

TRUTH & PEACE

A GOSPEL WORD IN A VIOLENT WORLD

SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2024-2025



One Page Summary

The Australian Bishops Conference's social justice statement for 2024-2025, "Truth and Peace: A Gospel Word in a Violent World," addresses the urgent need for peace from a Gospel perspective. This document highlights the alarming levels of global and local violence, noting that the 20th century was the most violent in history, and the early 21st century continues to see numerous conflicts. In 2022, there were 55 state-based conflicts and 82 non-state conflicts affecting two billion people worldwide. Specific conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Myanmar's military coup, the persecution of Rohingya people, the crackdown on pro-democracy movements in Hong Kong, and ongoing violence in West Papua and Papua New Guinea, underscore the pervasive nature of violence and its devastating impacts.

The document discusses the erosion of truth in public life, emphasizing the rise of a post-truth culture where facts are frequently contested and falsified. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by new technologies and social media platforms that rapidly disseminate fake news and conspiracy theories, leading to widespread misinformation.

In a post-truth world, the distinction between truth and lies blurs, leading to a crisis of truth and trust. Without a shared understanding of basic facts, civil society and the rule of law are undermined, making informed democratic debate and accountability difficult. This environment allows for the rise of populism and extremism, where grievances are inflamed and followers are mobilized through disinformation. Authoritarian regimes exploit democratic processes to subvert democracy, further destabilizing societies.

Catholics are called to be active peacemakers by embracing a culture of encounter and dialogue, inspired by Jesus Christ, who is presented as the ultimate source of peace and truth. The document underscores the responsibility of Catholics to collaborate with all people of goodwill to build genuine peace based on truth and trust. Practical suggestions for promoting peace include building relationships with those affected by violence, supporting local peace initiatives, and engaging in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue. Community involvement and collective action are stressed as crucial in the pursuit of peace.

Theologically, the document positions Jesus as the embodiment of God's truth and peace, emphasizing that the fullness of peace is a divine gift requiring human cooperation. Believers are encouraged to trust in the power of the crucified and risen Christ, viewing peace as both a divine gift and a human task. It suggests that peace can be achieved through the proactive efforts of individuals and communities, guided by the principles of the Gospel.

"Truth and Peace: A Gospel Word in a Violent World" is a comprehensive call to action for Catholics and all people of goodwill to engage in peacebuilding through truth-telling, dialogue, and practical initiatives. It frames peace as a realistic and attainable goal, grounded in the teachings of the Gospel and the example of Jesus Christ. By addressing both global and local conflicts, the statement encourages a collective effort towards a peaceful world, rooted in the values espoused by the Catholic faith.