



Issue 1
April 2018

Behold the miracle of creation



*National newsletter
Catholic Women's League Australia Inc.*

The president's report

Valma Ivory

The Easter season continues, and Pope Francis challenges us to be the light of Christ in our communities. 'Remember that Jesus is walking with you just as he walked with his followers on the road to Emmaus.' "Wasn't it like fire burning in us when he talked to us?"

With our Installation and Handover taking place in early February I feel that our first quarter has been extremely busy with little time to take a breath. Anne Marie Clark has continued to work with Joanna Lamek on the new website. Please note that the new website address is 'cwla.com.au'. An audit of the website is about to take place. Our vision is to use social media to generate interest and build membership and excellent communication between all member organisations through well-managed social media applications. Our newly appointed Public Relations Officer, Mrs Robertson has experience with website content management including social media and is excited to join our team to assist in achieving our vision.

Madeleine's and Sonia's attendance at the 'Commission for the Status of Women 62' in New York was an excellent investment for CWLA. Their enthusiastic participation in all sessions and their daily reports sent to National Secretary Maria to distribute were a unique way to give all members an insight into these sessions, and we look forward to hearing their presentations at our Mid-Term Council Meeting in August. Their final report has been collated and is ready to distribute at our Mid-Term Meeting.

Our convenors have been very busy researching and collaborating to produce well-written submissions to the Federal and State Governmental bodies. We are very blessed to have such committed professionals who work tirelessly to bring about positive outcomes for all women and families. We are still waiting for responses from letters written regarding motions from the 2017 National Conference.

The World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) General Assembly in Dakar, Senegal is fast approaching. Catherine McGrath, Madeleine Banister and I will be attending along with a few members from NSW. We ask for your prayers as we travel and participate in the Assembly.

I congratulate Catherine McGrath on her appointment as CWLA WUCWO Board Member for 2019 – 2022. I know all members will continue to enjoy her reports and wish her well in continuing as our representative.



May the Virgin Mary, whom we invoke with the title of Queen of Heaven at this Easter time, support us with her prayer so that the fraternity and communion we experience in these Easter days can become our style of life and the soul of our relationships.

A note from our national chaplain

Fr Jess Sargado Navarra

Let me greet you: "Rejoice and be glad" on this Easter Season!

Currently, I am serving the parish of Lechenault, Christ the Living [Church](#) in the Diocese of Bunbury, Western Australia. It is one of the Parishes in the Diocese where the Catholic Women's League members are actively engaging in the life, mission and ministry of the Church.

I sincerely expressed my humble thanks to the national executive officers in choosing me to be the National Chaplain. CWL is always close to my heart.

Growing up in the local church in the Philippines, I witnessed the dedication, commitment and love of the CWL in their works of charity for the Church.

When I joined Bunbury Diocese after my ordination in 1994, CWL played a vital role in integrating myself in the Australian Church.

I look back after twenty-four years of my priestly ministry in the Diocese and remember those dedicated women in the Parishes of Bunbury, Busselton, Katanning, Kojonup, Harvey, Waroona and now Leschenault. And I say to you all: thank you for being co-workers in God's Vineyard.



The current national executive team is comprised of Treasurer Fran Mulcahy, Vice President Adele Parsons, Secretary Maria Parkinson, Vice President Karyn Kamman (back row) and President Valma Ivory and National Chaplain Fr Jess Navarra (front row).

Tasmania's report

Judy Gibbens and Deirdre Reid

This year 2018, we Catholic Women's League of Tasmania, are making a concerted effort to rebuild our numbers, enthusiasm and image.

We need some new faces, new blood and new ideas of how to involve the younger ladies. Because we have lost a significant number of senior members, if we are to survive at all, the younger women have to join us! Let's find them!

One possible way to begin might be to have evening meetings in homes and include an exciting speaker or two or even have a short public speaking tutorial. Perhaps Sonia Di Mezza & Deirdre Little could come to inspire us!

We Catholic Women's League members must embrace the values. We have to be a source of inspiration; we are relied on to put forward the beliefs of Catholic women, what a challenge! With the help of The Holy Spirit, we can do it!

Tasmania has been enjoying the wonderfully warm weather. On 19 January, it was one such sunny day when the busload of CWL members and friends arrived at Richmond for a planned picnic and to see the incredible memorial for "lost babies through abortion". A Mass was held and attended by Southern members, and the same readings were shared from the initial "blessing day". Northerners were disappointed that their bus was too late for them to join in this. They decided that, if picking up people on the way, they needed much more time!

Never-the-less, southerners met them with such friendliness, refreshing drinks and delicious lunch that they soon forgot the disappointment.

Their visit to the marble 'life-like baby' was so worthwhile. Comments were: I felt very moved. The baby looks so real. I want to hug it. It is more special than I could have imagined.

One of the 'Prayers of the faithful' included:

We pray for Your mercy upon all mothers who have had an abortion and also all the fathers, as well, whether or not it was their decision. Send Your Holy Spirit of Truth to draw them into Your loving embrace. Remind them that their child waits for them in Heaven.

Many photos were taken of members admiring the sculpture.

Our lovely new chaplain is at present in India, his homeland, sorting out his permanent visa. Good luck with that Fr Jaison – we want you back!

Tasmania's CWL Bio Ethics team has written a three-page submission on our behalf, to the Expert Panel, set up within the Prime Minister's cabinet, to examine whether Australian Law adequately protects the human right to freedom of religion. We have suggested that the Australian law fails to protect the human right to freedom of religion and we urged the Expert Panel on Religious Freedom to recommend; 'That the ability of Christians to practice and explain their faith in public should be enshrined in legislation.'

As this is our conference year, we look forward to lots of rewarding stimulation, challenge and production. The theme of the conference is: Keeping our organisation sustainable and relevant for the future.



South Australia's report

Cecilia Quigley

We experienced sadness in January with the unexpected death of Pat Farrer. Pat was an extraordinary CWL member for many years in her hometown of Gawler and then in Adelaide when she moved to Norwood. She was always welcoming, bright, committed, a knowledgeable historian and a great participant in all our meetings! We miss her.

SA CWL has had a different start to the year with a decision to move our headquarters from the Adelaide Diocesan Centre to a room at the National Christian Women's (NCW) House in South Terrace, Adelaide. The reason for this is we do not have the funds required to pay for this room at the Centre. As I believe in most states, CWL membership down from the past five years, ours more considerably than most. This difficulty is apparent in the State CWL executive not being able to fill three positions on its ten-person executive. At our February meeting, we were able to co-opt a new member until our AGM in October.

A small group of four State members have begun preparation for a State Conference in September, with a dinner scheduled for the evening before (Sunday 16/9) and then a day of unpacking *Laudato Si*, one of the motions proposed at the National Conference by Western Australia. We hope to have practical speakers as well as theological people during the day. Fr John Herd will conclude the day with Mass.

Our Community Child Care Centre leased by Christian Brothers College in Adelaide has a new Director, and already some significant improvements have been made. A much more welcoming entrance has been created by moving a desk, waiting chairs have been added, and new equipment and play areas have been established.

At the moment the committee is getting quotes to have an ancient and big Moreton Bay Fig tree

removed. The next strategy requirement is to look at the roof and guttering, then the floors in the Centre! All ongoing necessities when we (SA CWL Inc.) are the owners of this property. CBC has had the lease for five years ending in 2016 + another five years with an option for a third five years. Our relationship with this school community is active and collaborative – a delightful situation to be in. They have undertaken improvements at their own cost which for us is commendable, and we are thankful.

Leonie Holmes is our WUCWO representative and writes a monthly report on one of the topical social issues. In the February edition of the Archdiocesan Newsletter, she summarises an article from the Australian Bishop's Conference about employment and who is affected as well as the ever-growing concern of affordability of buying a house and the state of homelessness of many young people and women and children. In SA we will be exploring ways that information on these topics can be disseminated in the next two years.

Another initiative we are putting in place this year is to take our State Executive meetings to the country centres on alternate months. We have chosen Clare for our March meeting, but unfortunately, Clare's branch closed at the beginning of February, but those members are kindly providing lunch for us and will join us for that break. It will be a privilege to hear firsthand the remarkable work undertaken by these members over their fifty/sixty years.

When the next report is due I will ask Anne Redden, our Port Pirie Diocese President to inform you of the great work being done in that part of SA too.

Blessings and peace to you all. Continue to pray for us in SA as we relocate, energise and move forward on some significant social issues.

Western Australia's report

Bev Macri

We began our year with significant changes on our State Council, because of WA now in the role of being the National Team for 2018-19. Thank fully, we were able to have enthusiastic members to step up into the vacancies, and "Have a Go". I thank them so much for being prepared to take on new roles that will be, hopefully a wonderful rewarding experience.

We thank Valma, Maria, Karyn, Adele and Fran for their past involvement and dedication on CWLWA State Council. We wish them every success and pray they will have an enjoyable experience as our national Executive.

CWLWA members attended the Installation and Handover Mass held at St. Benedicts Church Applecross on the 4th February 2018. It was a wonderful mass with SA outgoing team in attendance. Lots of lovely food and catch up chatting with all.

Our Bunbury branch will be Celebrating, 50yrs on the 28th April 2018. Members have been busy organizing these Celebrations and all CWLWA members have been invited, to their luncheon. I'm sure it will be very enjoyable.

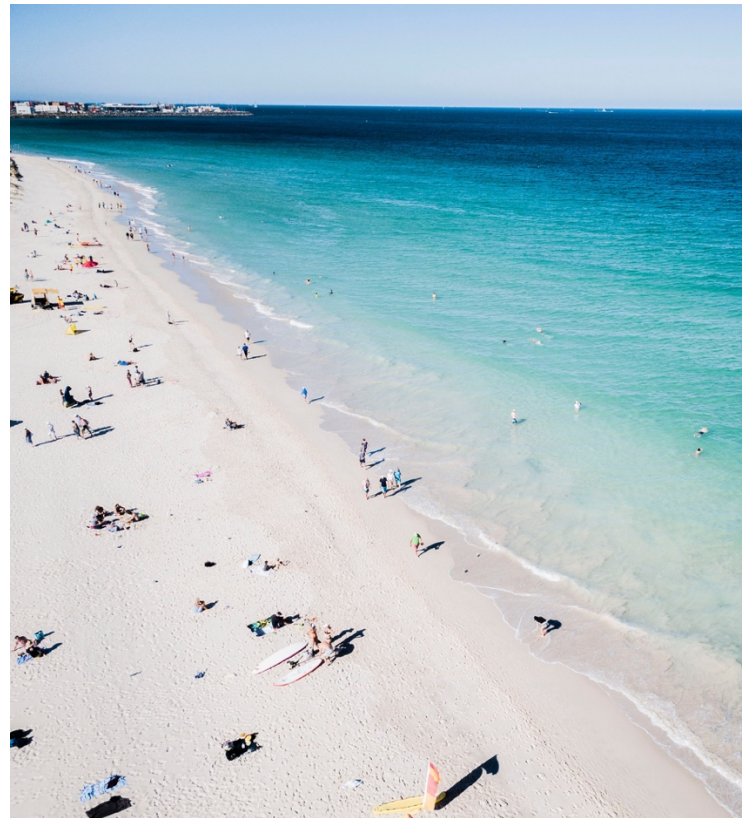
2018 is the "Year of Youth" so we are looking at various organisations that are involved with youth for our State Fund Raising project.

We continue to Sponsor a scholarship of \$3,000 for a Female student, attending Notre Dame University. Our 2018 scholarship recipient is nursing student, Amy Colgan from Esperance. Congratulations, Amy!

In the past 5 years we have had some wonderful girls that were very worthy winners.

We continue to have Representatives on outside organisations such as World Day of Prayer, National Council of Women, Australian Church Women. I thank our representatives for attending meetings, etc. and keeping us informed.

I do hope members have found this Lenten and Easter time to be a wonderful Spiritual experience.



The next national council mid-term meeting is taking place on Saturday 11 August and Sunday 12 August 2018 in Perth.

Queensland's report

Veronica Box

On the weekend of 17-19 February, the State Executive flew to Townsville, then travelled on to Ayr for the State Annual General Meeting, followed by the State Council Meeting.

We were guests of the Townsville Diocesan Council and were joined by delegates for the Brisbane Archdiocese and Rockhampton Diocese. The AGM began with a liturgy based on our theme: Living the Joy of the Gospel. Unfortunately, our Chaplain, Fr Peter Luton was unable to join us but sent us a lovely message with his usual wise counsel.

On a Friday evening, the Executive and Council Delegates were joined by many members of the Ayr and Home Hill branches for dinner at a local club. There has been a generational change in the Townsville Diocesan Executive, and it is lovely to feel the enthusiasm of this younger group of women, who have been nurtured into these positions by the “matriarchs” who have shared their wisdom and experience. Succession planning is the key to our future.

Following the State meetings, there was a Conference meeting, and planning is well in hand for the State Conference to be held September 14th, and 16th followed by tours of the Burdekin area on 17th. Activities have been arranged during the weekend for any husbands who accompany their wives. Come, see, learn and enjoy!

At the State Conference in 2016, it was decided to respond to the problem of homelessness of women and children because of domestic violence. Dioceses were to choose a project in their areas.

Most branches have completed their fundraising for their project.

Brisbane Archdiocese decided to support Good Sam Housing, a ministry of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan which provides support,

independent living accommodation for young mothers and their children, many from traumatic backgrounds, who are homeless. A vital part of the program's ethos is to give the residents the skills they need, not just to grow and develop their self-worth. Further, their education, recognise their potential, strengths and goals, but also to become tenancy-ready, to move on to more permanent affordable housing.

Rockhampton Diocese has supported homes in Mackay and Bundaberg which provide accommodation for homeless women. Lowanna House in Mackay offers supported temporary housing for single women and for women with children who are in a crisis and are escaping domestic violence. Support provided may include crisis counselling, safety planning, general assistance, support and advocacy, the establishment of community links and securing independent accommodation. Edon Place in Bundaberg provides similar services for a vast catchment area as far as Childers, Gayndah and Monto.

Townsville Diocese supports the Ronald Macdonald House, adjacent to Townsville Hospital, which caters for families from across North Queensland undergoing medical treatment. It has accommodation for 100, and families are provided with travel, clothing, food and other essentials.

As previously reported, in 2016 CWL Queensland sent in submissions to the enquiries into two bills regarding abortion law reform. Now the matter has been referred to the Queensland Law Reform Commission, and we were invited to submit yet another submission. Thank you to our Research Officer Sonia di Mezza, with input from Dr Deirdre Little and Jane Munro, who came to our aid in formulating yet another submission.

All members in Queensland have been asked to keep this matter in their prayers. We are experiencing a change of direction for the Catholic Women's League, in so many areas.

Victoria and Wagga Wagga's report

Jane Munro

Membership

we have both Branch Membership and individual General Membership. Branch membership has been an excellent means of providing support and service at a parish level. Unfortunately, as you all know, keeping Branches open is difficult, and we are looking at other models. General Membership is increasing, so we need to review this role, as well as investigate how well our online membership works for young mothers who cannot attend meetings.

Our role

we are looking seriously at our way of operating as Catholic group in our society, by reviewing all of our activities, our networking and communication. This will take many months but we have started and are aiming at having as much input as possible from every member.

The Anima Team (with whom we have a Memorandum of Understanding) is comprised mostly of young mothers have given us a great example (and encouragement) with their online Advent and Lenten Retreats. By aiming at busy young mothers –whether in the workforce or working very hard at home – they have covered a neglected market. The response to the Retreats has been excellent, and the Anima Team is to be congratulated.

Putting forward a Catholic viewpoint

A significant portion of our time and effort is put into responding to government submissions and inquiries.

We are trying to promote a reasoned, holistic understanding of the value of human life to counteract the “three-word-sound-byte,” emotional response which is currently so popular, in secular society. Realizing this is an essential aspect of our work we have developed a network of active members who can respond to calls for action.



New South Wales' report

Anne Pereira

We had two branches close at the end of 2017. From one, several members opted to join a close by branch. They have been made very welcome. The other, the diocese are endeavouring to keep them informed, and hopefully, some of the members may become diocesan members.

I frequently mention the situation of our organisation and encourage our ladies to look for ways to ensure we continue. No one can do it alone! We must support each other, encourage friends and acquaintances and be inclusive.

Recently in the Lismore Diocese Magazine, there was an article about reverence written by Elizabeth Harrington, Liturgist, Archdiocese of Brisbane. The Second Vatican Council reminded us that Christ is present in the Eucharist in at last four different modes: in the bread and wine transformed into his body and blood, in the word proclaimed in the midst of the assembly, in the presider who leads our worship and in the assembly itself. It is the fourth one we need to relearn.

Christ dwells in each of us, and when we gather for worship, our very gathering makes the body of Christ more visible. This is most evident when we make an effort to reach out to someone we don't know or perhaps don't like for some reason. When we reach out to them, that is precisely an act of reverence. When we welcome with respect the teenager who seems unhappy to be at church, when we welcome immigrants from other lands, we express our recognition that Christ dwells in them too.

Having said all that, sometimes we act without thinking, and our actions are seen as excluding people, we are comfortable with our fellow members and do not stop to consider how the new person feels when we talk about things they do not understand. Do we say hello when we see them in the street, at other venues, sporting events?

This is living your faith and being an example. With all the "bad press" over recent years are we ashamed to proclaim who we are? Be proud and wear your faith for all to see!

All our members enjoyed the daily updates from New York. They said it is the first time that they felt included in the day to day activities and members send many thanks to Madeleine and Sonia for keeping them informed. When you see and read of the beautiful things these two young ladies have done for us, it is hope for our future. What are we doing to bring young women into our groups?

It is the Year of Youth, and the theme is "Open New Horizons for Spreading Joy"! It is a theme we could make our own!

The New South Wales Conference will be held in Wollongong in September. Wollongong is a short journey south of Sydney, and the venue has a spectacular view overlooking the beach.

Please note the date, and we would be happy to see many of you there. If you are interested, please let us know, and we will forward information.

Congratulations to our dear NSW member, Margaret (Peg) McEntee OAM. Peg has been awarded a Papal Honour - Dame of the Order of St Gregory the Great.

Social issues

Anne-Marie Ferry

LENTEN SEASON

The 2018 theme for Project Compassion was “A Just Future.” Caritas chose this theme because “social justice starts at the grass roots and can only flourish when all members of society are allowed to participate fully in the process of development.” (Caritas News Autumn 2018 P 3) As 2018 is the national Year of Youth, there was a particular focus on empowering the young, for example through education and employment.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY

The Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) group has been raising awareness of how young children can be forced to work in conditions of slavery, for example in producing cocoa for chocolate. The campaign looks at the supply chains of goods, and urges consumers to only buy things with FAIRTRADE, Rainforest Alliance or UTZ certification that they were produced without slave labour at any point. Secondly ACGATH suggests congratulating compliant manufacturers and suppliers while boycotting products which have not been produced ethically. The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney is supporting this campaign for human dignity by looking at their supply chain.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

International Women’s Day celebrations on 8 March took various forms. While highlighting the achievements of successful business women is maybe going to inspire others, it is also a day to reflect on the continuing inequality of women, who often do not have equal rights or opportunities. Sometimes there is direct discrimination based on gender, such as when girls are denied education. In Australia there has been considerable discussion of the indirect effects of the compulsory superannuation scheme because women are either not in the paid workforce, are paid less, or have gaps in service – resulting in lower superannuation balances than men.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY/HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness has grown 4.6% in the 5 years between censuses, and there were more than 116,000 homeless people on the night of the 2016 census. The proportion of older women has increased. The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) is concerned that, if the Government’s omnibus welfare bill passes the House of Representatives, homelessness may increase further. (At this stage it has passed the Senate, after some amendments.) Home ownership rates are falling for Australians under 65, but self-interested people oppose measures to increase the supply of affordable housing, fearing it may decrease their property values.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING OR FORCED MARRIAGE

In February the Minister for Social services Mr Dan Tehan announced a 12 month trial of a support program that removed the requirement for legal action and offered 200 days support instead of the previous 90 days. Red Cross received additional funding for this work.

CLOSING THE GAP

On national Close the Gap Day (16 March), it was reported that only one of the targets had been met, some were on track, and others were not likely to be achieved. It seems the mortality rates for children under 5 will be halved by 2018 which is good. Progress is being made on enrolling 4 year olds in early childhood education and halving the gap in Year 12 attainment. However literacy targets, school attendance, employment and life expectancy targets are unlikely to be met. Pope Francis has been speaking out about the rights of First Peoples everywhere, so if you would like to make suggestions or submissions, go to <http://closingthegaprefresh.pmc.gov.au> and respond before 30 April. (The site is interesting because you can read some of the comments already submitted.)

HARMONY DAY

Celebrations of cultural diversity were rather muted in our area on 21 March this year. Those opposed to racial discrimination have an opportunity to put the positives, but it seems there are growing tensions in some communities. This is hardening some hearts against the plight of refugees, in fact the story of those still in off-shore detention after 5 years is no longer news. What can we do, besides trying to encourage a more compassionate response whenever the subject arises?

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REVIEW

Mr Ruddock and his expert panel received over 16,000 responses so instead of reporting at the end of March, there has been an extension to mid-May. Some argue that there is no need for any exemptions or protections because same-sex marriage is law now. Others such as ourselves explained that changing the marriage act was not intended to restrict religious freedom so maybe our rights need explicit legal protection.

CONCLUSION

In many social justice issues, there is a link between those in power making self-serving laws which either directly or indirectly disadvantage the poor. Our task is to see if those who devise the policies could find ways to make our society fairer for everyone.

Please can you let Anne-Marie Ferry know about any issues which require our attention. Anne-Marie's email is amjferry@gmail.com



Bioethics

Recap by Valma Ivory

Deirdre has worked passionately preparing the Bioethics Newsletters and I know you find them informative and challenging which is just what we need to become aware of what is going on outside our own comfort zones.

Thank you, Deirdre for your professionalism, passion and easy to read newsletters.

“The full court of the Family Court of Australia removed themselves of the decision- making process required for the use of cross sex hormones in children on 30th November 2017. No longer do these drug approvals in minors require permission from the Family Court.”

Deirdre’s article then explains gender transition and the dangers to the individual and society of experimentation due to fads and lack of expert consultation at a time of vulnerability.

The push for ‘normal’ to be realigned with ideology counter to our country’s values built on Christian tenets needs to be held at bay.

“Our children, our grandchildren and our neighbour’s grandchildren, our politicians and our therapists need our prayers. The futures and well being of many young children may well depend on prayers dissolving the mystique of a new culture which treats physically well adolescents with sterilization.”

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, pray for us.



Report from WUCWO board member

Catherine V McGrath

World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) General Assembly will be held in Dakar, Senegal, on the continent of Africa. The dates of the Assembly are 15-22 October, 2018.

National President of Catholic Women's League Australia Inc (CWLA), Valma Ivory, National International Secretary, Madeleine Banister and some ladies from New South Wales and me as your Board Member will be attending this Assembly and maybe more will join with us. The Registration date has been extended until 1 June, 2018 to allow more ladies to attend this unforgettable Assembly.

The preparations for the Assembly are progressing well and we are looking forward to having a great time in Dakar. We have been told by the ladies of Senegal and the other countries of Africa that it will be an Assembly with a difference. Lots of colour, music, singing and dancing as well as learning more not only about Senegal and Africa but also of the role of WUCWO in the Church and many other aspects of life regarding women and the world. There will be Study days, Business days and time for us to be together in Regional Meetings and time for us just to enjoy ourselves. I look forward to hearing that more ladies will be attending this Assembly.

If you are unable to attend but would like to assist someone else attend think about making a donation towards Registration, Accommodation or Travel for another lady.

Remember WUCWO Day is on 13 May or as close to that date that you choose to celebrate the day. The Liturgy for the service this year was prepared by Asia Pacific Region – that is our Region.

The donation on this day is necessary to help with the day to day running of WUCWO so please remember and forward it to your Treasurer who in turn will forward to the National Treasurer who will then send it to WUCWO.

I thank you all for your prayerful support and remember all CWLA members in my prayers.



Madeleine Banister's and Sonia di Mezza's CSW62 report will be available as a booklet at the mid-term meeting. An electronic copy will be sent to all MO's.

A prayer for our earth

Laudato si', Pope Francis

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.



