



JUST NEWS

We answer God's call to transform human hearts and to make way for the Reign of God.

September 2004

Office of Justice and Peace

The Role of the Church in the Political Arena

By Stephen Colecchi, Director of the Office of Justice & Peace

The Catholic Church is in a unique position to educate voters in preparation for the 2004 national elections. The Church's role is especially important given today's highly partisan and polarized political environment.

For many Catholics their primary reference point for political decisions is a partisan or ideological worldview. These Catholics may be interested in the Church's social teaching, but they are interested primarily in those parts of the teaching that bolster their political predispositions.

To complicate matters, both liberals and conservatives alike appeal to "the separation of Church and state" whenever they disagree with the Church's position on a social issue.



Competent pastoral ministers know that avoidance of political dialogue runs the terrible risk of isolating faith from the major issues of our day. In effect, to do nothing reinforces a radical "separation of Church and state" mentality. They also know that pursuing a partisan political agenda compromises the integrity of the Church's teaching office.

The Second Vatican Council dealt with these tensions in the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. In speaking of the Church's role in the social order, the Council argued:

At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. (# 4)

At the same time the Council maintained:

By its nature and mission the Church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. (# 42)

Local parishes can make a unique contribution to the political process, especially in the current partisan environment. The Church and its ministries are situated squarely in the world, a world that is tragically wounded and polarized. But at the same time our mission is to be in the world, but not of the world.

With the grace of God we can strive to rise above the polarizations, to shine the light of faith on the whole political process without regard to political ideology or partisan advantage. Our teaching calls us to address the foundational issues of human life, to protect human dignity here and abroad, and to

(Continued on page 2)

Focus on

Political Responsibility

In this issue

ART of Justice & Peace	2
Pastoral Perspective	3
Resources	3
Sowers of Justice News	4
Catechist Connections	4
Political Responsibility	5
JustFaith & J-Walking	6
Calendar	7
Ecology Corner	7
Seeing From A Distance	8

Inserts:

JustFaith Sessions, Political Responsibility Guidelines, and Domestic Violence resources



Featured Web Site:

Faithful Citizenship

<http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/>

Includes the Bishops' document as well as many useful resources -- family guide, bulletin quotes, clip art, ideas for parishes, & preaching tips.



(Continued from page 1)

preserve God's creation. In all these things we give special attention to the poor and the vulnerable.

In today's highly charged partisan atmosphere, we frequently hear the thunder of attack ads, sound bites, and campaign targets.



Civil dialogue is often eclipsed by the prognostications of pundits, the predictions of polls, and the distortions of intense partisans.

The Church is one of the few social institutions left whose mission and teaching can help us transcend the divisive polarizations. The Church can offer a safe and challenging space for substantial and respectful dialogue on the issues of our day.

Our God calls us to love one another; this communion allows us to create a safe space for dialogue. Our God also challenges us with the demands of the Gospel; this call allows us to challenge one another in love.

Creating a safe and challenging space for political dialogue based on Catholic social teaching is not an easy task, but it is a necessary one.

Thankfully the Administrative Board of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has provided us with a guide, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility* (2003).

Order copies by calling USCCB at (800) 235-8722 (item #5-561). Or visit their web site with useful resources at <<http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship>>..

The Office of Justice and Peace is also available to provide help in designing parish or regional voter education programs. ✚

Quote for Reflection

It must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good.

– Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *The Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, November 2002.

Just News

is published bimonthly by the
Office of Justice and Peace (OJP)
Catholic Diocese of Richmond
811 Cathedral Place, Richmond, VA 23220
Web Site: <http://www.richmonddiocese.org/ojp/>

Staff

Stephen Colecchi, Kathleen Kenney, Michael Stone, Rosie Flax, & Martha Mainous
E-Mail: first initial + last name@richmonddiocese.org
Teresa Stanley - OJP Tidewater Liaison
teresastanley@nethosters.com

Sowers of Justice

is the membership organization of OJP.
The Sowers Communications Team serves as editorial advisor for *Just News*.

Regional Sowers Contacts:

Tidewater:

Patrice Schwermer (757) 583 - 0291

Peninsula:

Dan Ruggaber (757) 599-5115

Richmond:

Michael Stone (804) 359-5661

Charlottesville:

Susan Pleiss (434) 244-0837

Roanoke Valley:

Lynne Lonnquist (540) 774-0066

New River Valley:

Frank Santoroski (540) 552-1091

Appalachia:

Appalachian Office (276) 762-5050



The ART of Justice and Peace for Parish Justice & Peace/Social Ministry

Issue: Political Responsibility

ACT to serve human needs, giving issues a human face:

- ◆ Encourage parishioners to register and to vote. Publish info in your bulletin about registration sites and deadlines. Contact your local registrar for details.
- ◆ Host a voter registration drive at your parish after weekend liturgies.
- ◆ Ask your parish Justice & Peace/Social Ministry Committee to conduct a voter registration drive in a nearby low income area with other local organizations.

REFLECT on social causes & principles of our faith:

- ◆ Give your pastor worship and preaching resources on political responsibility from the U.S. Bishops' web site: <<http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/>>.
- ◆ Encourage your parish Pastoral Council to read and reflect on the U.S. Bishops' document, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*.
- ◆ Ask your parish to distribute extra copies of the diocesan candidate surveys that will be published in October by *The Catholic Virginian*.
- ◆ Invite a diocesan speaker to an adult education forum to help parishioners reflect on church teaching on political responsibility.

TRANSFORM social structures:

- ◆ Encourage talented parishioners to consider running for elected office.
- ◆ Join the diocesan Parish Legislative Advocacy Network (PLAN) and advocate for state and national public policies consistent with Catholic Social Teaching.

A Pastoral Perspective:

Faithful Citizenship



Excerpts from the U.S. Bishops' 2003 Statement, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*.

As we approach the 2004 elections, we renew our call for a new kind of politics -- focused on moral principles not on the latest polls, on the needs of the poor and vulnerable not the contributions of the rich and powerful, and on the pursuit of the common good ...

The Church is called to educate Catholics about our social teaching, highlight the moral dimensions of public policies, participate in debates on matters affecting the common good, and witness to the Gospel through our services and ministries.

For Catholics, the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause, but a way of life and a framework for action. A key message of the Vatican statement on public life is that Catholics in politics must reflect the moral values of our faith with clear and consistent priority for the life and dignity of the human person. ...

The Church cannot be a chaplain for any one party or cheerleader for any candidate. Our cause is the protection of the weak and vulnerable and defense of human life and dignity, not a particular party or candidate.

As Catholics, the election and the policy choices that follow it call us to recommit ourselves to carry the values of the Gospel and church teaching into the public square. As citizens and residents of the United States, we have the duty to participate now and in the future in the debates and choices over the values, vision, and leaders that will guide our nation +

Resources on Political Responsibility

Church Documents

U.S. Bishops, **Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility**, 2003.

<http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/>

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, **The Participation of Catholics in Political Life**, 2002.

http://www.osjspm.org/cst/pol_life_vat.htm

Books

Jim Wallis & Diane Sterling, **The Soul of Politics: Beyond Religious Right and Secular Left**, Harvest Books, 1995.

James Reichley, **Faith in Politics**, Brookings Institution Press, 2002.

Organization

Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
P.O. Box 12516, Richmond, VA 23241
(804) 643-2474, <http://www.vicpp.org/>

Free Resource

Elections Matter: Vote to End Hunger provides tools for voter registration, candidate forums, and media relations.

Contact Bread for the World at (800) 82-BREAD or visit http://www.bread.org/institute/elections/sign_up_form.html.

Web Sites

National Committee for a Human Life Amendment
<http://nchla.org/>

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
<http://www.networklobby.org/>

Project Vote Smart
<http://www.vote-smart.org/>

Who Is My Legislator
<http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy/constinput.asp>

Virginia Campaign Contribution Data Base
<http://www.vpap.org/>



Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
2. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation**
3. Rights & Responsibilities
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
5. Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
6. Solidarity
7. Care for God's Creation

COWS + JUSTICE



Call to Family, Community, and Participation

- The person is not only sacred, but social in nature.
- Our economy, law, and policies affect people and their ability to grow in community.
- The family is central, and should be supported and strengthened not undermined.
- People have a right and a duty to participate in society, to work for the common good of all -- esp. the poor and vulnerable.

Sowers of Justice Seedlings

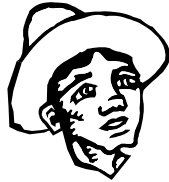
*Activities of
the Catholic Community and
Friends Working for the Common Good*



Tidewater Youth in Mexico

By Katie Schwermer

This summer, ten youth and four adults from *Voices that Challenge* went on an immersion trip to the border of Arizona and Mexico. The trip was led by BorderLinks, a cross-border organization, which educates people about the plight of Mexican people who immigrate to the U.S. across the hot, dry desert.



Our group spent three nights with Mexican families, heard their stories, and ate wonderful Mexican meals. We met with those trying to help the migrants. We heard horrific stories of migrants traveling through the desert for 2 or 3 days with only one gallon of water and how they change their clothes and leave the discarded clothes right in the desert.

Our group actually saw a shirt in the desert. It was small, probably for a younger male. That really hit me, how real people are crossing the desert and dying.

Tommy Basset, an American who lives near the border, explained how people like him leave water bottles for the migrants and invite them into their homes despite it being against the law. He told us that vigilantes slash the water bottles, sit in watch towers, and call the Border Patrol when they spot migrants. It is quite distressing.

The *Voices* group visited Steward, a Maquila factory that produces iron products for the electronics industry. We learned that Mexican factory workers there earn between five and fifteen dollars a day.

To help put that into perspective, we carried out an exercise called "living on a Maquila salary." We had to buy dinner for everyone in our group with ten dollars at the local market. All in all we did fairly well, but it was difficult. We learned that all the prices in Mexico are the same as in the United States, but the people make much less money.

The next day Francisco Trujillo, the BorderLinks Mexico Director who worked fifteen years in the Maquila Industry, spoke to us about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Under NAFTA, U.S. corporations can open factories in Mexico, pay substantially lower wages, ship the products back to the states, and sell them there. Profits flow to U.S. shareholders.

Overall this experience was eye opening. Some *Voices* want to return next summer to work with those aiding migrants crossing the desert. Others want to bring fair trade to their schools and parishes.

Our group will work on legislative advocacy to revise NAFTA and help immigrants already in the U.S. The DREAM Act, for example, would help undocumented students in the U.S. go to college. We can also pressure our government to allow undocumented workers get drivers' licenses.



In this coming year we will keep the Mexican people and the groups that help and harm them in our prayers.

Katie Schwermer is a sixteen year old member of St. Pius Parish, a rising junior at Norfolk's Granby High School, and a new member of Voices.

Catechist Connections: Justice and Formation

By Debbie Stollery

This feature offers ideas for catechetical ministers to make connections between this issue's theme and their parish faith formation work.

For CATECHETICAL LEADERS: Familiarize yourself with resources that encourage faithful citizenship. Share these with other parish leaders, and offer a workshop for adults on this issue. Use bulletin inserts, flyers, videos, and websites to encourage parishioners to become informed.

For CATECHISTS of Children: Children have an innate moral sense. Bring the newspaper or TV news clips into the classroom. Discuss how the Catholic Social Teaching principle of the dignity of all human beings is affirmed or denied. Ask the children what Jesus would want for the people in the news. When this is done, help them understand that this is what is expected of adult Catholics when they prepare to vote.



For CATECHISTS of TEENS: Choose an issue pertinent to the upcoming election to analyze. Use Catholic Social Teaching concepts -- that justice is constitutive of the gospel and the preferential option for the poor -- as lenses for the analysis. Help teens see that the moral analysis is how faith informs politics. It is then up to the individual to choose the candidate.

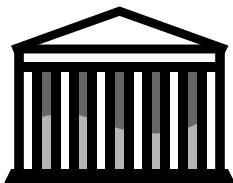
For ADULT FORMATION: Adults can benefit from replicating the teen exercise. Sponsor a panel discussion of the separation of church and state as well as the Church's understanding of the relationship between politics and faith. Disseminate the diocesan list of do's and don'ts for election campaigns. Encourage discussions at gatherings using "Faithful Citizenship" as a guide.

Political Responsibility

Faithful Democracy, Faithful Action

By Rev. C. Douglas Smith

People of faith have a moral imperative to participate in democracy. Living out our faith by advocating for just legislative policies and voting for qualified candidates is wholly consistent with what the Apostle Paul calls, "Living in the world but not of the world."



One might say that God's people engage in legislative advocacy to demonstrate the coming Reign of God. Our moral obligation is to do for others what we would have others do for us within our democracy.

The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy (VICPP) believes that God calls us to be agents of positive change in ways consistent with our sacred texts and traditions. For 22 years VICPP has worked with the Diocese of Richmond through the Office of Justice and Peace to faithfully fulfill our common responsibilities.

As partners, we help legislators and constituents learn, pray, and act on issues that affect poor and vulnerable families. Our voices are powerful when we speak together on issues consistent with the beliefs of Virginia's faith communities -- Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox Christian, Muslim and Jewish.

In the 2004 session of the General Assembly the faith community focused on taxes and the poor. Most legislators admitted that the state needed more revenue to maintain core operations. We understood that revenue increases were only part of the solution since proposed increases were regressive, i.e., having a disproportionate impact on the poor.

The faith community worked as one to seek reduction of the sales tax on groceries from 4% to 2.5% to give the poor some respite amidst the other tax increases. If we had not been unified, our advocacy would have gotten lost amid the Special Session feeding frenzy. And the grocery tax may have not been reduced. However, our combined voice ensured that the poor were not forgotten.

Ask your legislators and they will tell you that the role of the faith community is crucial at our General Assembly. Through our strategic relationships, we are a faithful voice working for the "least of these."

Some legislators respond more visibly than others, but all understand that our concern for the poor and marginalized is unceasing. Legislators know that we will hold them accountable for the impact of any new public policy.

Democracy was never meant to mute the voice of faith. On the contrary, democracy is meant to amplify the voice of all, including the faithful.

Learn, pray, act. The Commonwealth Depends on Us! ✚

Rev. C. Douglas Smith is Executive Director of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy and the product of a fine Peninsula Catholic High School education in Hampton Roads.

Organizing A Candidate Forum

By Monica Pawinski

As Catholics, we have a moral responsibility to choose wisely among candidates for public office. Which ones will most closely follow the Church's social teachings?

In Charlottesville, we found these answers by organizing forums for House of Delegate and Senate candidates. Our strategies may work for your community, too:

- ◆ Assemble a planning team of 5-7 people from different congregations and denominations.
- ◆ Begin in late spring; candidates' schedules fill up fast.
- ◆ Limit the forum to 1-2 districts. Otherwise there is not enough time to fully address the issues.
- ◆ Schedule the forum in a place of worship.
- ◆ Contact the office of each candidate with 3-4 possible dates, all within 4-6 weeks of the election.
- ◆ Share details of the event. If they see that you are organized, they will be more willing to come.
- ◆ Send questions to candidates in advance. Assure candidates that these will be the only questions.
- ◆ Stress that the event is **not** a debate.
- ◆ Allow candidates to answer an open-ended question, like "What are your goals for the General Assembly?"
- ◆ Establish time limits per question. Develop a system to let candidates know they have 30 seconds remaining.
- ◆ Use staff resources at the diocesan Office of Justice & Peace and Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.
- ◆ Send advance publicity to churches and other groups. Encourage pastors to invite their flock.
- ◆ Send press releases, make follow up calls to local political and religion reporters.
- ◆ Follow up with thank-you letters, phone calls, and office visits after the election.
- ◆ Remember to stay non-partisan. No endorsements!



These events help build relationships with our officials. We educate people of faith about candidates' positions and we educate candidates about our moral priorities. ✚

Monica Pawinski is Legislative Advocacy Coordinator at Church of the Incarnation in Charlottesville.



JustFaith & Justice-Walking

The Impact of JustFaith

By Tim McCarthy, Tidewater Sowers of Justice

The "JustFaith" program has flourished in the Diocese of Richmond. Initiated in Tidewater three years ago and adopted across the diocese two years ago, more than five hundred people have completed this intensive 30 week justice formation program.

JustFaith was founded by Jack Jezreel of Louisville and is sponsored nationally by Catholic Charities USA. Nationally, JustFaith is now in more than 67 dioceses. This past year more than 3,000 folks completed the program from Virginia to Hawaii.

The program has inspired a deep commitment among people in this diocese to work for justice through our parishes and communities. Many graduates have joined our local *Sowers of Justice* groups and the Office of Justice and Peace in their mission to "transform human hearts and structures to make way for the reign of God."

The Just Faith program is a formation program that relies on intentional small faith communities. Each group meets for an opening and closing two-day retreat and meets weekly for two and one half hours for thirty weeks.



Participants read about 50-70 pages each week from 12 books that address Catholic Social Teaching, simple living, and the lives of modern spiritual heroes like Dorothy Day and Oscar Romero. JustFaith also examines topics such as racism, domestic and world poverty and hunger, and the impact of First World countries on economic, military and social issues in the developing world. The program is both challenging and rewarding.

Each session begins and ends with prayer and reflection. The program is patterned on the RCIA model and provides an excellent opportunity for adult education and formation. It is truly a faith journey.

The focus on small faith community allows participants to examine their faith and its practice with the support and encouragement of others on their faith journey.

JustFaith also integrates the U.S. Bishops' domestic anti-poverty program, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). Each participant is asked to attend a "Journey to Justice" session on a Saturday in January or February. This allows JustFaith participants to witness firsthand a low income empowerment project supported by CCHD. This is a highlight and a transforming experience for all JustFaith folks.

JustFaith has provided a path for many to begin an adult process of putting their faith into action. Graduates of JustFaith have opted for more simple lifestyles, become advocates for the homeless and for affordable housing, and become leaders in Haiti twinning and many community action programs.

Many have become more active in their parish justice and peace efforts. Others have joined efforts sponsored by the Office of Justice and Peace and local *Sowers of Justice* groups. JustFaith has energized our faith communities in giving new emphasis to the "preferential option for the poor" and seeing Christ in wounded people on the margins of our communities and across the world.

Jack Jezreel will return in September to promote JustFaith across the Diocese (see insert and calendar on page 7). Please join us for one of these informational events and sign up for JustFaith. It will change your life! +



Justice-Walking Calls on Youth

By Michael Stone, Office of Justice & Peace

Justice Walking (or *J-Walking*) is a new justice formation program designed for high school youth. The program's founder, Joe Grant, visited Tidewater and Richmond in early July to talk about this exciting new program.

An outgrowth of JustFaith, *J-Walking* is a process for youth and adult companions that explores the spiritual and social implications of the Gospel message and the social justice tradition of the Catholic faith.

J-Walking ("jaywalking") means going against the flow, choosing unconventional paths, crossing social and cultural boundaries, entering into unlikely relationships, uncovering new opportunities to build community and gain insightful perspectives through personal encounters, prayer, reflection and dialogue.

Over the course of a nine-month school year, a small community of young people and adult mentors (between 5-10 teens and 2 to 4 adults) enter into prayerful dialogue and investigate the prophetic call. *J-Walkers* gather for 18 bi-weekly sessions to build relationships with people at the margins of society. *J-Walking* is flexible and can be led by youth ministers, teachers, parents or other interested adults.

If you are interested in *J-Walking*, contact Tim McCarthy in Tidewater at (757) 431-0610 or <McCarthyT@aol.com> or Michael Stone in Richmond at (804) 359-5661, ext. 128 or <mstone@richmonddiocese.org>. +





CALENDAR

September

6 Labor Day. For resources on worker rights, contact the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice at (773) 728-8400 or visit <<http://www.nicwj.org>>.

10-12 JustFaith Orientation Sessions (and Participant Reunions) with Jack Jezreel. See insert for details.

11 Anniversary of 9-11 Terrorist Attack: The Path to Healing and Peace. For OJP resources, contact Steve Colecchi at (804) 359-5661, ext. 125 or <scolecchi@richmonddiocese.org>.

16-19 Transformation Retreat for people living with HIV/AIDS to be held at Holy Family Retreat Center in Hampton, VA. Join others living with HIV/AIDS on a journey to live more meaningful, informed, and complete lives. For information, contact Wanda Rue at (804) 353-0060 or



<transform@mindspring.com>.

17-19 Rachel's Vineyard Retreat. For those suffering from abortion's aftermath. Contact Kay Marie Geiger at (804) 330-3137 or Molly Smith at (804) 794-0222 or <molly.smith@epiphanychurch.org>.

October

Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Awareness Month

17 Children's Sabbath. A great opportunity to educate parishioners about child poverty. Visit the Children's Defense Fund web site <<http://www.childrensdefense.org>> for details and resources.

24 National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty. Useful materials available from Amnesty International USA at <<http://www.amnestyusa.org/faithinaction/>>

November

19-21 Demonstration to Close the School of the Americas. At Fort Benning in Georgia. Visit <<http://www.soaw.org>> for details.

21 CCHD Collection Sunday. CCHD is the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Bishops. For more info, visit the CCHD web site at <<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/>>.

December

1 World AIDS Awareness Day. For information & resources on AIDS, contact Kathleen Kenney at (804) 369-5661, ext. 129 or <kkenney@richmonddiocese.org>.

25 Catholic Charities Christmas Collection. Catholic Charities of Hampton Roads & Commonwealth Catholic Charities benefit.

January 2005

1 World Day of Peace. For info on the Pope's annual peace statement, contact Steve Colecchi at (804) 369-5661, ext. 125 or <scolecchi@richmonddiocese.org>.

241 March for Life in Washington, DC. Contact Michael Stone at (804) 359-5661, ext. 128 or <mstone@richmonddiocese.org>.

31 Catholic Advocacy Day at the Virginia General Assembly. At St. Peter's Catholic Church, Richmond. Contact Steve Colecchi at (804) 369-5661, ext. 125 or <scolecchi@richmonddiocese.org>.

Ecology Corner

In each issue of *Just News*, we present some facts and/or reflections on our current ecological crisis.

Did You Know?



- ◆ The United States produces 25% of the world's carbon dioxide pollution.
- ◆ The polar ice cap has shrunk nearly 20% in the last 20 years. The area of lost ice is larger than Texas, Maryland, and California combined.

SOURCE: *Nature's Voice*, January/February 2004, The National Resources Defense Council.

- ◆ "Save the rain forest" is an application of "Thou shalt not kill."
- ◆ A major engine of Earth's destruction is overconsumption. Chicago, with 3 million people, consumes as much raw material in a year as Bangladesh, with 97 million people.
- ◆ Ecology is a moral problem.
- ◆ To address this, the pope proposes a series of righteous actions -- to be converted from a consumerist lifestyle, to address poverty & war and its devastating ecological effects, to promote education in ecological responsibility starting with the family, and appreciate the beauty of nature which tells of the glory of God.

SOURCE: Elizabeth Johnson, *From God's Beloved Creatures, America*, April 16, 2001.

Last summer's power outage, in which 100 power plants in the Northeast U.S. shut down, had a happy consequence. The air became remarkably cleaner! Visibility increased by some 20 miles, as light-scattering particles were reduced by 70 percent. Sulfur dioxide levels were reduced by 90 percent, and ozone was down by about 50 percent.

SOURCE: *Daily Grist*, June 23, 2004
<<http://www.gristmagazine.com>>

For information about the Ecological Network of *Sowers of Justice*, contact Clare McBrien at (276) 686-5039 or <cmcbrien@richmonddiocese.org>.

Office of Justice and Peace
Catholic Diocese of Richmond
811 Cathedral Place
Richmond, VA 23220

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Richmond, Virginia
Permit No. 321

***JustFaith* Information Sessions**

September 10-12, 2004

Join *JustFaith* program founder,
Jack Jezreel, to learn more about
this exciting adult formation program.
Sessions to be held in Norfolk, Richmond,
Charlottesville, & Roanoke

See insert for details!

Seeing from A Distance

By Most Rev. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

I find it really difficult to look at the photos of the Twin Towers dissolving in flame and rubble. I know I'm not alone in that, but for me, they bring back the memory of being on the inside of the picture that day in New York, when I, with others, was trapped for a period in a neighboring building.



The image from outside is the single dramatic moment, the crash out of a clear sky. But what we are going to remember from inside is the chaos, dark, and dust, and the unexpected intimate conversations and touches of the hand between strangers as we waited.

Photographs can't begin to do justice to what we can't see, the thousands of lives ending dreadfully, the fear and agony, the anguish of those who lost friends, children, parents. Our minds can't really cope with all that. And if they can't, just gazing at the pictures feels detached and wrong.

Perhaps it's got something to do with how easily we focus on dramatic pictures to spare us from the personal reality. The terrorist, the suicide bomber, is someone who's got to the point where they can only see from a distance -- the sort of distance from which you can't see a face, meet their eyes, hear who they are, imagine who and what they love.

All violence works with that sort of distance; it depends on not seeing certain things. No one would ever have been able to carry on as a soldier without the training not to see or think about an enemy in personal terms. ...

One of the disturbing things about religious faith is that it tells us that God never sees at a distance, never sees things only in general. There are no lives that are superfluous. ...

[T]he great religious traditions ... [teach us] that the choice to go to war is at best the lesser evil, but also that there are ways of fighting that increasingly damage our own humanity, changing what we expect of ourselves and others.

With high-tech military methods, there's a temptation to take for granted the view from a distance. ... If we don't see the point of this caution, ... the nearer the terrorist comes to winning, because it means we're getting used to the view from outside as the normal perspective -- the distant view that spares us the real cost to our own humanity. +

The November 2004 issue of *Just News*
will focus on the theme of
Mental Illness.
The deadline for articles is October 12, 2004.