



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

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Action required to achieve global peace

Australia's Catholic bishops say peace is possible if people commit to speaking the truth and redouble efforts to end war.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has released the Social Justice Statement for 2024-25, entitled *Truth and Peace: A Gospel Word in a Violent World*.

Every year, the bishops seek to make a substantive comment on a key social issue and this year the focus is on the promotion of peace and the need for truth in public life.

"Words are never enough to make peace – action is required," said Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB.

"Words such as those found in this statement can help us understand the current situation and how we might work together to create a world which better matches both human desire and the divine plan."

The statement examines rising tensions around the world, the nature of truth, the spread of misinformation and disinformation, the arms race, domestic cohesion, the need for dialogue and education for peace.

It also lists practical action which can be taken to make a real difference.

Bishop Vincent Long, Chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service, said: "The violence in Australia and other parts of the world make it all the more urgent that all who believe in Jesus Christ work together with everyone of good will, all who love truth, to show the world that there is a realistic way to peace, a genuine peace built upon speaking truth and building trust".

A copy of the statement and other resources can be found [here](#).

Social Justice Sunday will be marked on August 25, 2024.

KEY POINTS:

- The document highlights the devastating effects of wars and conflicts and emphasises the need for action to create a world of peace.
- The erosion of truth and the emergence of a post-truth culture contribute to the current crisis of trust and peace.
- Disinformation and misinformation have become more widespread due to the rapid dissemination of fake news and conspiracy theories through social media.
- The arms race and the international arms trade are major obstacles to peace, and efforts should be made to end the production and sale of weapons.
- Building a culture of dialogue and encounter is essential for peace-making, as it promotes understanding, respect, and the common good.
- Education plays a vital role in promoting peace by teaching the values of truth, trust, and dialogue.
- Peace-making is not limited to political decision-makers; everyone can contribute to peace through actions such as prayer, advocacy, and local community engagement.
- The ultimate source of peace is God, and peace-making requires a commitment to truth, trust, and the common good.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Foster dialogue and understanding:** Talk with people from different backgrounds and perspectives, seeking to understand their experiences and viewpoints. This can help break down barriers, build empathy, and promote mutual respect, which are essential for peace-building.
- **Promote education for peace:** Support educational initiatives that teach the values of peace, conflict resolution, and empathy. Encourage schools and educational institutions to incorporate peace education into their curriculum, teaching students about the importance of dialogue, non-violence, and cooperation.
- **Advocate for disarmament:** Take action to promote disarmament and the reduction of military spending. Support organisations and campaigns that work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons and the regulation of the arms trade. Encourage governments to redirect resources from military spending to social welfare, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development.
- **Engage in community service and reconciliation efforts:** Volunteer and participate in community service projects that promote social cohesion, inclusivity, and reconciliation. This can involve working with marginalised groups, supporting refugees and migrants, or participating in initiatives that address historical injustices and promote healing.
- **Practice non-violence and conflict resolution:** Embrace non-violent approaches to conflict resolution in personal relationships, communities, and broader society. Seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts, promote dialogue, and encourage mediation and negotiation rather than resorting to violence. Support organisations and initiatives that promote non-violence and conflict resolution skills training.



TALKING POINTS

Why have the bishops issued this statement?

Since the 1940s, the Australian bishops have issued an annual Social Justice Statement, drawing on the wisdom of the Church's social teaching on matters of critical importance to our nation. In recent years, the Statement has addressed domestic and family violence, mental health, the environment, homelessness and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Why did they choose this topic?

Each May, the bishops choose the topic for the Social Justice Statement that will be issued in August the following year. In May 2023, the bishops recognised the need for a statement on how to achieve peace in a time of war, violence and the erosion of truth.

Are the bishops backing one side or the other in the Middle East?

The bishops have made two public statements on the Middle East situation since the events of October 7, 2023. These statements make it clear the bishops support a just ceasefire with the release of all hostages and unhindered access to aid, as well as global efforts to negotiate a lasting peace. This 2024-25 Social Justice Statement makes three references to the conflict in Gaza (Pages 1 and 3) in relation to the scale of human suffering, the use of disinformation and the theatricalisation of war.

Do the bishops have anything to say about the war in Ukraine?

The bishops issued a public statement on the Ukraine conflict in February 2022. The 2024-25 Social Justice Statement also mentions Ukraine (Pages 1 and 3) in the context of the slaughter and human suffering, media reporting and disinformation.

What is the basis for the statement?

The bishops and advisers draw on the Bible, papal teaching, academic studies and the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching prepare the Social Justice Statement each year.

What is the Church doing to promote the statement?

Each diocese will disseminate the Social Justice Statement through schools, parishes and agencies to raise awareness, educate, promote discussion and encourage action. Religious Orders and other Catholic ministries will be encouraged to do the same.