



The Vincentian
Partnership for
Social Justice

**Working for social
and economic
change tackling
poverty and
exclusion**

Members:

The Society of
Saint Vincent de
Paul,
The Vincentian
Congregation,
The Daughters of
Charity
and
The Sisters of the
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JUST.NOW

September/October 2005 Justice Briefing

This year 2005 is a historic one in terms of policy development. The U.N. Summit has met to assess progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The World Trade Organisation will gather to assess trade rules and their effects on developing countries. Here at home the Government begins to draw up a new National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion to replace the 2003-2005 strategy. Policies set directions for future decision-making. To be effective, policies must be translated into action to impact on people's lives. Specified actions enable citizens to scrutinise national decisions in the light of agreed targets. Mere words change nothing.

In this issue of Just.Now we look at the present position regarding one key development goal, education, evaluating the extent to which words (policies) have been translated (or not) into effective action. We profile a man who, by translating words into actions has offered hope to million of the World's poorest people. We offer some reflection/prayers.

**Reminder - Monday, October 17th 2005, UN Day for the
Eradication of Poverty. Join us if you can at 11.30am,
at the Famine Memorial, Custom House Quay Dublin 1**



“Whenever men and women are condemned to live in poverty, human rights are violated. It is our solemn duty to come together to ensure those rights are respected”.

This text lies at the origin of the commemoration day.

Ending Global Poverty- Millennium Development Goals

- In September 2005 the largest gathering of world leaders in history took place at the UN World summit to assess progress on meeting the 8 Millennium Development Goals (outlined in the May issue of Just.Now).
- The outcome of the September Meeting fell far short at the global partnership for development on trade, aid and debt needed to achieve the goals. Greater political will and comprehensive strategies at international level are needed if poverty is to become history.
- Since these goals were drawn up in 2000, commitment to their implementation has been slow and spasmodic. To take one example - education.

Education Development Goal

To achieve equal numbers of boys and girls in education by 2015 and universal primary education.

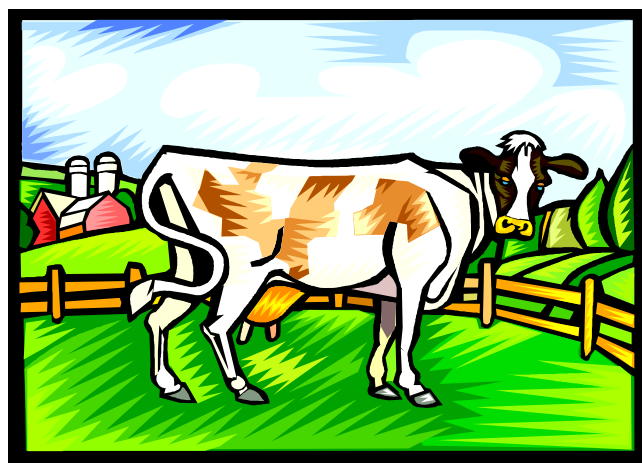
- This goal has been badly missed. Forty percent of countries will not attain gender equality in enrolments even by 2015.
- Sixty million girls do not have a primary school place. A total of 86 countries will fail to achieve universal primary education by 2015.
- The extent of failure in realising this goal highlights the lack of commitment by Governments. The task is difficult. Yet, the achievement of this one goal would mark a major step towards a more just world.

Trade Justice

December 2005 is another crucial date in the evolution of policies that promote justice. At this time the World Trade Organisation, one of the main organisations directing international trade, will hold its summit in Hong Kong. Here policies will be drawn up that will affect the lives of millions of the world's poorest people.

Trade Justice is about changing trade rules and weighing them in favour of those who lose out badly from international trade. It is not an economic issue; it is a human issue.

- At present unfair trade rules rob poor countries of €1.3 billion a day - fourteen times what they get in aid.
- Between 1990 and 2002 the least developed countries share of world trade fell from 3% to 2%.
- The price of commodities produced in these countries continues to fall; in 2002 prices were just 67% of their 1997 level - a drop of over one third in income.



'Cows are better off than people'

The European cow receives €1.50 a day by way of subsidy. Almost half the world's population has to exist on less than €1.25 a day.

What Can We Do?

- Become aware; know the facts.
- Support organisations that campaign for trade justice and the defeat of poverty (such as Comhlámh, DAFOD, Debt and Development).
- Work to Make Poverty History.
- Attend the 17th of October Commemoration at the Famine Memorial.

From Words to Action: Frederic Ozanam

"You have a great way with words, sir, but what else do you do to prove the faith you claim is within you?" These challenging words of a hostile colleague sparked a fire of action in Frederic Ozanam's heart. They were the spark that transformed Frederic's circle of friends in his debating society into a small group of dedicated servants of the poorest people of Paris.

Frederic Ozanam was a young man studying law at the University of the Sorbonne in Paris when he set up his debating society. His aim was to make the Church's teaching known to those who attacked and rejected them. One evening, after a convincing speech in defence of the Catholic faith, a man stood up to ask him if his conviction was in words only.

Frederic was deeply disturbed by this challenge. He heard in it a call to go beyond words to action on behalf of the poorest people in the community.

He and his friends formed a society to visit the poorest families and so the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was born.

From being a man of words Frederic became a man of action. He transformed words into service.

Two people greatly influenced the fledgling society. Monsieur Bailly, a committed activist who constantly visited the poor, inspired the young men with these words, *"You must observe Jesus, suffering in the poor"*.

The second was Sister Rosalie, a Daughter of Charity, whose fervent commitment to the poor and suffering people of Paris showed them the way to even greater service.

The seed sown by this small group spread throughout the world. Today, the work begun in Paris in 1833 has inspired people to respond in many and varied ways to his call: that *"we occupy ourselves with people whose wants are too many and whose rights are too few, who are crying out, and fairly, for a share in public affairs, for assurances of employment and against distress, who follow bad leaders because they have no good leaders"*. By the time of Frederic Ozanam's death in 1853, the Society had spread to sixteen countries. Today, over 600,000 women and men translate the Christian message into action in a myriad of ways.

The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, in its efforts to promote a more just and equal society works with people in disadvantaged areas to encourage them to participate in the democratic process. Change will come when the views of all our people are heard. In this work the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice is encouraged by the words of Frederic Ozanam, the founder of one of four membership groups of (the Society of St. Vincent de Paul), which comprise the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice.

"My knowledge of history leads me to the conclusion that democracy is the final stage in the development of political progress, and that God leads the world in that direction."



Prayer and Reflection

Basic necessities of life

We pray for the Church throughout the world, that she may be a voice for those who lack even the basic necessities of life, tirelessly serving them and calling for change.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the world's leaders, that they may not hide behind their power or abuse it, but work for the good of all humanity, particularly the poor throughout the world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for our local community, that we may show our love through our respect for each other and for our environment, gladly sharing what we have with those in need.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for world leaders, that they may listen to the voices of those who live in poverty, and begin to use their power generously for the good of all.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

For the benefit of all

As we enjoy our abundance of wealth
We pray for the hungry nations of the world.

May they be freed from the yoke of oppression.

Response: Hear your people's plea.

As we celebrate the joys of creation
We pray for the people who are denied their share.

May the earth and everything in it

Be for the benefit of all human beings.

Response: Hear your people's plea.

As we benefit from international trade,
We pray for the producers and workers
Who are deprived of their just reward.
May all created goods flow freely for all.

Response: Hear your people's plea.

Cry justice!

The harvesters' cries echo hollow
In gold temples of power-empty feast
Where rich banqueters dine on the profits
Cry justice!

Crumbs fall from the tables of wealth
Drops of wine from vast jars of excess
Pouring scorn
While rich banqueters feed on the profits
Cry justice!

Generous Lord, as the harvesters' cries
Resound through the arches of heaven
Show us how to trade places to see
with the eyes of the prophets
your truth, and
Cry justice!

The cost of free trade

God of Compassion,
You look down on the global marketplace
and see the scales tipped by subsidies
and tariffs.

The unsold milk in Jamaica draining
away wasted.

The maize in Mexico rotting on the stalk.

And while the rich feast on the
proceeds of their sales,
the poor count the cost of free trade.

God of justice,
Call us to account.

Inspire us, so that we may cast off
our complacency and apathy
and joining hands with people at
home and abroad,

we may make a stand for justice and
righteousness,
for all who dwell on the earth.

Nelson Mandela on ending poverty *"Sometimes it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom. Of course the task will not be easy. But not to do this would be a crime against humanity, against humanity, against which I ask all humanity now to rise up"*.

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