

That You act Justly

Br Vincent Kingston

I might have given you the impression last month that the *LiveSimply* campaign was solely to do with CAFOD, but in fact, all the Catholic agencies are involved, and I would particularly like to bring Progressio to your attention.

Until the 1st Jan 2006, this agency was known as the Catholic Institute of International Relations. It retains its old name as a charity, but uses Progressio as its 'working' name.

The following is taken from its website www.progressio.org.uk

"Our research showed that the name CIIR no longer reflected the organisation, what it stood for and what it sought to do. The full name was overtly long, difficult to say, and gave an inaccurate and confusing picture of our work.

Progressio is a Latin word meaning development and advancement, the very factors the organisation promotes among its partners, supporters and the general public.

The name Progressio comes from 'Populorum Progressio', the encyclical that Pope Paul VI wrote in 1967. It is one of the central documents in Catholic Social Teaching that emerged from the Second Vatican Council, and speaks of the challenge of development, and the importance of justice in relations between rich and poor nations."

Progressio operates in 11 countries around the world, from S America to the Caribbean, Middle East, Africa and SE Asia. It places experienced professional volunteers to share their skills with local communities in these countries.

A couple of examples will give you a flavour of the kind of Advocacy work that Progressio engages in:

It is involved in a campaign to end the exploitation of Haitian sugar-cane workers in the Dominican Republic (Echoes of the Slave Trade of 200 years ago).

Progressio is calling on the Zimbabwean government to compel employers to fulfil their legal requirements to make workplaces accessible to disabled people, etc.

Progressio together with its antecedents, is the most long-standing of the Christian Justice and

Peace agencies, and if you are looking for something to keep you up to date in this area, you could do a lot worse than chose it as your mentor.

The following is from the current issue of 'Interact', Progressio's quarterly magazine .

"Living simply so that others may simply live, can seem a trite thing to say, but it's easy to forget about the impact of our lives on the lives of others... To celebrate a document written 40 years ago, doesn't mean we are limited by it. Such an encyclical today would need to include references to inter-faith dialogue, environmental concerns, gender equality and HIV – all key issues for Progressio. But the underlying principle – concern for the fullness of life for the human person – is as crucial as ever. In too many places, people are seen only as economic units, passive recipients of decisions, with little or no control over many aspects of their lives. PROGRESS isn't about EARNING MORE or HAVING MORE, but BEING MORE." (capitals mine)

"The *LiveSimply* message taps into a growing realisation that our lifestyles in the global North cause many of the problems experienced by people in the global South.

Here in the North, we are now aware of the impact our energy use is having on climate. We are concerned how our food is grown, and where it comes from... The *LiveSimply* campaign gives an added focus to these concerns. If we have the luxury of making a choice to live simply, we should not be doing so to ease our consciences, but in order to make a difference. What we are doing is not just about us, it is really about others, especially the world's poor."

I give the 'end word' to St Ambrose, who wrote this in the second half of the 4th Century...

"You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor, but you are giving back what is theirs... You have been appropriating things that are meant for the common good of everyone."

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