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**ACMICA GENERAL MEETING
Sat, June 7**

Notice is hereby given that:

The **General Meeting** of the Australian Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs will be held at:

**The University of Technology, Sydney
Room 2.4.10.**

on Saturday, 7 June 2003

General Meeting follows talk by our guest speaker, Fr Bruce Duncan CSCR

**2-3:30pm > Talk and discussion
3:30-4:30pm > General Meeting**

Business to be transacted include:

- > Consideration and approval of the annual report, financial report and strategic plan
- > Consideration and adoption of the National Constitution
- > Election of new committee

Nominations are now invited for the committee. Please send nominations to: peace@acmica.org or PO Box 306 Dulwich Hill NSW 2203. Only financial members are eligible to stand.

ACMICA membership form available at: <http://www.acmica.org/membership.pdf>

Please contact Minh Nguyen on 0403 181 586 or mnguyen@acmica.org for more information.

FR. BRUCE DUNCAN TO SPEAK IN SYDNEY

Fr. Bruce Duncan to speak in Sydney on the need for a new social engagement

By Fr Peter Maher

We are immersed in times of war and the aftermath of war, in times when our social fabric and social services are being eroded or attacked to the disadvantage of the most vulnerable, in times when profit is clearly winning over people and the ordinary person is experiencing fear and insecurity and hardly knows why.

In these times the role of lay Catholics has traditionally been to critique these trends and apply faith to the current cultural milieu. This process tries to bring about more hopeful and just outcomes for all and especially for the marginalised.

This tradition has been at the heart of Catholic Action for over 100 years in what Pope John XXIII called the three steps: observe, judge and act (*Mater et Magistra*, 236). He described the process as examining the situation, evaluating the problem carefully in the light of faith and deciding what can and should be done in order that traditional norms may be adapted to the circumstances of the time and place. This requires ongoing exploration and careful analysis in order to act with justice and compassion.

The Australian Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (ACMICA) is a newly formed movement of Catholic graduates that is affiliated with the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs, one of the two autonomous organisations of Pax Romana, which is a lay apostolate movement recognised by the Holy See. It is engaged in this process of reflection and action. While it is in the tradition of the Newman graduate societies, ACMICA is forging strong links with the Asia Pacific and the International Movement so that it can advocate for just action as a result of careful analysis and reflection as an International Catholic Non-Government Organisation. It also has strategies for members to reflect and act.

ACMICA will be formally constituted at its first General Meeting in Sydney at the University of Technology, Sydney on June 7 at 2pm with a talk by Fr Bruce Duncan CSSR. Fr Duncan coordinates the program of social justice studies at Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne. He is a regular contributor to the *Catholic Weekly* and is the author of *War on Iraq: Is it Just?* (ACSJ, March 2003). He will speak on the theme of "engagement and participation: the struggle for social transformation."

Fr Duncan has recently been assisting Catholics to apply Pope John XXIII's principles to the war in Iraq by looking at how to interpret our faith. He recently noted that Pope John Paul told military chaplains that the "vast contemporary movement in favour of peace" gave evidence that "war as an instrument for resolving conflicts" had been repudiated by the "conscience of the majority of humanity". ("Iraq: Church Must Speak Firmly, Clearly," *Catholic Weekly*, 20 April 2003, p.11)

It is with this kind of analysis that Catholics can better contribute to just social change in our world. How do we have an ongoing conversation that allows Catholic intellectuals, along with all of good will, to put into action their talents and gifts? It is this that Fr Duncan will address at the ACMICA meeting. Catholic graduates have been charged with this task by their faith and their education, so that the gospel can be put at the service of the poor, the dispossessed, the voiceless and the disempowered.

For full details of ACMICA membership and the AGM see the website: www.acmica.org or call Minh Nguyen on 0403 181 586.

CROSS CULTURAL STORIES IN A POST VATICAN II CHURCH REPORT BACK

By Jenni Whelan



Fr Froi building bridges
through music

A few weeks ago, at the invitation of ACMICA international guest Father Froi Rivera spoke with a group in Newtown. Fr Froi works with Bishop Labayan in Infanta diocese on Luzon, in the Northeastern part of the Philippines. They minister in a variety of ways to the materially poor both through formal programmes (such as reducing domestic violence, increasing the marketable skills of the women) and informally, by just being present to the people there (sharing a beer, playing soccer with the children).

The extraordinary thing about Fr Froi was not only what he does but the spirit in which he does it. His approach is a clear contrast to that of the traditional missionary. He sets himself the task, not to bring or present Christ to the people who he works with but to find Christ as He is already present there.

How does he do this and, more broadly, what relevance does his work have for us?

Firstly, he is incredibly aware of issues that are ever-present in the cross-cultural work that he does (and perhaps many of us also), such as perceived power imbalances and ignorance of the

cultural mores of others. This awareness of itself brings sensitivity to the needs of others and opportunities to equalise perceived imbalances or misunderstandings.

Secondly, while he speaks of community and finding Christ in the face of others, his actions ensure that he will do so. He encourages the building up of connections in the way that he leads discussions. He played guitar and led us in two songs (one of which was "Imagine"). Nothing breaks down barriers between people like bad karaoke. He also asked every participant in the group (amongst other things) their age. These were very subtle things which pushed people gently out of their comfort zone – perhaps making them a little more alert and receptive to his message. Notwithstanding that he speaks with gentleness and humour his message was honest and forthright. Fr Froi was asked what were his perceptions of Sydney. His first reply was that he was struck by our infrastructure; clean water, electricity, well-maintained roads – how much we all seem to take for granted.

As we ran out of question time in the group discussion I asked Fr Froi through Minh what it was that we, as affluent Christians, should do to assist the world's poorest people. He replied that our work must begin at home – not just through charity but through education and solidarity work. Some challenges for us, perhaps, are to work out how to be effective in education so that we are not simply preaching to the converted and to try to achieve a synthesis of message and method when building up solidarity.

While we work towards the bigger picture (of social change and redistribution of wealth) Fr Froi also set a challenge that we can try to achieve in the meantime in the circles within which we move every day – let us find Christ in the face of all that we meet and live our ordinary lives in an extraordinary way.

Jenni Whelan is a lawyer working in the field of human rights.

NEWS IN BRIEF –

ACMICA to present workshop at Faith in the Future Conference

Faith in the Future? Christianity Culture Crisis

This Conference will explore responses to the current horizon of political, environmental and social change that disrupts accepted pictures of the future and relate them to the resources of the Christian faith.

ACMICA committee members, Peter Maher and Minh Nguyen will present a workshop on the theme "**global crises: reading the world from two perspectives**". Peter will take a biblical and theological reading of the current world order while Minh will explore global changes from a Coxian understanding of civilisation. The workshop will be presented as a conversation between the presenters and the participations following brief inputs.

When: 23 (evening) - 24 May 2003

Venue: Dunmore Lang College, Macquarie University, 130 Herring Rd North Ryde.

Costs: Waged \$55, full time students \$35.

Speakers include: Fr Frank Brennan, Associate Director of Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre; Rev Dr Jione Havea is Lecturer in Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at the United Theological College; Professor Barry Leal Professor Emeritus, Macquarie University; Rev Dr Dorothy McRae-McMahon is an author, broadcaster and justice advocate; and Rev Dr Anita Monro is Lecturer at United Theological College Nth Parramatta.

Refreshments including lunch are provided. Conference sponsored by Uniting and Catholic Chaplains Macquarie University supported by Macquarie NAVS, CathSoc, UCATSA.

More info, registration: Tony Stuart, Ph 9850 7644, email: tstuart@laurel.ocs.mq.edu.au, or visit: www.mq.edu.au/chaplaincy/faith

Draft National Constitution

The committee is currently drafting the Constitution for ACMICA and this year's Strategic Plan. We are requesting your input from now until the general meeting. Draft copies will be distributed for exposure prior to the general meeting.

ACMICA membership

Don't forget you can still sign up for this year's membership. Membership cost \$60 for organisations, \$50 for families, and \$30/\$15conc for individuals. Please note only financial members will have full voting rights at the upcoming general meeting.

Download membership form from our website <http://www.acmica.org/membership.pdf> or email us and we'll forward it to you: peace@acmica.org.