

Washing One Another's Feet



An invitation to critically reflect on JPIC and our relationships of power – in this instance by raising awareness of social justice issues for those experiencing homelessness.

This reflection gives us the opportunity to consider the many issues around homelessness and what, if any, are the implications for us as we go about our daily lives. We are challenged to address this and similar social justice issues in our document, *“Being Artisans of Hope.”*

“Contemplation of the pierced heart of Jesus in the heart of wounded humanity impels us to be in solidarity with the displaced and excluded; to defend the victims of abuse of power; and to commit ourselves to search for systemic changes.” (Statement of JPIC commitment, RSCJ, Being Artisans of Hope, P.1)

“Power when exercised without mutuality and reciprocity, becomes a tool of domination and oppression. At the same time, we have been witness to the healing capacity and redemptive value of power, especially when it is put at the service of reconciliation and love.” (Being Artisans of Hope, P.5)

The stark reality of one aspect of Homelessness in Australia

We read that “More than 9,000 women and children face homelessness each year after leaving a violent partner. As this report highlights, many simply have nowhere to go. Victims and survivors of domestic and family violence are often criticised for returning to their abusive partners, but an overwhelming majority have to choose between that and homelessness. Stable housing is critical to their safety and wellbeing. The harsh reality is that women need to leave to find safety....by building more social housing, the Federal Government can inject billions of dollars into our economy, create tens of thousands of jobs and prove it is serious about helping victims of domestic and family violence.” (Kate Colvin from Everybody’s Home)

How might we respond, personally or as community, to the issue of homelessness?

Some ideas:

- Access the numerous articles/documents available on “homelessness”
- Discuss issues about homeless in our communities
- Celebrate and support local good works
- Donate to local service providers
- Volunteer and provide hands-on help
- Sign the following petition by clicking on the link:

[Everybody’s Home has a petition calling on the Prime Minister to build more homes for domestic violence survivors. Sign the petition here.](#)

The Bishop’s Social Justice Statement 2018 draws on the parable of the Good Samaritan, offering a reminder that when seeing people in the street in need of help, wounded by violence, misfortune or poverty, there is a choice: Walk past or stop and help? And behind these people on the street there are so many others struggling to keep their homes and make ends meet, especially since COVID.



“Housing is a human right, asserted by documents like the UN Declaration of Human Rights and by the teachings of our Church. Housing is an essential entitlement for all people to meet their basic needs, flourish in community and have their inherent human dignity affirmed and upheld by others. This human right and the call of the Church was reinforced by the words and example of Pope Francis, who has made it a priority to reach out to the disadvantaged and marginalised of Rome, including homeless people”, Bishop Long said.

Older women and homelessness

Older women are the fastest growing group to experience homelessness in Australia.

A report released in August 2020 by HAAG and Social Ventures Australia finds that the number of older women at risk of homelessness in Australia is a staggering 405,000. This includes:

- 165,000 women aged between 45 – 55 years and
- 240,000 women aged 55 years and over.

Research shows that most older women who are homeless have **never been homeless before**. In fact, many don't self-identify as experiencing homelessness, as they view homelessness as the stereotypical image of a man sleeping rough. Most women blame themselves for their homelessness. The reality is, no matter what they might have done, their homelessness is not their fault. The blame lies squarely on a broken system. Women should not be living with the fear of homelessness at this point of their lives.

"Let us admit that, for all the progress we have made, we are still "illiterate" when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the most frail and vulnerable members of our developed societies. We have become accustomed to looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly." (Fratelli Tutti No. 64)

Every time we see Jesus in Scripture, he is not living in permanent housing. It starts with his birth amongst the animals, his bed a feeding trough. Then, we see him traveling to Egypt and to Jerusalem as a child. He lives in the wilderness for forty days. We see him wandering between Galilee and Jerusalem, town to town, all throughout his ministry. His disciples follow him into a life "on the way", a life without a consistent roof over their heads. Jesus says himself, *"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."* He lives his life here essentially homeless, relying on the generosity of others to offer him shelter. *(Extract from Facebook - Anam Cara Ministries)*



Homeless Jesus, also known as Jesus the Homeless, is a bronze sculpture by Canadian sculptor **Timothy Schmalz** depicting Jesus as a homeless person....

https://youtu.be/2rAys_ON8rg

What might it look like for us to follow Jesus in this aspect of his life on earth? Obviously, it's not that we should all suddenly become homeless; but there is something to his unattached-ness to an earthly dwelling as his "home" that invites us to consider our own attachments, our own needs for security and stability.

What would it be to really experience the powerlessness of being homeless?

What invitation in your own life do you sense from Jesus as he says, "Follow me"?

Called to be agents of Transformation

Blessed are those who live contemplatively; they will find God in all things.

Blessed are those who own their complicity in the violence of our times;
they will gain insight to live the change they want to see in the world.

Blessed are those who listen with tenderness to lives of the neighbour;
they will respond in compassion.

Blessed are those who value diversity; they will be empowered to be co-creative.

Blessed are those who embrace simplicity;
they will live in right relationship with all creation.

Blessed are those who practice non-violence toward self and neighbour;
they will know peace.

Blessed are those who speak for the voiceless; they will be promoters of the common good.

Blessed are those who are willing to suffer in love and in truth;
they will know the fullness of God's love. *Marcia Allen CSJ*