



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
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JUST.NOW

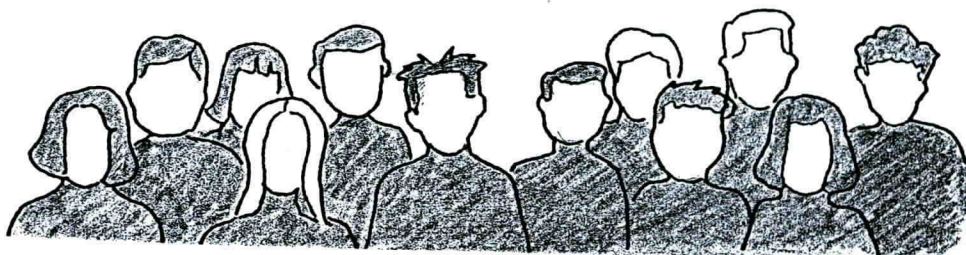
September 2003 Justice Briefing

The United Nations International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

This day October 17th which is marked around the world, was started by Fr. Joseph Wresinski and people living in poverty. It is a day to honour the courage of people who struggle daily for dignity and human rights. It is an opportunity to make visible our solidarity with them.

In preparation for the 2003 event, this issue of JUST.NOW looks at the reality of poverty and its impact on key areas of life in our society. It does this from a balanced stance, highlighting not just the bad news but also the good news. It asks why poverty continues.

"People created poverty. Only people can eradicate it"



Origins of The U.N. Commemoration Day

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

This appeal signed by Fr. Joseph Wresinski, was engraved in stone and unveiled in Paris on the 17th October U.N. day, 1987. It is this text that lies at the origin of the U.N. commemoration.

Put in your Diary !

Friday 17th October
U.N. International Day
For the Elimination of Poverty
Commemoration in Dublin

Friday 17th October

12.00 – 1.30 pm
Famine Memorial
Custom House Quay
Dublin 1

Tea and sandwiches afterwards

Poverty: The Reality

Good News

Bad News

1. Ireland is now the 4th richest country in the world. Only Norway and Luxembourg have a higher income per person.

1. Ireland ranks top of the list of E.U. countries with the biggest gap between the richest and poorest people.

2. The number of children living in consistent poverty dropped from 15% in 1994 to 6% in 2002.

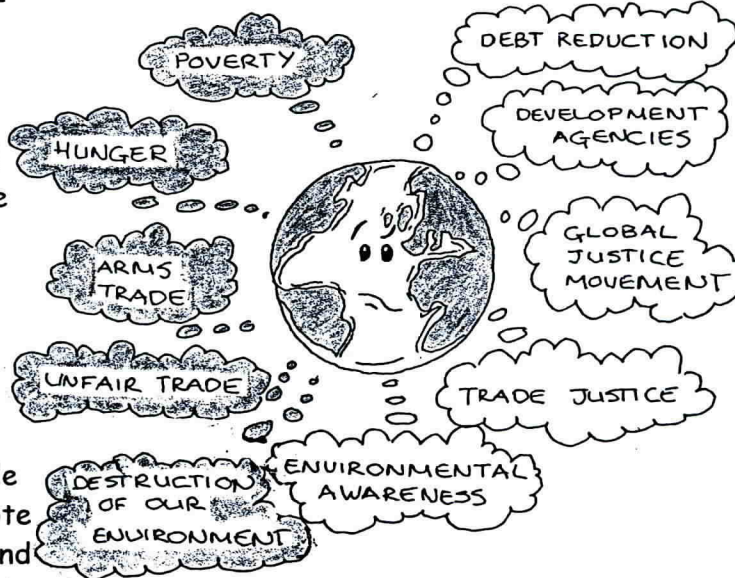
2. 90,000 children live in consistent poverty and 5,000 more will be born into such poverty by the end of 2003.

3. Ireland is one of a number of countries with a National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPs) which sets down targets for reducing educational disadvantage, income adequacy, rural poverty, etc.

3. Ireland has the second highest level of child poverty in Europe at 28%. Child Dependent Allowance has not been increased since 1996.

4. The National Development Plan 2000- 2006 set aside €6.8 billion to promote social inclusion, second chance education and life long learning.

4. In 2003, 22% of Irish people live on less than €147 per week. The lowest social welfare payment is €124.80 a week, the rate for a single unemployed adult.



Bad News Good News

5. During the 1990s the Government set up 38 Local Partnership Companies with a specific focus on tackling social and economic exclusion.

5. Most at risk of poverty are older women, children, people with disability and one parent families. Especially vulnerable are traveller families and refugees/ asylum seekers.

6. Ireland has now ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

6. Ireland has failed to ratify a number of key international conventions including e.g. the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers.

..... Poverty: The Reality

The Good News

1. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals set clear targets for reducing hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDs, illiteracy and environmental degradation by 2005.
2. The Irish Government has pledged to reach the agreed 0.7% of G.N.P. in aid to developing countries by 2007.
3. There is a real effort to focus on economic and social rights as well as human rights. For example: The "Rio plus 10" World Summit affirmed global commitment to sustainable development in 2002 to respect all creation.

The Bad News

1. More than 2.7 billion people live on less than €2 a day, while over €12 billion is spent each year on perfume in Europe and United States.
2. Developed countries contribute only 0.2% of their G.N.P. to developing countries, that is less than one third the agreed international figures. Ireland will contribute 0.41 % in 2003.
3. The World Trade Organisation talks in Cancun 2003 failed when the E.U. and U.S. refused to lower tariffs on sugar, rice and cotton produced by poorer countries.

Why Poverty Continues

The reasons for global poverty are complex. They are easier to understand if looked at in the Irish context. During the past decade of great wealth, little progress was made in eradicating poverty. The U.N. Development Report (July 2003) shows Ireland with the worst poverty rate in Western Europe. We spend less than half the E.U. average on social expenditure (i.e. services such as education, health, social welfare, etc). Our overall tax take is the lowest in Europe. Tax rates only seem high because so much of the burden falls on people on low incomes.

Clearly poverty is the result of deliberate choices. To give one key example: over the last 6 budgets, the rich became richer, while people on low incomes lost out. In Budget 2003 a couple on €40,000 got an increase of €263 per week; an unemployed single adult received €6 a week.

"We can afford to eradicate poverty or to continue give-aways to the rich - not both"



What Can You Do?

- Become aware of the reality of poverty in Ireland and the world.
- Attend the U.N. Commemoration Day on October 17th (see diary note) or support by some gesture of solidarity.
- Lobby, write or visit T.D.s to ensure that in Budget 2004 poor people get a more adequate social welfare increase.
- Support organisations such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice, Trocaire, Bothar etc.
- Pray for the conversion of heart that enables us understand the reality of poverty and the need to work for justice.
- Believe that now is the best time to make a difference.

Prayer and Reflections: As Pilgrims We Journey Towards Justice

Why Go On a Pilgrimage?

A pilgrimage is a journey with a purpose. It is a time to grow in self-knowledge, and awareness of others' needs. We see people around us who are poor. Millions of people are hungry. One of the major reasons for hunger and poverty is unfair trade.



As Pilgrims We Carry Only What We Need.

As pilgrims we take only what we need of the journey. Taking more than we need will mean that others have less. The way of the world suggests that greed is good, but our faith calls us to a different path - a path that leads to a better life for all.

As Pilgrims We Walk with others and with God.

Now that very same day, two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him.

Luke 24: 13-6



Through Our Actions as Pilgrims We are Visible Signs of God's Concern for the World

As pilgrims, moving out, into and through our world, we witness to our faith every day. Our beliefs are made visible in the way we treat those we meet. They can also be seen in the way we treat those whom we may never meet face to face, but to whom we are connected through our involvement in trade.



As Pilgrims We Celebrate God's Generosity

As we continue on our journey we celebrate God's generosity in the rich abundance and variety of our world. Yet we see the needs of our poor neighbours. Our task is to take firm and sure steps on the path that will bring God's Kingdom of justice here on earth,

*In our seeking and our hoping,
Guide our ways, Lord.*