in a workshop, but of course other members and potential members will be most welcome. This offers us a great opportunity to meet, share skills and hospitality.

At our AGM in October, Sister Liz Morris spoke of her work with the **Rural Ministry Formation Program**. Many of our fundraising efforts in 2010 will go towards supporting Rural Ministry throughout the state.

Since the AGM, there has been a new development in this area, with Sister Liz being appointed as Pastoral Director of the Bordertown Parish. In this role, she will work with the Parish Priest of Mt Gambier and Millicent, who also becomes the Priest Moderator of the Bordertown Parish. He is well known to Sister Liz, being her brother, Fr Richard Morris.

Sister Liz will be the regular pastoral leadership presence for the community. She will work half-time as Pastoral Director and will also continue her very important work with the rural ministry program, supporting and coordinating the formation of lay people for pastoral leadership in the south-east region. So it's not just our priests who are being stretched in many directions!

South Australia State Executive for 2010:

President, Pauline Victory; Vice-Presidents, Josie Frost and Maureen Bevan; Secretary, Kath Kelly; Treasurer, Joan Young; Committee Members: Lyn von der Borch, Geraldine Davis, Denice Fetherstonhaugh, Margaret Mariner, Chris Redden; State International Secretary, Anne-Marie Clark; Social Issues, Leonie Holmes; Bioethics Issues, Geraldine Davis.

Executive Meeting dates:

Monday, 12 April, 10.30-1.00pm Kapunda (followed

by lunch); Monday, 9 August, Plympton; Monday, 11 October, Jamestown (possibly AGM); **Biennial Conference** will be held on 6 and 7 June at Sophia, Cumberland Park.

Pauline Victory State President - South Australia

TASMANIA

The Commissioning Mass for the new National Executive celebrated in St Patrick's Cathedral on 31 January was magnificent and made one feel proud to be a Catholic and a member of the Catholic Women's League. We wish Madge and her team every success in their two-year term.

Tasmania is in the throes of election campaigning and we supported a forum organised by the Australian Christian Lobby, at which our Premier and Opposition Leader spoke to Christians across the State in a live webcast. Both leaders presented their case for the Christian vote, followed by questions on a broad range of issues from church leaders.

On the federal scene, our State Social Issues Convenor, Mrs Pat Gartlan, is urging members to write to Senator Conroy to support his plan to introduce a series of measures to clean up the internet. "The internet is a public space, routinely accessed by children as well as adults and safeguards must be part of the system."

Our attention has also been drawn to the Ovarian Cancer Prevention program, with NSW League member Patricia Brown teaming up with comedienne Jean Kittson to be one of Ovarian Cancer Australia's 11th Hour Ambassadors, spreading the word about early detection of symptoms. More information is available on www.ovariancancer.net.au.

Plans are well in hand for our mid-term meeting in Launceston on 16 March. Members from throughout the state will attend. At that meeting the theme for this year's State Conference will be voted on.

Our beloved centenarian Peg Lambert passed to her eternal reward on 16 December. Her Mass of Christian Burial was a celebration of a wonderful life.

At a special Christmas luncheon a presentation was made to Mrs Lola Phillips, in recognition of her contribution to the League's Centre in Hobart. The dining room closed on 18 December and is now a hall, controlled by the Hobart City Council. Our craft shop continues to operate.

Lillian Deane State President - Tasmania

Climate Change: Myth or Reality?

Amidst all the propaganda, misinformation and manipulated brouhaha on the matter of climate change, one thing is very certain: yes, the climate is changing and so too global temperatures, as they have always done since the beginning of geological time. The real question is: does human activity significantly distort these normal geological processes to an extent that the causes need to be and can be moderated without hampering human development?

These latter four words are most significant, as they refer to the Catholic view of Creation as enunciated in the Magisterium of the Church which surely, for readers of this magazine, is the 'rock' and truth of our belief and value system from which all our behaviour stems.

The core principle of Creation, as spelled out in several apostolic letters and other statements by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John-Paul II, is that in 'having a hand' in creating nature and the environment, God did so to provide humanity with the material means — food, fibre and shelter - to live a dignified and productive life on Earth in order to achieve eternal life. Consequently, 'mankind is King of the creation' and 'it is contrary to authentic development to view nature as more important than the human person. Moreover, Church teachings include that:

- nature must be used in a sustainable way and developed through science and technology for the benefit of present and enlarged future generations. Nowhere does the Church promote population limitation;
- non-renewable resources, especially energy, may be used for the development of humanity and should be shared with less developed countries to enable their people to improve their living standards and keep food production costs low;
- technologically advanced countries must reduce domestic energy consumption to slow down the depletion of fossil fuel resources.

Unfortunately, the Catholic view of Creation is not shared by all people within the Christian community, and even some of our own religious and clergy as well as Church institutions have taken positions not

1 Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church

in accord with Church teaching. In essence, they choose to interpret papal statements as placing nature on an equal footing with mankind, or even above it. Aided and abetted by the compliant media, which thrive on discord and have generally strongly supported the man-made climate change lobby, these well-meaning but misguided Church 'experts' are causing confusion and even fear among less informed people.

Statements such as the (climate change) 'problem being unprecedented', and 'immediate action being required to combat climate change lest disaster befall us', or that the 'energy lobby is driving the sceptics propaganda', reflect a misguided ideological view and have no proven basis.

On the subject of climate change, the Popes have not been prescriptive but caution governments against hasty actions lest they interfere adversely with the divine plan for humanity, challenging scientists to investigate and monitor the issue of human environmental pollution thoroughly and honestly.

In that context, while many scientists have warned us that the findings of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) have been politically manipulated to suit the predominantly Green lobby and its fellow travellers, recent publicity of unforgiveable errors in several of the IPCC so-called scientific findings, have finally largely discredited that organisation as a source of sound science. Even the media are moderating their bias against the sceptics' arguments.

For what it is worth, my advice is to sit back, take no immediate action, listen and revisit the issue in 2020. Nothing will happen before then; indeed, we could be moving into another Ice Age!

Peter Finlayson

The author is a retired Agricultural Scientist with an interest in the issue of climate change and has worked extensively in developing world countries over 30 years.

(Editor's note: Peter is the husband of our WUCWO Board Member Australia Brenda Finlayson)

² Caritas in Veritate

SOCIAL ISSUES



CATHOLICS URGED TO JOIN THE BATTLE OVER INTERNET SAFETY

After a Government trial of internet filtering and extensive industry feedback about the most approprite way to improve safety online, Senator Stephen Conroy, Federal Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy announced late last year the following measures to clean up the internet:

- Mandatory ISP-level filtering of Refused Classification (RC) rated content. This material includes child sex abuse content, bestiality, sexual violence including rape, and the detailed instruction of crime or drug use.
- 2. Agrants program to encourage the introduction of optional filtering by internet service providers, or to block additional content as requested by households.
- An expansion of the Australian Communications and Media Authority Cyber-Safety
 Outreach Program and the Cyber-Safety
 Online Helpline and improved education and
 awareness of online safety.

Senator Conroy needs the support of everyone concerned about cyber safety because he is being vigorously opposed by the following lobby groups:

- The Eros Foundation, which describes itself as Australia's national adult retail and entertainment association, opposes these measures claiming that they are 'draconian';
- The newly formed Australian Sex Party, whose policy is 'to overturn mandatory ISP filtering of the internet';
- The Greens, who say they have 'serious concern' about them;
- The Council for Civil Liberties, who oppose

them 'because this censorship is an unnecessary restriction on freedom of speech'.

There is inconsistency here: The Council supports the freedom of adults to read and see what they want, but what of the civil liberties of children and the parents rearing them?

Safeguards must be part of the system because the internet is in effect a public space, routinely accessed by children as well as adults.

The report into the pilot trial of ISP-level filtering demonstrates that blocking RC-rated material can be done with 100% accuracy and negligible impact on internet speed.

For those families that wish to have a wider range of material filtered, including possibly X18+ and gambling sites, the Government will establish a grants program to encourage ISPs to offer these services on a commercial/optional basis. These additional filtering services will help parents to choose what they want filtered without having to download and install software to their home computers.

Under the National Classification Scheme and related enforcement legislation, it is already illegal to distribute, sell or make available for hire RC-rated films, computer games and publications. This material is currently subject to take-down notices by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) if it is hosted online in Australia. However, ACMA is unable to directly regulate content hosted overseas. This action is an additional measure to the existing take-down regime for Australia-hosted content.

The Government will assess highly regarded international agencies and the rigor and accountability of their classification processes with the aim of sharing lists of specific internet addresses (URLs) of known child abuse material so as to block them.

The Government expects to introduce legislation about mandatory ISP-level filtering during the Autumn 2010 parliamentary sittings. I urge all members of the League to send messages of support to Senator Conroy for the introduction of these measures to improve safety on the internet. You can send an e-mail of support to senator.conroy@aph. gov.au or a letter to Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600. Please encourage others to do the same.

Betty Roberts OAM Social Issue Convenor

BIOETHICS



ARE WE TRUE WITNESSES TO THE GOSPEL OF LIFE?

The feast of the Annunciation, 25 March, marks God's saving entry into human history in all the mystery and fragility of motherhood and the risk of life as a tiny human embryo. This year the feast marks the 25th anniversary of the declaration of the ground breaking encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life), one of most important and distinctive of Pope John Paul II's long and significant Pontificate.

In Evangelium Vitae, Pope John Paul II changed the way the Church, and many in the world, talked about bioethical issues. He widened and linked central ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, suicide, population control, reproductive technology with underlying philosophical and social attitudes and practices, those which marginalise the weak, objectify the human body, exploit the poor, and justify violence and coercion. The document considers a wide array of major and burning issues: the nature of civil law, the importance of the dignity of each person, the issue of capital punishment, war, the respect for creation and nature – issues which have become even more troubling today than they were 25 years ago.

This Lent it is worth challenging ourselves with three key tasks set out by Pope John Paul II:

1. To deepen our understanding of the Gospel of life

The Catholic Women's League itself has taken into the heart of its mission many of the key phrases which were highlighted in the encyclical: the civilization of love and life (EV 27.1); of 'choosing between the culture of life and the culture of death' (EV 28:2); of respect for life (EV 70); 'proclaiming the Gospel of Life' (EV 80); the general mobilization of consciences (EV 90) and perhaps most

controversially the *new feminism* (EV 99). But are these terms only slogans for us?

An important step in promoting a true 'culture of life' is both personal reflection and education. In particular we need to learn about God's culture in key moments in the Scriptures. Four sections of *Evangelium Vitae* pivot around God's revelation as the source, guide and lover of 'life'. Have we reflected upon these?

This portrait of the caring face of God is further developed in the Church's wisdom and her life. Are we inspired by the holy figures and saints? Mother Teresa, St Francis, Dom Bosco, St Vincent De Paul, Dorothy Day all show us examples building up a civilisation of life - with different personalities. Who are our models for life?

How well do we understand the connections between issues and how well informed are we? Do we understand for instance why John Paul II insists that: "The trivialization of sexuality is among the principal factors which have led to contempt for new life. Only a true love is able to protect life." Have we explored the knowledge of the Church's teaching beyond the newspaper headlines? Do we keep ourselves informed and thoughtful?

2. To choose life at home

Evangelium Vitae, is not intended as an abstract theological 'policy' text for discussion by 'bioethical' experts. The promotion of the culture of life, comes with our membership of the human race (as children of the one Creator) and with our baptism as adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

Whether we are young or old, academic or handson, regional or urban, it is our vocation to make the respect and value of human life a concrete and grassroots reality. The 'culture of Life' is a 'culture of Love' and like love, proclaiming and celebrating life begins at 'home'. John Paul II insists that women will be essential to the building up of the civilisation of life and love.

The very attitudes, expressions and simple gestures of our relationships, families, communities and workplaces witness far more than our words. Do we talk about the evils of euthanasia, but refuse to visit our frail and demented aunties? Are we strongly against the destruction of disabled unborn babies, but move away from the boy with Down's sitting next to us in Church?

Are we people of the Beatitudes? Are we humble, merciful and just towards those we see damaged

and misguided by the 'culture of death'? Are we grateful for the graces we have been given?

"We need," urges the Pope, "to begin with the renewal of a culture of life within Christian communities themselves ... often it happens that believers, even those who take an active part in the life of the Church, end up by separating their Christian faith from its ethical requirements concerning life ..." (EV 95.2).



Unborn baby at 20 weeks after conception

3. Solidarity with others - in faith, hope and joy

Bioethics can be daunting and sometimes depressing. Legislative defeats and cultural opposition to the Church's message about unborn life, about sexuality, the preciousness of the elderly and disabled and value of 'suffering' can bite deeply into our energy and confidence. The constant lack of understanding and respect which we find in the secular media and even among our peers can tempt us to be bitter and angry. Without the support of like minded friends, a sense of humour and prayer, we will not make the distance.

John Paul II reminds us that as people of "life" we are people of 'joy' and hope. Not because we always win the argument or the day, or because we make light

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of suffering or give glib answers to major problems. We celebrate Jesus' conception, Mary's pregnancy and the Nativity, and the Crucifixion not because they are cosy fantasies, but because God chose to share our suffering and vulnerability, to enter human experience in loving solidarity with our pain and sin in order to bring it to full life and so that "the full meaning of every human birth, and the joy which accompanies the Birth of the Messiah is thus seen to be the foundation and fulfilment of joy at every child born into the world" (EV no.1). This gift of solidarity enables us to touch the hearts and minds of others. The amazing thing is when we focus upon our love for others we cannot always see the light we bring.

Anna Krohn Bioethics Convenor

Anna Krohn is an educator and educational writer, and is currently a tutor in ethics and spirituality in the Department of Nursing at Australian Catholic University, Melbourne. She is also the Academic Advisor to students at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family and, a writer for the Catholic Record in Perth and other religious media.

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Anna is also currently an honorary co-ordinator of volunteers and collections the Caroline Chisholm Library in Melbourne. She is a member of the Board of Trustees for Campion College for the Liberal Arts in NSW and a founding member and convenor of the Anima Women's Network. She has trained in library and information work, and has completed a Bachelor of Theology at the Melbourne College of Divinity. She is currently completing a Ph D in Theology.

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