Jubilee Sunday May 19, 2013.

Pentecost Sunday

“Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.”



A Christian worship and education resource for your faith community.

JUBILEE AUSTRALIA

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1. Invitation

Join us in remembering the biblical idea of 'Jubilee' on Sunday May 19 2013.

Dear Jubilee friends,

True wisdom doesn't age or expire. And so it is with the ancient idea of 'Jubilee'. Each year, on the third Sunday in May, people across Australia unite in heart, mind and spirit to recall and be re-inspired by the ancient Old Testament idea of 'Jubilee', a time when debts were cancelled, slaves were freed and land was redistributed.

As a congregation, a social justice group, a school group, a family or even as an individual, Jubilee Sunday is an opportunity to set aside time to reflect on our role in building a fair, equitable and compassionate society.

As Christians, we are called to live in step with the spirit of Jubilee renewal, to break the chains that bind our global brothers and sisters and prevent them from realising full and dignified lives, and to actively seek ways to release from poverty those who live on the outer margins of society.

Many of us have a deep desire to do something about the plight of the world's poor. We may even have our own ideas about how best to help. But the causes of poverty and inequality in our world today are complex. Living the Jubilee Principle means understanding that poverty is not simply about lack of money, and that charity alone will not bring it to an end.

Jubilee Australia's challenge for you in 2013, and especially as we remember together the biblical idea of 'Jubilee', is to put your traditional ideas aside for a moment, and join us as we *listen*.

We invite you to join us on Jubilee Sunday to *listen* to the voices of the poor, the oppressed and the powerless, to *deepen* your understanding of the structural causes of global poverty and injustice, to *pray* for long-term solutions to the global poverty crisis, and *collect* a special offering to support the work of Jubilee Australia.

Enclosed you will find reflection, worship and action materials. We encourage you to adapt and use them in any way that works for your congregation. Incorporate one prayer and/or dedicate your entire service or social justice group to the vision of Jubilee.

Through your prayers and actions, your congregation can be part of the worldwide Jubilee movement to fight greed and inequity, and build a just and fair global economy, for the sake of the world's poorest communities.

Our warmest regards, *The staff and board of Jubilee Australia*.

2. Reflection

Hearing the voice of God in voices of the poor.

> *"My metaphor for thinking about the world is 'the beloved of God'. It means that I must tie my life to the voice of God in my heart as I hear it through the poor, the oppressed, the disenfranchised, and those voices other than the voice of the institutions. For that I may be rejected by the system, of course, but I cannot keep my soul and do otherwise."*
>
> Joan Chittister OSB *Called to Question: A spiritual memoir.*

In this beautiful and challenging picture, Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, well-known author and international speaker, talks not only of hearing the voices of the poor, the oppressed, and the most vulnerable, but of attaching the very meaning of her life to what she hears through those voices. This pursuit of Sister Joan is a tough challenge for all of us.

But there is a second idea raised in the passage above, about the need for us to take care that we hear the *right* voice. This second challenge is a tall order in today's media saturated world where we are inundated with news and information, and the opinions of this person and that. When we hear of a new development plan or mining development which affects a poor community, more often than not we get the positive stories crafted by clever Public Relations staff wrapped in language of 'progress' and 'benefits'. The voices of communities affected are too far away, and become drowned out by the voice of those more powerful.

All the more reason for us to heed the words of Sister Joan. If we want to uphold the dignity of people, regardless of their financial wealth and power, the first thing we are called to do is to *listen* to them...not to institutions which purport to speak on their behalf.

The citizens who are risking much by speaking out on the streets of the Philippines, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and more - what are they asking for, what do they have to say, and what does 'justice' look like to them.



In response to what we hear, we have the opportunity to ask questions of ourselves - what kinds of laws/policies (national and international) do we have? Do they espouse human freedom, or put people in bondage? Are there opportunities for ordinary people like us to change some of these laws or make new ones? What role can we play?

(Listening and responding to the grassroots struggles in our region is the essence of Jubilee Australia's mission. Learn more in part 4 of the Jubilee Sunday 2013 material.)

3. Worship

Liturgical resources for Jubilee Sunday

Jubilee Sunday May 19th 2013

Feast of Pentecost *"Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth."*

Notes:

- This year Jubilee Sunday falls on the Feast of Pentecost.
- The Readings are for Pentecost from the Common Lectionary.
- Brief homily notes are included for reflection on Pentecost and the Jubilee principle.
- There is a Candle Ceremony at the beginning of the liturgy which requires simple preparation.
- Place in a central place a globe of the world with five candles arranged around it: three red and two yellow.
- Have the responses for the Candle Ceremony displayed for the congregation.
- You are encouraged to use music that is appropriate to the theme and well-known.

Introduction

Today is the Feast of Pentecost. It is also Jubilee Sunday. We gather as a faith community in the Great Southern Land of the Holy Spirit on the traditional country of the (insert the name of the local Aboriginal people), giving thanks for the presence of God's Spirit in the world. It is God's Spirit who empowers us to love as Jesus loves, to bring peace and justice for all peoples and the earth as we work for the Reign of God.

Candle Ceremony

✴ **Light Candle One (Red)**

(Celebrant) Today we are using the colours of red for solidarity and yellow for liberation as well as the symbol of the global world and its peoples to invoke the Holy Spirit.

✴ **Light Candle Two (Red)**:

As a local community which is part of the global community, we wait together in hope for a world made new where all peoples will be able to live in dignity and peace.

Response: Send forth your Spirit of hope.

✴ **Light Candle Three (Yellow)**

"Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: *The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me."*

Response: Send forth your Spirit of love and compassion.

✴ **Light Candle Four (Yellow)**

"*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 downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour."*

Response: Send forth your Spirit of justice and mercy.

✴ **Light Candle Five (Red)**

"Then he began to speak to them. *"This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen."*

Response: Send forth your Spirit of courage and strength.

Song/Hymn

Homily Notes.

Scripture points to connect with:

1. *"When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together"* – the global world, solidarity.

2. "*They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim*" – hearing Jesus' message, communication.

3. "*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit" –* action for justice is not an option, it's our responsibility.

4. "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always.* – we need the Spirit to be with us in our living this out.

The Jubilee Principle

Based on Old Testament scripture, the ancient Hebrew traditions of Sabbath rest and Jubilee renewal required that those enslaved as a result of debt be freed, lands lost because of debt be returned and communities torn by inequality be restored.

The scriptures tell us that the Spirit of God has called us to be good news to the poor, to forgive each other's debts, to heal the broken, to announce freedom to those who are imprisoned by suffering, to proclaim the Jubilee (Isaiah 61:1-2).

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus gave the ancient Law of Jubilee new meaning when he invoked it at the beginning of his mission (Luke: 4:19), when he read from the scroll, "He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor... to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Year of the Lord's Favour."

As Christians, we are challenged to join the struggle to break the chains that bind our global brothers and sisters, preventing them from realising full and dignified lives.

How do we apply the essence of the Jubilee principle in today's complex and globally connected world?

The causes of poverty and inequality in our world are complex. Living the Jubilee Principle today means understanding that poverty is not simply about lack of money, and that charity alone will not bring it to an end. Our approach to helping the poor must have two facets: a focus on the actual conditions of those in poverty, and a corresponding focus on the systems, laws and policies that make and keep people poor.

Prayers of the Faithful (Bidding Prayers)

(Celebrant) God of all, you created us in your image and call on us to serve you and do your will on Earth.

Response: Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

1. We give thanks for your gifts of the rich diversity of life which is to be available to all.
2. We pray for church and world leaders that they will be inspired by your Spirit to act to change a global system which is creating an increasing gap between the rich and the poor.
3. We pray for the global family of peoples. We are all connected in some way. Help us to show the same solidarity with our brothers and sisters far away as we do with those close to us.
4. We pray for all those who are suffering through no fault of their own under the weight of poverty caused by economic injustice and for all those who seek just economic relationships.
5. We pray that we too will have the strength to work towards a world that reflects the love, mercy and justice of Jesus. Give us courage to lay down our lives for justice for it is only by freedom from debt and poverty that we can begin to fulfil your commandment to love one another.

(Celebrant) Compassionate God, help us to embrace the love we receive from you, that comes to us through the most unlikely of the people in the most unlikely of places. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.)

(After Communion) Announcement

Jubilee Australia is a small, dynamic organisation formed at the turn of the millennium when 24 million people signed a petition calling for 'Third World' Debts to be cancelled by the year 2000. This is what Pope John Paul II called for. In response to the Jubilee 2000 campaign, around $125 billion of debt was cancelled, and governments were able to start spending money in ways that benefited their people.

But the 'Jubilee' idea goes beyond cancelling some debt. Jubilee Australia is still working because of its belief that the global economy has been structured in a way that is deeply unfair, worsening poverty and inequality in many parts of the world. Over the long term, our efforts have to change the economic rules of engagement if less-developed countries and communities are to do anything more than struggle against the tide.

Today, Jubilee Australia collaborates with groups in 50 other countries that are working against greed and inequity, and towards a global economy that is fair, sustainable, and protects the most vulnerable from exploitation.

This is something that faith communities can and should take action on.

Final Blessing

God of all, give us the strength and the desire to minister to those who struggle to live under oppressive conditions. Allow us to see your presence in our lives and in the lives of others. Breathe the fire of your love into our hearts. Amen.

Prepared by the Columban Mission Institute Centre for Peace, Ecology and Justice.
For Debt prayer bookmarks, please contact Anne Lanyon 02 9352 8021 or pej.cmi@columban.org.au

4. Learn

What does Jubilee justice look like today?

I. Cancellation of *illegitimate* debt - We believe people have the right to *refuse* to repay someone else's debt.

"I don't think we should just let a nation off the hook because we are sympathetic to the fact that they are having difficulty. As debtors, I think they should be made to pay as much as they can bear without breaking them. You just can't let your heart rule in these situations."

These are the words of the Secretary of the US Treasury, Donald Regan, in the early 1980s. Much of what we call 'development' or 'aid' shares this underlying premise - that countries that are poor have become so due to their own malfeasance. Any help offered by wealthier, developed countries is, therefore, a form of charity - an offer to help even when it is not deserved.

At Jubilee Australia we fundamentally disagree with this premise. Jubilee is not calling for charity, but changes to the economic policies and practices that disadvantage the poor. We believe that the global economy has been structured in a way that is deeply unfair, worsening inequality and poverty in many parts of the world.

Today for millions of people around the world, prospects for a better future - for working infrastructure and effective government services - are quite literally buried under decades of old debts.

How did this happen?

In the 1960s and 70s, developed nations and the international institutions loaned millions upon millions of dollars to countries that quite obviously had no capability of paying them back in the foreseeable future. Publicly, the loans were presented as a means to fast-track development and poverty alleviation. In reality, it was more like political commerce, trying to buy the alliance of commodity rich countries and strategic geopolitical strongholds across the developing world.

As a result, Creditors agreed to give money to administrations and dictators that were known to be corrupt and non-democratic. They put funds behind white elephant projects that were obviously going to bring no benefit to the people of debtor countries, but which were massively profitable for the companies of creditor nations hired to implement the project, and for the corrupt elites in the developing nations who profited from pushing through the bogus, often illegal deals.

When international interest rates shot up in 1979, even paying the interest on these loans became unmanageable.

Since the mid-1980s, the 'debt spiral' has meant that developing countries have been forced to take out fresh loans in order to meet existing debt repayments.

The living conditions of the most deprived people in the world have deteriorated almost everywhere over the last twenty years. Yet wealthy governments and international financial institutions never cease to demand the repayment of external debt.

What can we do to bring justice?



Along with its neighbour, the Philippines, Indonesia's economy is dominated by the spiral of debt - continuous repayments constantly financed by new borrowings. Even with consistent economic growth through the early and mid-2000s, Indonesia remains a country with deep impoverishment, severe inequality and a stifling debt overhang. In 2009, the Indonesian government spent 11 times more to meet debt obligations than it spent on public health, despite the fact half of all Indonesians live in poverty and are unable to afford to pay for medicines and treatment themselves.

Jubilee Australia has been working with groups in Indonesia, including anti-poverty and anti-debt advocates, who want their government to stop repaying old and new foreign loans until a transparent national financial system has been established. They are calling for creditors and donors like Australia to be responsible and accountable for illegal or corrupted financing extended to their government.

Since 2007 we have been shining a spotlight on Australia's loans to Indonesia, in order to establish their legitimacy.

In 2008, Jubilee Australia launched a series of applications under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. We sought documents concerning loans to Indonesia that we suspected were illegitimate. We discovered that the details of sovereign debts owed to Australia are secret, even those that are still on the books after more than two decades. The Australian export credit agency, EFIC, relied on its exemption from the FOI Act to refuse us access to over 800 documents identified as relevant to our enquiries.

For the past four years, we have been making the case to the government that the Australian public has a *right to know* whether 'aid' loans made to less-developed countries, such as those made to Indonesia in the 1980s and 90s that are still being repaid today, were made more to serve the interests of Australian exporters than they were to serve the development needs of the recipient countries, and whether or not they involved or facilitated corruption. And likewise, Indonesian citizens who are still living with the burden of these debts have a *right to refuse* to repay the illegal loans contracted by their past dictator and his cronies.

Following our sustained pressure, last year the Government ordered an independent inquiry into Australia's export credit arrangements. The final report of the Productivity Commission Inquiry, released in June, supported Jubilee's position:

"The Australian Government should remove EFIC's special exemption [...] from the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (while retaining protection for Cabinet and commercial-in- confidence material)."

Productivity Commission Final report, June 2012.

We are making progress, breaking the silence, and challenging the secrecy around Australia's lending practices. The fight for more breakthroughs continues.

II. Stop debt vultures - We believe people have the right to resist being the prey of greedy, unscrupulous investors.



Vulture funds are private investment firms that prey on the world's poorest countries. These commercial bankers circle developing countries on the lookout for debts that the country is struggling to repay. Then they swoop down, purchase the debt on the secondary market for a cheap price, and sue the poor country to recover the full value of the debt, plus interest, penalties and legal fees.

In 2007 Vulture Funds hit the UK headlines when Donegal International, an investment firm registered in the tax haven British Virgin Islands, sued Zambia in the British High Court for $55 million, for a debt it had bought for $3.3 million. After campaigner pressure and legal support, Donegal was awarded $15 million - which Zambia had no option but to pay, even though, as pointed out by Presidential Advisor Kalunga- Banda, paying Donegal meant "the treatment, the Medicare, the medicines that would be available to in excess of 100,000 people in the country will not be available."
The insatiable greed of a small number of individuals is undermining international debt relief initiatives. Money that, thanks to debt relief, should be going to lifesaving medicines and schooling, is lining the pockets of wealthy investors instead.

Without legislation to prevent it, these so called 'vulture funds' are free to profiteer from poor country debts in Australian courts. In 2010 one did just that.

Since 2011 Jubilee Australia has been stirring public sentiments with the story of a small New York based private equity firm that earned $32 million by suing the Democratic Republic of Congo in an Australian Court. Following the successful campaigning of Jubilee UK, which resulted in landmark legislation, we want the Australian Government to follow suit and outlaw this vulture fund activity in Australia.

Thousands of Australians have sent "Stop Debt Vulture"postcards to their member of Parliament since the beginning of this year, such that when Jubilee's staff arrived at Parliament House in July 2012 to have face-to-face discussions, we found the support of many MPs and Senators right across the political spectrum.

Following the campaigning, Independent Member Rob Oakeshott moved a motion in the House of Representatives, seconded by Labor MP Melissa Parke, supporting our campaign and calling upon the federal government to act.

As of December 2012, the Government had committed to formally investigate the feasibility of drafting and enacting anti-vulture fund legislation.

We are thrilled with this success to date and continue to work toward our ultimate goal - the enactment of legislation to close the legal loophole which currently allows vulture funds to unconscionably profiteer off the indebtedness of developing country's in Australian courts.

III. Put *limits* on mining - We believe people have the right to say *no* to socially and environmentally harmful projects on their land.

While theoretically, a country's natural wealth in underground minerals should provide a large economic boost, in reality the opposite has proved to be true - the economies of developing countries rich in natural resources have, almost without exception, grown at a slower rate than the economies of those countries that are natural resource- scarce. This phenomenon has become known as the 'resource curse'.

Furthermore, time and time again, these projects fail to live up to their lavish projections. The scale, complexity and the deep impact on local communities means that when they go wrong - and they do go wrong - they change the lives of people forever.





(Abandoned mine equipment, PNG)

What can we do to bring justice?

In December 2012 Jubilee Australia released a lengthy investigative report, Pipe Dreams. It is the most extensive independent analysis to date of the 'official' projections made by those with power, about the $19 billion ExxonMobil led deal to extract gas from Papua New Guinea's Southern Highlands.

PNG LNG is a liquefied natural gas scheme backed by the largest project finance deal ever made, including an Australian export credit loan of US $350 million. It has been hailed as a catalyst for PNG's economic transformation. But our research casts doubt over the overly positive predictions, suggesting that in some cases they may simply be 'pipe dreams'.

Our findings raise concerns that the Australian Government, by investing taxpayer funds into the massive Project, has placed already vulnerable Papua New Guineans at even greater risk, in order to prop up the balance sheets of private Australian corporations.

> *“Many community leaders have gone on record making public threats against the Project and its workers if they do not get what they want, and informants say that weapons are being smuggled into the region in preparation for violent conflict if expectations are not met.*
>
> *[...] The project proponents and financiers, including the Australian Government, were warned about these possibilities many times, and yet they backed the project anyway.”*
>
> Luke Fletcher, Jubilee Australia Research Director

Here's one email we received soon after its December publication:

> *"May I take this opportunity on behalf of the grass roots, the no-hopers in a nation so blessed with much yet very poor, to pay my deepest gratitude for the report your organization so professionally carried out. Never have I or many of our like minded PNG nationals read a report so true to the real situation. You have put together what we ourselves would have loved to do but did not have the capacity in order to announce to the world at large the predicament of a nation.*
>
> *[...] I'm one of those concerned Papua New Guineans searching for answers and will continue to search for answers until a solution is found to make right what is wrong. We are as your report correctly state, in a hopeless situation unless action is taken in some way by some caring, like minded from within and outside of PNG.”*

Since the launch of its previous report Risky Business in December 2009, the same month the Rudd Government announced it would extend the largest ever export credit loan to support the LNG project, Jubilee Australia has been successfully putting Australia’s Export Finance and Insurance Corporation (EFIC), and the financial support it gives to Australian mining, oil and gas companies, under the spotlight.

5. Collection

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Or sign-up and/or donate online www.jubileeaustralia.org

Frequently Asked Questions

How do we fund our work.

Jubilee Australia stands apart from most other anti-poverty groups and charities in Australia because we don't take money from the government or corporate donors. We rely on donations from individuals, non-profit organisations, and faith communities. This independence enables us to be a critical and independent Australian voice on global poverty.

And, as a small organisation with a very small operating budget, we can say with the deepest sincerity that each and every one of our supporters is an integral and highly-valued part of the Jubilee Australia family. The commitment of our members and financial supporters to long term change, and the vision to see a world without so much unnecessary suffering and impoverishment, is an inspiration to us.

How do we spend donations.

Approximately $8.50 out of every $10 donated to Jubilee is spent on core work – this includes researching, campaigning, media work, participating in strategy meetings, lobbying in Canberra. The remaining funds are used for administration and marketing. We keep these costs low through generous in-kind donations from friends of Jubilee.

How are finances managed.

Jubilee Australia's board of directors has oversight of all operations and Jubilee Australia's accounts are administered by the National Council of Churches in Australia.