

EDITORIAL

December 2011 Finding common ground for the good of all

The ‘occupy’ movement which has dominated the centre of cities in the Western world in the past month has served to focus on the greed of those who control global financial systems. One stark contrast it has also thrown up, besides that of rich/poor, has been in the dress and general demeanour of the protesters who are rather less formally attired than the suited corporate employees who must pass the ‘occupy’ sites on their way to work.

This observation came from a Franciscan Friar who visited the Occupy Chicago movement one morning last month and had coffee with protesters while noticing the business people going to work in the city’s CBD. In these days of speedy internet connections and comprehensive search engines it is no secret that a large part of the world lives in grinding poverty while a smaller section of the population basks in a world of plenty, excess actually, according to the ‘occupy’ movement.

The occupy movement has been calling for corporates to put people before profits. Pope Paul VI broke new ground in terms of collective responsibility towards individuals with less control over their lives when he wrote in 1971 that political power must be focused on achieving the common good.

‘While respecting the legitimate liberties of individuals, families and subsidiary groups, political power acts in such a way as to create, effectively and for the well-being of all, the conditions required for attaining humanity’s true and complete good, including spiritual ends.’ A Call to Action, #46

In 1986 the US bishops wrote that as well as an individual dimension, ‘love our neighbour’ means a ‘broader social commitment to the common good’.

Does economic life enhance or threaten our life together as a community? The bishops ask. #122.

The Political Community

Occupy Wall Street’s anger isn’t enough

Only sustained pressure and real power will generate lasting change. That’s why another, largely unnoticed development in a governmental office down the street from Zuccotti Park, holds such promise. New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has refused to go along with a tepid settlement offer being pushed by the White House and its hand-picked attorneys general, which would let the banks that destroyed so many families and communities off the hook for a mere \$20 billion. [Read more](#)

Vatican endorses ‘Robin Hood’ tax against greed

The rage of recent ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protests around the world is merely the latest expression of disgust at an economic system that crushes the hopes of billions while rewarding a tiny elite which controls the economic levers. Thousands have together vented their anger at the way the super-rich have taken over democracies and exercised disproportionate power over people’s lives. [Read more](#)

But what if there is no economic growth?

The Editor of *Private Eye* hit on something really significant when he observed that the Occupy London protest has ‘succeeded in getting three quite well meaning priests removed and no bankers at all’. It has become exceptionally difficult for Christians to respond to economic, social and political questions. We are finding it very hard to articulate a vision of the common good in a static or even shrinking economy. [Read more](#)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Gillard's grotesque people-smuggler sledge

So-called people smugglers are often penniless teenagers who are simply a link in the chain for those who are seeking legitimate asylum. The Government's new retrospective law will punish such individuals for an act that was legal at the time it was committed. [Read more](#)

Protecting Indonesia's vulnerable workers

Anis Hidayah has made protecting Indonesia's migrant domestic workers – nannies and housekeepers who seek work abroad and face a wide range of abuse – her life's work. [Read more](#)

Minorities laud new property act

Minority leaders in Bangladesh are claiming victory after the passing of a bill that will enable people to reclaim property confiscated by the state under an old controversial law. "The new legislation enables us to regain our property. We thank the government," said Rana Dasgupta, 64, a lawyer and secretary-general of the Bangladesh United Council for Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, an inter-faith forum. [Read more](#)

Human Work

Jobs lost to the office evolution

If you walked into a public service office in the early 1980s, you'd see typing pools, mailrooms and whole floors full of people doing routine clerical work. People with disabilities were disproportionately employed in low level positions. Today, most of those positions have gone. [Read more](#)

Human Rights

Burmese generals still have much to do

Archbishop Charles Bo of Rangoon said December 1 that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to Burma signalled significant change in the country but that President Thein Sein had much left to accomplish to convince the world and the people of Burma that democratic reform was real and lasting. [Read more](#)

A humane justice system

Judges, academics and senior figures from the criminal justice sector called for plans for mandatory minimum sentences to be scrapped at last month's National Justice Symposium with keynote speaker and former judge Frank Vincent saying that there are better ways of reducing the incidence of offences, including dealing with the factors that contribute to crime. [Read more](#)

Environment

Truth drowned in river system's fight for life

A Riverina farmer told ABC Radio that the environment will always survive, but once communities die, they're gone. The truth is that without protecting the ecological health of the rivers, dependent communities will not survive. [Read more](#)

End nuclear power now – Japan's bishops

In the wake of the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster, Catholic bishops in Japan are calling for an immediate end to nuclear power generation, insisting that humans have a responsibility to protect "nature and all life, which are God's creatures," and to pass on a safe environment to future generations. [Read more](#)

Poverty

Social Justice in the bible

There are many signs that remind us of the inequality and social injustice that plague our global community not least the passing of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, last month. How can we take direction from the bible in our efforts towards achieving social justice? Dominik Markl SJ looks at how the Old and New Testaments lay the foundations on which we can build a society that strives to be 'a perfect community of love'. [Read more](#)

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