

That You act Justly . . .

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Gloom-tinted Spectacles:

How do we see the world? If we live in the UK we might well believe the outlook is dark as clouds loom. 'The squeeze on people's spending money is at its worst level for 10 years, thanks to higher tax bills and the rising cost of essentials such as food, fuel and mortgages,' says The Times. 'Signs that the feel-good factor is on the wane' . . . 'a grim backdrop for the Prime Minister'. In view of all that it is just as well that we live in the 5th wealthiest country in the world. What would it be like if we were 159th in the wealth stakes? And if we came 5th in the Olympic medals table we would be saying 'Haven't we done well!' Yet when it comes to money we are more likely to lament what we have not got and can't afford than to see the value of what is in our hands. 'The river always wants more water', as a Congolese proverb says.

But a good Appetite:

Despite only being the 5th wealthiest nation, we are the 2nd greatest consumer of goods and natural materials. There are more mobile phones in the country (c. 70m) than there are people. It would require, apparently, 3.1 planet earths just to share our present lifestyle with the rest of the world population. While the current situation lasts we could be forgiven for seeing life through the traditional rose-tinted spectacles.

See and Act:

So does all this matter? And if so, what can/should we do about it? Just as we could not turn around a drifting super-tanker, we cannot as individuals envisage world consumption and development going into reverse just because we have seen some of the problems. But for people who want to change things there is always scope to do something, even if we have to work on the micro scale. It was Ghandi who said, "You have to be the change that you want to see in the world." We need to avoid unrealistically tinted views of any sort and practice looking at our situation in a clear and realistic fashion so that we can see the issues we can tackle and those that we can raise our voices about.

That involves, of course, being aware of the plight of those countries that languish well down the wealth list. Not long after the Lasallian Project groups returned from Ghana, Kenya and Uganda, disastrous floods hit parts of those countries and after the English summer of 2007 most of us could probably sympathise. But the real problem for those countries is that when the crops are destroyed and housing damaged, the people have no resources to fall back on whereas people here are at least able to find sufficient to start rebuilding their lives.

Nor can we afford to neglect a look at life in our own country and matters that concern us. The director of the charity Kids Company, based in south London, was quoted last month as 'worrying how to push the needs of thou-

sands of vulnerable children higher up the national agenda so that, as a society, we begin to take our moral responsibility for this wasted generation more seriously'. We are part of that society.



Start Here:

A favourite quotation of mine that applies very much to everyday life comes from Cardinal Hume and echoes the sentiment earlier expressed by Ghandi:

"The future of humanity does not depend on political reform, social revolution or scientific advance. Something else is needed. It starts with a true conversion of mind and heart." I think that without that continual effort to change ourselves we will fail even to see the issues at the heart of justice and peace.

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Pax Christi have announced the launch of the 2008 schools contest.

This year they will be working with Pax Christi France, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Italy.

The contest is open to 15-18 year olds, who need to work in teams of 4 to produce a 3 minute Power-Point presentation or digital video on the theme of Peace and Environment.

Entries need to reach the office by **31st Jan. 2008**.

More information from www.paxchristi.org