



ERC JUSTICE UPDATES
May 2020 No.21

From Edmund Rice Centre Director, Phil Glendenning:

A couple of weeks ago I was talking at length with our Irish colleague and friend Colm Regan from his current home base in Malta.

Colm and ERC have worked together in peace and reconciliation programs in Australia and internationally for many years.

*Reflecting on our shared work in many diverse places on this small planet of ours, we began ruminating about the number of TV commercials, jingles, songs and public invocations telling us all in this time of COVID-19, that **“we’re all in this together”**.*

We contemplated whether the people in some of the places we have worked like Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Zambia, Vietnam, Brazil, and Aboriginal Australia, might not be finding reality to be as pithy and inclusive as the songs and celebrities suggested. Here is Colm’s reflection:

COVID-19 - deep fault lines evident

It is commonplace for celebrities, politicians and many columnists to assert that in the context of COVID-19, ‘we’re all in this together’. Really?

Consider this. In Malawi fewer than 50 people a day can be tested for the virus currently; there are less than 25 intensive care unit beds and precious few ventilators in a country with a population of more than 18 million. In 2018, Malawi had a GDP per capita of US\$517 equivalent to just 4% of the world average. Zambia currently has one doctor for every 10,000 people while Mali has a mere three ventilators per million people. Given our medical capacity across the countries of Europe, can we even begin to claim that we are ‘in this together’ with the citizens of Malawi, Mali or Zambia?

Consider this also. Two weeks ago, Prime Minister Modi of India declared the world’s largest lockdown with just four hours notice. This, in a country where many millions live at absolutely extreme levels of poverty and homelessness. ‘Staying at home’ in such a context is utterly meaningless. The lockdown triggered a wave of mass migration across the country with many taking to the roads in an attempt to travel home hundreds and even thousands of miles. Normal food shortages, especially among the poorest have become catastrophic with little chance of immediate resolution.

‘In this together’. Really?

Consider. Applying the idea of physical distancing; the practising hand washing in clean water with sanitiser or soap; maintaining a healthy and

balanced diet and choosing which exercise session to follow on social media is a frankly ridiculous proposition for slum dwellers across many developing countries. In the packed shacks of Khayelitsha (Cape Town, South Africa), Kibera (Nairobi, Kenya), Dharavi (Mumbai, India) or Ciudad Nega (Mexico City), COVID 19 has arrived as yet another dimension of existing inequality and oppression.

Consider also. In these last few days, the International Committee of the Red Cross has expressed its deep concern about the impact of the virus on refugees stranded in so many parts of the world in camps with limited or absent basics. The Committee's fear is that governments will not only seek to protect and support those they see as 'their own' but leave those in such camps to fend for themselves often under military enforced lockdown. The situation was chillingly described by mother of seven Asho Abdullahi Hassan in a camp in Mogadishu as being like 'waiting for death to come'.

'Together in this' – insult upon insult.

Here in Europe, we read of the discriminatory actions of our states with reference to the health or basic human security needs of migrants and refugees. Even in the richest nation on earth, the United States, we see emerging data that the virus has impacted hardest on the poorest (and frequently black) communities. And, even here in Malta, we hear of the dangers of increasing domestic violence against women as a result of 'stay at home' strategies.

While it may be true that the virus does not discriminate, we have built our societies on multiple layers of discrimination. This inevitably ensures that those often most vulnerable and marginalised pay the highest price in times of pandemic.

Once again this particular global crisis has revealed the deepest of fault lines upon which our world is built and sustained. Disturbingly, it also reveals the deep seated prejudices and bigotries needed to justify and, in turn sustain such fault lines.

Our latest line of chatter is about what the world might look like post-coronavirus. Many claim it will not/cannot be the same. Yes, it may indeed change but will it be change for the better particularly as regards inequality and injustice and their consequences? I, for one, am not exactly holding my breath.

There is, however a sting in the tail. The realisation may finally be dawning on many of us (even on our most resistant and self-obsessed 'leaders') that discriminations, barriers and walls of various kinds cannot now and will never ensure our individual or collective health and well-being.

Despite their best efforts, we, the rich of the world cannot barricade ourselves from the poor – their health and well-being is intimately linked to ours.

Colm Regan

Dear All,

Welcome to the 21st Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

As we come into the 15th week from when Australians were first made aware of the corona virus in the last week of January and reflect on what a journey we personally and indeed the world has come through & encountered along the way let us take heed of the poet Mary Oliver.

"Keep some room in your heart for the unimaginable"
Mary Oliver 'Evidence'

In this time of great upheaval & change Justice Updates will be coming to you every fortnight - please send us anything you would like included. Your suggestions, comments both positive and negative or indeed any information you think would be good to include, it is all much appreciated.

Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

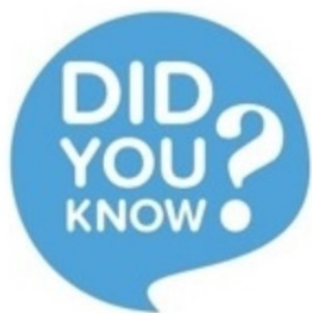
Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,
Marita McInerney



On Friday 1st May 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men &



On Friday 1st May 2020, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2461 days.



In an article by Francis Markam in the Conversation on April 20th entitled: ***'The coronavirus supplement is the biggest boost to Indigenous incomes since Whitlam. It should be made permanent,'*** some important facts come to light:

- Most very remote indigenous Australians live in poverty - the 2016 census showed 31% of Indigenous Australia lived below poverty line of \$404 week and the proportion of very remote Indigenous Australians in poverty was 54%.
- Bureau of Statistics figures showed median Indigenous personal incomes fell from \$482 per week in 2014-15 to \$450 in 2018-2019. Very remote Indigenous Australians' income fell from \$375 to \$310 per week during the same period.
- The Coronavirus Supplement for unemployed Australians will allow them to receive around \$557.85 a week in income support from April 27th. It is calculated 27% of the Indigenous population over 16years were receiving payments that makes them eligible for the supplement.
- The extra \$225 weekly is well targeted at the poorest Indigenous Australians it is estimated 38% of Indigenous adults in very remote areas will be eligible.
- **THIS THE BIGGEST BOOST IN 50YEARS TO INDIGENOUS INCOMES SHOULD BE MADE PERMANENT Because:**
- The Indigenous economy has been in crisis since 1788
- Unemployment rates in places such as Palm Island was around 60% before

coronavirus hit

- **Average duration of unemployment for Indigenous Australians is 73 weeks.**
- **The increase would lock in the biggest reduction in poverty rates in Indigenous Australians since the 1970's.**

Read more: https://theconversation.com/the-coronavirus-supplement-is-the-biggest-boost-to-indigenous-incomes-since-whitlam-it-should-be-made-permanent-135936?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2020%2020%20-%201598315309&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2020%2020%20-%201598315309+CID_c43f1f28404a3c2f2c8bad506378bc88&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=The%20coronavirus%20supplement%20is%20the%20biggest%20boost%20to%20Indigenous%20incomes%20since%20Whitlam%20It%20should%20be%20made%20permanent



Kugu-Muninh people, Putch clan Australia Qld 1944-2019 (Swamp) 2009. Collection: Queensland Art Gallery. Photo: Natasha Harth.

Mavis Ngallametta review - a bittersweet collection of a songwoman's stories of home

Shari Larsson, The Conversation, April 24th, 2020

This has been a difficult review to write. The late Aurukun artist Mavis Ngallametta's major survey exhibition *Show Me the Way to Go Home* opened in March at the Queensland Art Gallery. I was lucky enough to view the exhibition before QAG shut its doors to the public a couple of days later.

Now the gallery has uploaded a video journey through the exhibition with co-curator Katina Davidson. But my concern is the exhibition will be another victim of COVID-19, through no fault of its own. Perhaps future historians will look back on the earliest days of the pandemic and ask what fell through the

cracks? What were the unseeable exhibitions? Writing these words somehow feels like writing a love letter to the future.

This exhibition is both important and necessary, securing Ngallametta's rightful position in Australian art history.

Songwoman

Mavis Ngallametta was a Kugu woman born near the Kendall River in west Cape York Peninsula. She lived a traditional life on Country until she was five, when her family moved to the Presbyterian Mission further north at Aurukun. Ngallametta later became an elder of the Putch clan, and a cultural leader of Aurukun's Wik and Kugu people.

She was a songwoman and the exhibition's title is drawn from Irving King's 1925 Show Me the Way to Go Home, one of Ngallametta's favourite songs.

More than 40 of Ngallametta's paintings and sculptures are assembled for the first time. The exhibition is organised in terms of site, or groupings of paintings that are records of the most significant places in her life. The Kendall River series for instance, was inspired by a 2013 helicopter trip, where Ngallametta and a number of her family returned to their Country.

What comes to the fore is just how rapidly Ngallametta's command of the medium took place. Ngallametta was introduced to acrylic paint at a women's painting workshop at the Wik and Kugu Art Centre in 2008 at the age of 64. From 2010, her works started to grow in scale and ambition. It was also around this time that Ngallametta shifted away from acrylics to ochres and clay.

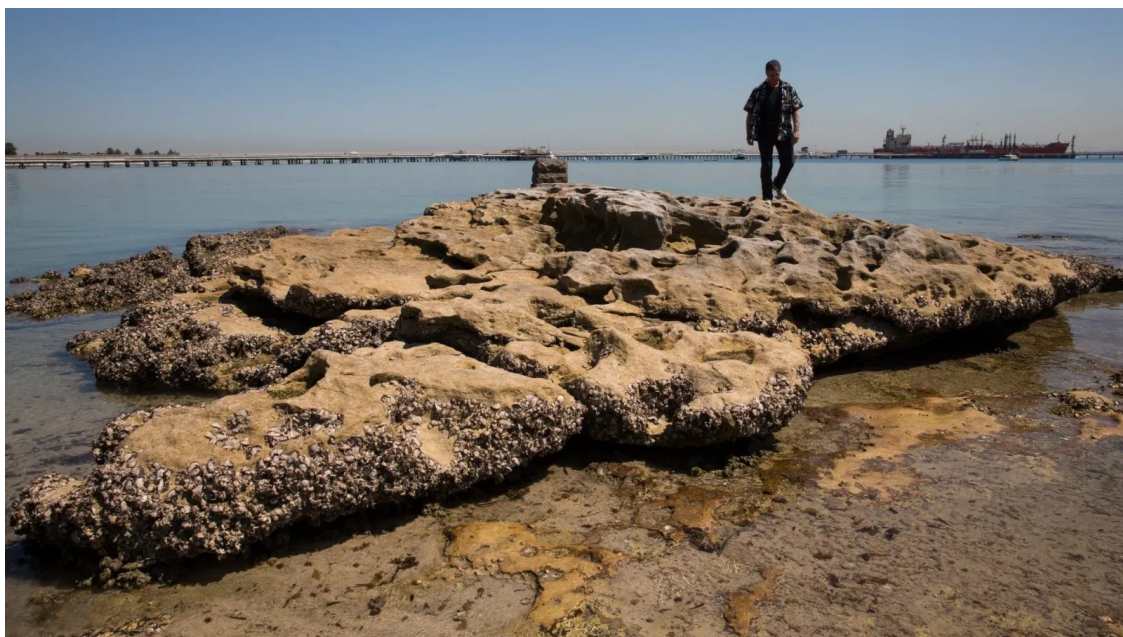
Connections to the land

Inscribed on the paintings' surfaces is the complexity of Ngallametta's connection to the land in and around Aurukun. Ikalath, the coastal region north of Aurukun, has spectacular red cliffs that rise steeply from the sandy beaches. The cliffs are where sacred white ochre is collected for paint. As a Kugu woman, this was not Ngallametta's traditional country. It was through her adopted son Edgar's blood ties that she inherited a relationship to Ikalath.

In a remarkably short period of time, Ngallametta developed her own distinct visual language, drawing from tradition and punctuated with her own unique motifs. The waterlilies and birds that featured in her early acrylics never fully disappear from her later works. Ngallametta would start with an acrylic blue base and gradually build the layers of paint from there. The blue unifies her practice, as well as reflecting the ebb and flow of the ocean, swamps and waterways she was responding to.

Read More: <https://theconversation.com/mavis-ngallametta-review->

[a-bittersweet-collection-of-a-songwomans-stories-of-home-133152?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2027%202020%20-%201604815381&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2027%202020%20-%201604815381+CID_7315049abcce4b565228f89f50f2d6f7&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Mavis%20Ngallametta%20review%20-%20a%20bittersweet%20collection%20of%20a%20songwomans%20stories%20of%20home](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-27/a-bittersweet-collection-of-a-songwomans-stories-of-home-133152?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2027%202020%20-%201604815381&utm_content=Latest%20from%20The%20Conversation%20for%20April%2027%202020%20-%201604815381+CID_7315049abcce4b565228f89f50f2d6f7&utm_source=campaign_monitor&utm_term=Mavis%20Ngallametta%20review%20-%20a%20bittersweet%20collection%20of%20a%20songwomans%20stories%20of%20home)



Botany Bay, where Captain James Cook first stepped onto land. Credit : Edwina Pickles

Between the ship and the shore: The Captain James Cook I know *Stan Grant, SMH, 28th April 2020*

I am reminded this week that we each have our Captain Cook, and how we see him tells us so much about how we see our country.

Black and white Australians enter this modern nation Australia differently. My ancestors stood on the shore and watched the ships come. Between the ship and the shore is two centuries of history; history still untold and justice still denied.

The descendants of those who came on the ships, even those who came in chains, reap the rewards of a nation that is among the richest, most democratic

and diverse on earth. Two hundred and fifty years after Cook, the sons and daughters of those on the shore die 10 years younger than other Australians, and are the nation's most imprisoned and impoverished people.

My blood stood on that shore. My great-great-grandfather, Frank Foster, was a Dharawal man whose grandparents could have seen the white sails of the Endeavour coming through the heads of Gamay/Kamay (Botany Bay).

Frank was born to the huddled remnants of the First Peoples, crowded into the fetid boat sheds of Circular Quay. Frank and his sisters were rounded up and banished to a mission on the NSW-Victoria border. All to make room for the whites who had stolen their land.

Painting of Captain James Cook by John Webber.

It is hard to be Australian in weeks like this, when Australia remembers its glorious Captain Cook. We are told again that this was not an invasion. That Cook came with the best of intentions. There are those, who would portray Cook as a figure of derring-do. An enlightened servant of empire.

Writing in The Australian newspaper, journalist Trent Dalton, wrote of a "titan of exploration and achievement". Cook was "a man of breathtaking courage", who brought a new world of knowledge to "our shimmering shores".

In the Herald, Peter FitzSimons portrays Cook as "a brilliant cartographer, navigator and seaman, who rose from extremely humble beginnings through hard work and technical excellence to be the foremost explorer of his age".

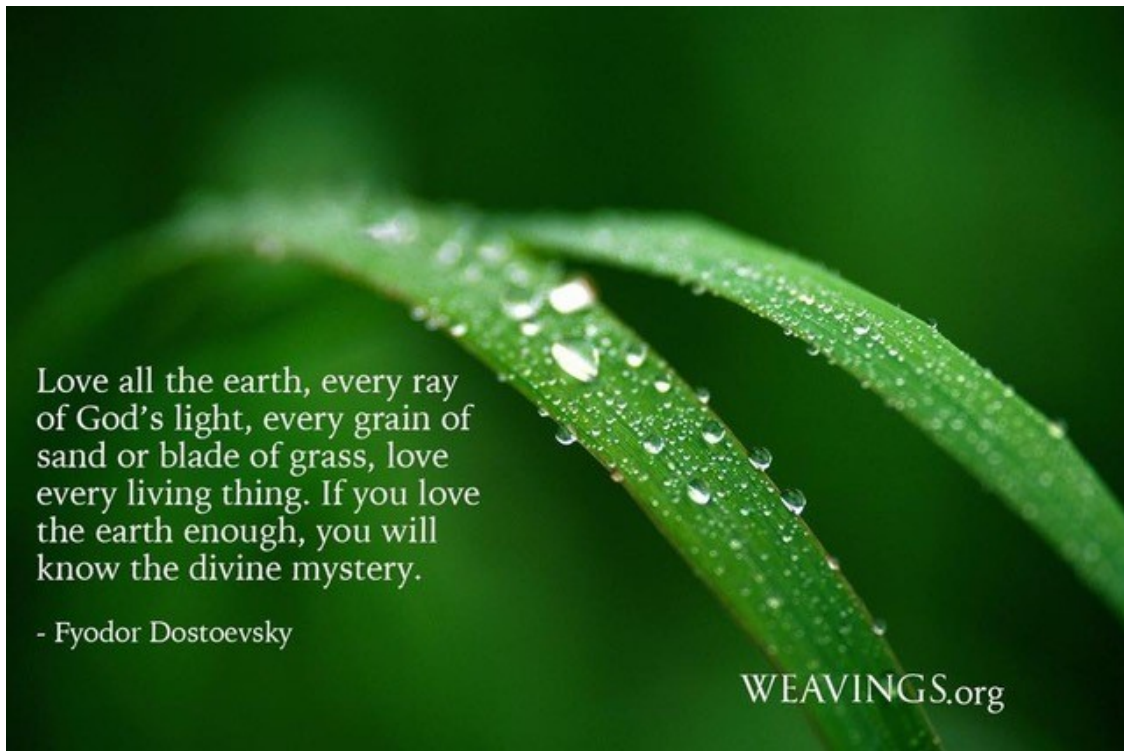
No argument from me. I can acknowledge that Cook. But I know another Cook.

FitzSimons' claim that Cook was far from "an enthusiastic imperialist" merely "an instrument of empire" is ludicrous. Cook was part of the Age of Discovery, when land not governed by a Christian monarch was deemed free for the taking.

Cook came here with secret instructions, orders of the crown to "make discovery" and "cultivate friendship and alliance" with the "natives". Cook was instructed to take possession of this land "with the consent of the natives". Before Cook had even stepped ashore he had shed Aboriginal blood. Is that

how he sought consent?

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/between-the-ship-and-the-shore-the-captain-james-cook-i-know-20200427-p54ni3.html>



22 April Mother Earth Day

This year marks the 50th anniversary of this special day. We know that with COVID-19 raging across the planet and our earth threatened at every turn, now, more than ever before, we are being called to a new way of being not only with one another, but with all creation...a way of less greed, power, violence, poverty, selfishness (we could go on...) and more simplicity, love, healing, togetherness, nurture, care. It's great to see and hear discussions happening all over the world about how we want to create a new and different way, once we emerge from this pandemic. Let's hope and pray we can put all our words, hopes and dreams into action! Happy Mother Earth Day!



'I will give my house to people that have become our national conscience.' Photograph: Jonathan DiMaggio/Getty Images

Australians want to open their homes to locked-down refugees. The government should let them

Craig Foster, The Guardian, April 19th 2020

We talk about using our time at home to prepare for our next assault on the economic dream, when they scream just to walk free

I'll take them.

At a time when real decisions are being made about social worth, of who will be left out or left behind, it is refugees and asylum seekers along with international students and migrant workers who capture the ugliness of "us and them".

Working every day in essential services to feed the vulnerable exposes the true nature of our response. Students who prop up our universities, kids whose parents entrusted us with their academic futures and immediate wellbeing, left destitute and hungry. A million migrant workers, who toil to keep the country operating, going without. You're only good for what you provide to us, after all, we're not real friends.

Iranian refugee finally home in Australia after first being refused entry under

travel ban

But it is not only they who suffer, it's our own concept of self. A virus that reduces humanity to one, that penetrates all artificial barriers, brutally exposes the differences that we refuse to overcome.

Similarly, the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers is not an abstraction that relates to a group of humans here and offshore, it's central to the very concept of Australia. It's the true test.

Everything we have done to the thousands of people on Manus and Nauru, in Villawood and Mantra, speaks directly to me, you, us. Do we protect their rights, see ourselves in them, recognise the commonalities between all races, minorities and human beings?

Treating each other well, our families and children, friends and colleagues, doesn't validate our humanity, that's easy. Child's play. There's social pressure to conform, workplace legislation and anti-discrimination laws to force compliance, our own social and economic interests directly impacted.

The real test is when there's no social capital, no personal gains to make. When speaking up for marginalised people will cost friends, business, social influence, will we stand by and let people die? Will we pen them for seven years and continue to turn a blind eye?

Read More: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/19/australians-want-to-open-their-homes-to-locked-down-refugees-the-government-should-let-them?fbclid=IwAR15jv8IUaO_uFsrg4h8DX__SG2SzovEOVwfHQqfrxH1_o4ZJZT1kq67NkY





Australian relief supplies delivered to Fiji at the weekend amid the Covid-19 outbreak and following Cyclone Harold (Defence Department)

Australia needs a comprehensive plan for Covid-19 in the Pacific

Pat Conroy, The Interpreter, Lowy Institute, April 20th , 2020

A region of great power rivalry and critical to Australia's physical security – that gave help when we needed it, too.

Of all the regions in the world, the twin health and economic crises caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have the potential to hit the Pacific the hardest.

Pacific Island nations supported Australia during our bushfire crisis, sending members of their defence forces and making donations to communities in a much wealthier nation. This region is perhaps the most critical to Australia's physical security – and a region which must be supported through the pandemic by a comprehensive Australian plan.

At latest count there are 266 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pacific island countries and seven deaths from the disease. The governments of at least 10 Pacific island countries have imposed states of emergency. Health workers with only a handful of ventilators at their disposal are bracing against more severe outbreaks. Travel throughout this vast and geographically dispersed region has been all but shut down, and populations already struggling with poverty are

facing a grim economic outlook.

The crisis will continue to unfold for some time yet out and will cast a long shadow over the countries of the Pacific.

There will be humanitarian, economic, social and political impacts – not only for the region itself, but also for Australia, which faces national security and geopolitical risks from an inadequate response to Covid-19 in the Pacific.

The coronavirus crisis has the potential to overburden weak local health systems. Healthcare systems in most Pacific countries suffer from a lack of resources, health professionals, basic equipment and infrastructure. In many countries, poor logistics, transport infrastructure and geographical isolation add to the challenges in providing health services in remote regions. Inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, and limited fresh water supplies in remote communities may also reduce the effectiveness of basic containment measures.

Some Pacific island nations' economies face virtual collapse because of the pandemic.

Several nations are highly dependent on tourism, which has been shut down by travel restrictions. The most tourism-dependent economies are Fiji (where tourism comprises 17% of GDP), Samoa (23%), Vanuatu (40%), the Cook Islands (73%) and Tonga (10%), according to ANZ research and official figures.

Economic impacts are likely to go beyond tourism. The World Bank has identified the following additional economic risks for Pacific nations:

- Commercial fishing may be reduced due to travel restrictions;
- Fish exports may be affected by a global economic slowdown;
- Construction and infrastructure projects may be affected by availability of labour and materials;
- Remittances from Pacific nationals working abroad may slump;
- Slower global growth may impact commodity prices and resources exports;
- Global equity market declines may hit investment earnings of sovereign wealth funds which comprise significant sources of government revenue in Kiribati and Timor-Leste.

<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/australia-needs-comprehensive-plan-covid-19-pacific>



Beyond Covid-19: could we create a more sustainable world?

Simon Bradshaw, Oxfam Australia, 22nd April 2020

What will the world's response to the COVID-19 crisis mean for the two defining and interconnected challenges of our age: climate change and global inequality?

If there's one thing we can be certain of in these strange times, it's that the world that emerges from this crisis will be different from the one we remember.

Pandemics have altered the course of human history – shaping politics, changing built environments, and bringing about new behaviours. They force us to reflect on our relationship to our environment and to each other. They may encourage us to reconnect with what truly matters. But above all, they hold up

a mirror to human societies – exposing inequality and injustice, as well as strengths and human ingenuity.

So, will we emerge as a fairer, saner and more sustainable world? Or having set things up for an even bigger catastrophe on the near horizon? Beyond the urgent tasks of protecting health and life, this may be the single most important question of our time.

What will the world's response to COVID-19 mean for the two defining and interconnected challenges of our age: climate change and global inequality?

To answer this, we're going to break it down into three different areas: a look at how COVID-19 is unleashing public spending and the potential for a clean energy future; a look at how our incredible problem-solving abilities and quick action could be applied to the climate crisis; and how COVID-19 magnifies inequality.

Could we recover with a clean energy future?

After committing billions in economic stimulus, many governments now face a long period of debt. It's reasonable to assume that, barring a collective leap into a whole new mode of economics and monetary theory (and hey – who knows what's possible these days!), we are unlikely to see a program of public spending on this scale for many years or even decades. In other words, this is likely a once-in-a-generation intervention in our economy. One that could lay the foundations for a fair, prosperous and clean-energy powered future, or double-down on the ailing carbon-intensive industries of the past.

When it comes to links between COVID-19 and the climate crisis, much of the discussion so far has focussed on an initial drop in climate pollution resulting from curbs on industrial output and human mobility during 'lockdown'.

Interestingly, even the largest estimates of this sudden fall are short of the pace of reductions needed for a shot at limiting warming to 1.5°C and avoiding a climate catastrophe. (And it's important to add, it has happened not through careful planning but because of a truly tragic turn of events. No one is celebrating.) Far more important is the question of what comes next, and whether the recovery from COVID-19 sees climate pollution sharply rebound, as it did after the global financial crisis of 2008-09 or continue to bend

downwards.

The good news is that Australia is faced with many investment opportunities (reported by The Guardian) that could form the backbone of an economic recovery while transforming our energy systems, building resilience, providing new jobs and radically reducing Australia's climate pollution.

These include investing in a modern electricity grid, energy storage, energy efficiency, and building the foundations for a world-leading renewable energy export industry and low-carbon manufacturing sector. Clean energy is far cheaper, and the climate action agenda far more advanced, than during the global financial crisis of 2008-2009. A climate-friendly stimulus package could also employ people to help restore land ravaged by the summer's extreme bushfires.

"This is a chance for nations to plan better, to include the most vulnerable in those plans, and to shape 21st century economies and societies in ways that are healthy, clean, safe and more resilient."

– Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum

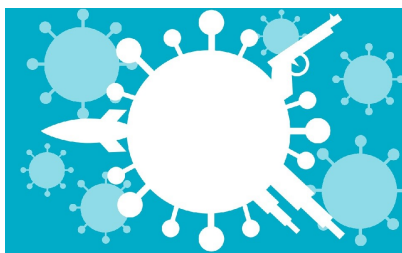
Read More: <https://www.oxfam.org.au/2020/04/sustainable-beyond-covid-19/>

Pope Francis
Prayer for protection from Coronavirus

O Mary, you shine continuously
on our journey as a sign of
salvation and hope.
We entrust ourselves to you,
Health of the Sick.
At the foot of the Cross you
participated in Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.
You, Salvation of the
Roman People, know
what we need.
We are certain that you
will provide, so that,
as you did at Cana of
Galilee, joy and feasting might
return after this moment of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform ourselves
to the Father's will
and to do what Jesus tells us:
He who took our sufferings
upon Himself, and bore our
sorrows to bring us,
through the Cross, to the joy
of the Resurrection. Amen.
We seek refuge under your
protection, O Holy Mother of God.
Do not despise our pleas
– we who are put to the test –
and deliver us from every danger,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.



[New Publications - Just Comments](#)



Save lives or destroy them - Militarism and COVID-19

The threatening unprecedented global chaos is quietly informing us as to what needs to be done to create a better world. Many are asking what must we do. The call is to work cooperatively 'to save humanity from massive global death and economic collapse rather than continue to devote \$1.8 trillion a year to waging wars and engaging in vast military buildups with the goal of slaughtering one another?'



The interconnectedness of life, climate change & pandemics

In 2015, Pope Francis, in fundamental connection between the environmental crisis and the current social crisis. To remind us that *Laudato si'*, underlined the 'everything is interconnected, he called for a personal and community ecological conversion.'

Download & read more: https://www.erc.org.au/just_comment



Religious leaders gather in Jerusalem to pray together. Image: Vatican News.

Interreligious meeting in Jerusalem shows unity in times of trial

Vatican News, 26 April 2020

Members of numerous religions take part in an historic interreligious prayer meeting in Jerusalem.

Different religions were represented at the exceptional community prayer that took place on Wednesday afternoon in Jerusalem. There were representatives of Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Druze denominations. In their own liturgical languages – including Hebrew, Arabic and English – they prayed:

“Hundreds of thousands died, millions have fallen sick. Save, we beseech thee, O Lord. We entreat thee, O Lord, send prosperity! Send complete recovery to the sick, avert the plague from Your world.”

The three-minute-long event was streamed on the internet to allow the faithful to participate despite the restrictions imposed by the quarantine.

It was with the words of Psalm 121 that the pilgrims from Jerusalem placed themselves under God's protection and asked for His blessing. In Israel, this psalm is also prayed on the day of commemoration of the Israeli soldiers who fell victim to terrorism, which will be celebrated next Tuesday, April 28.

“The coronavirus doesn’t know borders” said Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Apostolic Administrator of Jerusalem. There are no borders between religions, races or political parties, he explained. The prelate described all these religions saying the same prayer in Jerusalem as a “rare event,” and expressed the hope that this bond could continue even after the Coronavirus crisis has passed.

British Rabbi David Rosen, who is deeply engaged in interreligious dialogue, described this prayer meeting as “historic.” “The religious leaders of this land and this country have come together for the first time ever to recite a joint prayer for divine mercy and compassion of the Lord at this historic moment when we are challenged by a pandemic,” he said, introducing the meeting

This live, interreligious prayer was an initiative that involved various authorities and organisations. These included the Grand Rabbinate of Israel and the World Council of Religious Leaders, as well as the Sephardic and Ashkenazi Chief Rabbis Jitzchak Josef and David Lau; the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilus III; Archbishop Pizzaballa; Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif; Imam Sheikh Gamal el Ubra and Imam Sheikh Agel Al-Atrash.

The Joint Global Prayer:

God of the first and of the last, God of all Creatures, Lord of all generations, He arouses those who sleep and awakens those who slumber, He heals the sick, opens the eyes of the blind and raises those who are bowed down. We come before you with a bowed head, and with bent stature, and plead.

Hundreds of thousands died, millions have fallen sick. Save, we beseech thee, O Lord. We entreat thee, O Lord, send prosperity! Send complete recovery to the sick, avert the plague from Your world.

Please – God, You who have nourished us in famine and provided us with plenty, You have removed us from pestilence, and freed us from severe and long-lasting disease – Help us.

Until now, Your mercy has aided us and Your kindness has not abandoned us, therefore we plead and request before You to heal us, Lord and we will be healed, Save us and we will be saved, for You are our glory.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing before you, O Lord, my rock and redeemer.

As in the words of Psalm 121 “A song for ascents:

“I turn my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot give way; Your guardian will not slumber; see, the Guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps! The Lord is your guardian; the Lord is your protection at your right hand. By day the sun will not strike you, nor the moon by night. The Lord will guard you from all harm; He will guard your life. The Lord will guard your going and coming now and forever.”



REFLECTION

Mercy Inviting

Mercy inviting – to come together and share nature’s life, hope, gifts of this day.

Mercy inviting – to come together, to reflect and seek deep hope, wisdom of the day.

**Mercy inviting all of us,
to come together to heed life’s call for new hope each day.**

Jude Butcher April 3, 2020 Reflecting Mercy's invitation to seek and heed the gifts, calls and hope of each day.



Silence, Stillness Inviting

City life succumbing to new unsought realities.

Virus spreading - fear, constraints impacting.

Silence, stillness daunting norms of each new day.

Tomb like silence, stillness of public spaces new home to true simple sharing.

Hand signals, waves mutual acknowledgements of people passing.

Respectful greetings welcomed, genuine mutual presence offering.

Empty streets now mercy's rich seed beds for new flowerings of life.

City's unmet deep wounds healing; blossoms of mutual hope opening.

Tomb like silence, stillness inviting new flowerings of hope's true life.

Jude Butcher April 8, 2020 Appreciating gift of people's mutual greetings from within pain of strict social distancing.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

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