

ADVENT 2010

Reflections on our world through the eyes of children

Keeping alive a major theme of the XXI General Chapter



Message of THANKS to all those who contributed to this year's booklet

Based on the theme of last year's General Chapter, we contacted a number of people from several countries to ask for some reflections from children. We asked the children to tell us what are some of their concerns about the world around us and what are their hopes for the future.

We are grateful to the many children who responded to our request. We received many more reflections than those in this booklet – so thanks to all those who participated!

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“Seeing the World through the Eyes of a Poor Child”
[Superior General: Opening Address of the XXI General Chapter, 7 Sept 2009]



Telling their Story

Transforming Our Hearts

Changing Their Lives

The Season of Advent

Anticipation and Hope

Dennis Bratcher

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most Churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve (Dec 24). If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown.

The Colors of Advent

Historically, the primary sanctuary color of Advent is **Purple**. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion. The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, of the "Word made flesh" and dwelling among us is to reveal God and His grace to the world through Jesus' life and teaching, but also through his suffering, death, and resurrection. To reflect this emphasis, originally Advent was a time of penitence and fasting, much as the Season of Lent and so shared the color of Lent.

In the four weeks of Advent the third Sunday came to be a time of rejoicing that the fasting was almost over. The shift from the purple of the Season to pink or rose for the third Sunday Advent candles reflected this lessening emphasis on penitence, as attention turned more to celebration of the season.

In recent times, however, Advent has undergone a shift in emphasis, reflected in a change of colors used in many churches. Except in the Eastern Churches, the penitential aspect of the Season has been almost totally replaced by an emphasis on hope and anticipation.

This does not eliminate any sense of penitence from the Season. With the focus on the Advent or Coming of Jesus, especially in anticipating His Second Advent, there remains a need for preparation for that coming. Most liturgical Churches incorporate confessional prayers into the services of Advent that relate to a sense of unworthiness as we anticipate His Coming. It is appropriate

even in more traditional services of worship to incorporate confessional prayers as part of the anticipation and preparation of the Season.

Red and Green are more secular colors of Christmas. Although they derive from older European practices of using evergreens and holly to symbolize ongoing life and hope that Christ's birth brings into a cold world, they are never used as liturgical colors during Advent since those colors have other uses in other parts of the Church year.

Evergreens and The Advent Wreath

The beginning of Advent is a time for the [hanging of the green](#), decoration of the church with evergreen wreaths, boughs, or trees that help to symbolize the new and everlasting life brought through Jesus the Christ. Some churches have a special weekday service, or the first Sunday evening of Advent, or even the first Sunday morning of Advent, in which the church is decorated and the Advent wreath put in place. This service is most often primarily of music, especially choir and hand bells, and Scripture reading, along with an explanation of the various symbols as they are placed in the sanctuary.

The Advent wreath is an increasingly popular symbol of the beginning of the Church year in many churches as well as homes. It is a circular evergreen wreath (real or artificial) with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the center.



Since the wreath is symbolic and a vehicle to tell the Christmas story, there are various ways to understand the symbolism. The exact meaning given to the various aspects of the wreath is not as important as the story to which it invites us to listen, and participate.

Small Things and Possibility: An Advent Reflection

We live in a world in which bigger and better define our expectations for much of life. We have become so enamored by super size, super stars, and high definition that we tend to view life through a lens that so magnifies what we expect out of the world that we tend not to see potential in small things. But as the prophet Zechariah reminds us (Zech 4:10), we should not "despise the day of small things," because God does some of his best work with small beginnings and impossible situations.

It is truly a humbling experience to read back through the Old Testament and see how frail and imperfect all the "heroes" actually are. Abraham, the coward who cannot believe the promise. Jacob, the cheat who struggles with

everybody. Joseph, the immature and arrogant teen. Moses, the impatient murderer who cannot wait for God. Gideon, the cowardly Baal-worshipper. Samson, the womanizing drunk. David, the power abusing adulterer. Solomon, the unwise wise man. Hezekiah, the reforming king who could not quite go far enough. And finally, a very young Jewish girl from a small village in a remote corner of a great empire.

It never ceases to amaze me that God often begins with small things and inadequate people. It certainly seems that God could have chosen "bigger" things and "better" people to do His work in the world. Yet if God can use them, and reveal Himself through them in such marvelous ways, it means that He might be able to use me, inadequate, and unwise, and too often lacking in faith that I am. And it means that I need to be careful that I do not in my own self-righteousness put limits on what God can do with the smallest things, the most unlikely of people, in the most hopeless of circumstances. I think that is part of the wonder of the Advent Season.

I am convinced that one of the main purposes of the incarnation of Jesus was to provide hope. While most people today want to talk about the death of Jesus and the Atonement of sins, the early Church celebrated the Resurrection and the hope it embodied. It was a proclamation of a truth that rang throughout the Old Testament, that endings are not always endings but are opportunities for God to bring new beginnings. The Resurrection proclaimed that truth even about humanity's greatest fear, death itself.

Both the season of Advent and the [season of Lent](#) are about hope. It is not just hope for a better day or hope for the lessening of pain and suffering, although that is certainly a significant part of it. It is more about hope that human existence has meaning and possibility beyond our present experiences, a hope that the limits of our lives are not nearly as narrow as we experience them to be. It is not that **we** have possibility in ourselves, but that **God** is a God of new things and so all things are possible (Isa 42:9, Mt 19:26, Mk 14:36)

God's people in the first century wanted Him to come and change their oppressive circumstances, and were angry when those immediate circumstances did not change. But that is a short sighted view of the nature of hope. Our hope cannot be in circumstances, no matter how badly we want them or how important they are to us. The reality of human existence, with which the Book of Job struggles, is that God's people experience that physical existence in the same way that others do. Christians get sick and die, Christians

are victims of violent crimes, and Christians are hurt and killed in traffic accidents, bombings, war, and in some parts of the world, famine.

If our hope is only in our circumstances, as we define them to be good or as we want them to be to make us happy, we will always be disappointed. That is why we hope, not in circumstances, but in God. He has continually, over the span of four thousand years, revealed himself to be a God of newness, of possibility, of redemption, the recovery or transformation of possibility from endings that goes beyond what we can think or even imagine (Eph 3:2). The best example of that is the crucifixion itself, followed by the resurrection. That shadow of the cross falls even over the manger.

Yet, it all begins in the hope that God will come and come again into our world to reveal himself as a God of newness, of possibility, a God of new things. This time of year we contemplate that hope embodied, enfleshed, incarnated, in a newborn baby, the perfect example of newness, potential, and possibility. During Advent, we groan and long for that newness with the hope, the expectation, indeed the faith, that God will once again be faithful to see our circumstances, to hear our cries, to know our longings for a better world and a whole life (Ex 3:7). And we hope that as he first came as an infant, so he will come again as King!

My experience tells me that those who have suffered and still hope understand far more about God and about life than those who have not. Maybe that is what hope is about: a way to live, not just to survive, but to live authentically amidst all the problems of life with a Faith that continues to see possibility when there is no present evidence of it, just because God is God. That is also the wonder of Advent.



ADVENT PRAYER

We believe that the Son of God once came to us;
We look for Him to come again.
May His coming bring us the light of His holiness
And free us with His blessing.

R. Amen!

May God make us steadfast in faith,
Joyful in hope, and untiring in love
All the days of our lives.

R. Amen!

We rejoice that our Redeemer
Came to live with us, the same as us.
When He comes again in glory,
May He reward us with endless life.

R. Amen!

May almighty God bless us,
The Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen!

28 November 2010

Sunday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44

“Stop polluting the environment now ...”



*JP Avau - Aged 12
Samoa*

God created the world and he made it beautiful. He also made the colourful trees, the blue skies, shining stars at night and the sun which rises in the morning. He made everything around us beautiful so we can enjoy life. So my advice to everyone, “Stop polluting the environment now, and plant more trees to get oxygen, because if there are no more trees, there will be no more oxygen and we will die. We have to keep our environments clean.” For example, the mangroves is where the marine animals live and get their food from and in our country. Fish is one of our favourite foods which can be cooked in so many ways. Therefore, if we pollute and damage their breeding and shelter areas, the population of the fish will decrease and we will have less fish to eat. In our country one of the main sources of income is tourism. The tourists are encouraged to come because of how beautiful our country is and most of all because of its cleanliness. So keep our country clean and beautiful.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (Synthesis)

Article 1: Definition of a child

A child is recognized as a person under 18, unless national laws recognize the age of majority earlier.

29 November 2010

Monday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 4:2-6
Matthew 8:5-11

“In order to live in peace today’s world needs to know the Word of God.”



In general I see the world as a simple space where human beings live. And so I can assert that the world does not develop by itself, but that it is being developed by us. Unfortunately the truth is that the opportunities that the world offers are very far away from the reality of the world in the 18th century, when opportunities were given according to human possibilities. It is different today: opportunities are given to the degree that one is knowledgeable in technology and global advancement. In order to live in peace today’s world needs to know the Word of God. Many people do not carry God in their hearts and do evil. If they were to have God in their hearts, everything would be better. People change the world!

*Mônica Maria - Aged 17
Brazil*

Article 2: Non-discrimination

All children have rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, whether they are a boy or girl, what their culture is, whether they have a disability, whether they are rich or poor or the type of family they come from.

Article 3: Best interests of the child

All organizations concerned with children should work toward what is best for each child. States (*referring to countries which have signed and ratified the CRC*) shall provide the child with adequate care when parents, or others charged with that responsibility, fail to do so.

30 November 2010

Tuesday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10
Luke 10:21-24

“There are people from all social classes, but if we all work together, we can make this world a better place.”



I see the world from many angles. From the point of view of our society, it can be a happy world, a place where life is easy, and people work to achieve that. It can also be an unjust world, where there is a lack of trust, with a large spread between the rich and the poor. A sad world, with so many conflicts and wars. An invisible, egotistical world, where the inhabitants struggle to survive, but only fight for themselves, not for those in need around them. In summary, it is a world of “pros and cons”. I must also say that on the positive side the good-hearted contribute their grain of sand to the world solidarity. There are people from all social classes, but if we all work together, we can make this world a better place.

*Gemma – Aged 14
Catalunya, Spain*

Article 4: Rights in practice

States have a responsibility to implement the rights contained in the Convention.

Article 5: Parental guidance and the child’s growing abilities

States should respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and extended family to provide guidance for children so that as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly.

1 December 2010

Wednesday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10a
Matthew 15:29-37

"I can feel selfishness building up around me."



I believe the world is suffering from our mistreatment of the planet we live on. People are intoxicating our environment with harmful poisons and chemicals with no penalties, people are under huge amounts of pressure to minimize green house gases and protect our ozone layer so our future generations can enjoy a healthy lifestyle for many years to come but I see no changes being made. I think our world has already suffered too much and we are pushing it to the limits, it has to stop.

People have many issues of their own these days. I can feel selfishness building up around me, everyone is living a stressful lifestyle, violence in our society is horrific, children do not feel safe anymore. How can it be that I am living here in Australia with more food than I could ever ask for when there are children in other parts of the world living in poverty with absolutely nothing... something needs to be done for these children.

*Brianna – Aged 15
Australia*

Article 6: Right to life, survival, and development

Every child has the inherent right to life. States have the obligation to ensure the child's survival and development.

December 2010

Thursday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 26:1-6
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

“Love without borders”



For me, the vision of a new world means a world where war is declared not against another human being, but against hunger, poverty, corruption and ignorance.

A new world is what is built thanks to anonymous heroes who struggle day by day despite rain, fatigue or cold and help others no matter their social standing or race; and don't have automatic weapons or bombs but a LOVE WITHOUT BORDERS.

*Víctor Hugo – Aged 13
Paraguay*

Article 7: Name and nationality

All children have a right to a legally registered name immediately after birth. The child also has a right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, know his or her parents and be cared for by them.

Article 8: Identity

The State has an obligation to respect a child's identity, nationality, and family ties.

3 December 2010

Friday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 29:17-24
Matthew 9:27-31

"I'm lucky I have what I have."



My life is the best. I'm lucky I have what I have. Unfortunately some people don't have all the advantages I have. Sometimes I see beggars with their children on the street or on television. Sometimes I wonder why their lives let them be there. Other times I see rich families fight over what they have and be ashamed of how lucky they are. I hope that the children of the world know not to be ashamed of what they have but to know how special they are and choose to make the best of life.

*Melini - Aged 11
Fiji*

Article 9: Separation from parents

The child has a right to live with his or her parents, unless it is deemed to be incompatible with the child's best interests. Children have a right to maintain contact with both parents if separated from one or both parents.

4 December 2010

Saturday, First Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 6-8

*"Overall the world can
be a wonderful place
but ..."*



Overall the world can be a wonderful place but people are becoming greedy and it seems easy for countries to abuse the earth's natural resources. For example America accounts for 4.5% of the world's population but uses 30% of the world's resources. We are not being sustainable and future generations will suffer from it. I hope that countries can work together to work towards world peace.

*George – Aged 17
Papua New Guinea*

Article 10: Family reunification

Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between countries so that parents and children can stay in contact or get back together again as a family.

5 December 2010

Sunday, Second Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10
Romans 15:4-9
Matthew 3:1-12

“In my romantic world I want to be a helpful girl to people who need help from me.”



At my home there is a romantic world, good behaviour and good manners. I need this kind of world in my whole heart. Interesting, this is my life because I want to be a Christian girl. In my house I dress like a real girl, like others. In my romantic world I want to be a helpful girl to people who need help from me. Having this world in my heart it makes me see the world and makes me a golden one in front of My Lord.

*Tunuataake - Aged 12
Kiribati*

Article 11: Transfer and non-return

The State should take steps to prevent kidnapping or the illegal retention of children abroad by a parent or third party.

6 December 2010

Monday, Second Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 35:1-10
Luke 5:17-26

"We can be the difference that this world needs."



In my eyes, I see the world as an opportunity. We all have the chance to be whatever we want to be. We can change what we see, to what we want to see. We can be the difference that this world needs. We have the ability to make the change, whether we use this for good or bad is the question. But, we all know that this world needs a change. We can help others and be the compassionate friend, instead of the hateful enemy.

My only hope for now is to be the best I can be. I don't compare myself to anybody else because God made me who I am, not to be anybody else. My hopes for the future are to succeed in making a difference. How I do this, I am not 100% sure, but I know that I was made to make a change.

*Imogen - Aged 15
Australia*

Article 12: The child's opinion

The child has a right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into consideration in matters or procedures affecting the child.

7 December 2010

Tuesday, Second Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11
Matthew 18:12-14

*“... how important it is to take care
of the earth ...”*



I see a wonderful world around me; forests, rivers, lakes, wild animals. It is a place where people from around the world come to visit and see the things that we have here in Cambodia. This is good because it makes money for the country.

But for how long will we have all these things if we continue to treat the environment carelessly. We are clearing our beautiful forests and spoiling our rivers and the local people are suffering while we build nice hotels for the tourists.

So I wish for the future that people everywhere will understand how important it is to take care of the earth so that I and my friends can continue to enjoy clean water, fresh air and my family can grow the food we need to improve our life.

*Yorn - Aged 17
Cambodia*

Article 13: Freedom of expression

The child has a right to express his or her views, obtain information, and share information and ideas, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.

8 December 2010

Wednesday, Immaculate Conception (Solemnity)

Readings: Genesis 3:9-15, 20
Ephesians 1:3-6,11-12
Luke 1:26-38

*“Today we contemplate
the humble girl of
Nazareth ...”*



Tiepolo's Immaculate
Conception

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a feast very dear to the Christian people. It fits in well with the Advent season and radiates the purest light on our spiritual journey to Christmas. Today we contemplate the humble girl of Nazareth who, by an extraordinary and ineffable privilege, was preserved from the contagion of original sin and from every fault, so that she could be a worthy dwelling-place for the Incarnate Word. In Mary, the New Eve, Mother of the New Adam, the Father's original, wondrous plan of love was re-established in an even more wondrous way. Therefore the Church gratefully acclaim: Through you, immaculate Virgin, the life we had lost was returned to us. You received a child from heaven, and brought forth to the world a Saviour.

John Paul II, 2000

Article 14: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The national government shall respect the child's right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, subject to appropriate parental guidance, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights.

9 December 2010

Thursday, Second Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 41:13-20
Matthew 11:11-15

"I see the world as place where people keep on trying hard with what they do."



I see the world as place where people keep on trying hard with what they do. The world is a happy and caring place where people sometimes look out for each other.

My hope for now is to try my hardest and learn from other people. My hopes for the future are to have a great job that serves others. What is funny about doing this is that you never really know what your future is. You can only dream about it.

*Ella - Aged 8
Australia*

Article 15: Freedom of association

Children have a right to meet with others and to join or form associations.

Article 16: Protection of privacy

Children have a right to protection from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence, and from libel or slander.

10 December 2010

Friday, Second Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 48:17-19
Matthew 11:16-19

"I have the hope that one day, all human beings will work together."



I see the world affected by pollution, which is caused by emissions from vehicles and large factories, the pollution of the tropical forests, and the seas, rivers, oceans, which are very important, because without water, life cannot exist.

Also the burning down of forests and the felling of trees affects all animals, plants and human beings.

I have the hope that one day, all human beings will work together, united, to save the environment and achieve a better world. I see the world affected by pollution, which is caused by emissions from vehicles and large factories, the pollution of the tropical forests, and the seas, rivers, oceans, which are very important, because without water, life cannot exist.

*Ismael – Aged 9
Chile*

Article 17: Access to appropriate information

The national government shall ensure the accessibility to children of information that is important to their well-being from radio, newspapers, books, computers and other sources and take steps to protect children from harmful materials.



11 December 2010

Saturday, Second Week of Advent

Readings: Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 40:25-31
Matthew 11:28-30

*"In this world, a child is
like a little ant."*



In this world, a child is like a little ant. There are so many in the world but most of them think the same way: they want peace for the world, they don't want any of their family members or anyone else to die; they dream every night when they go to bed, cover themselves with a blanket, take their action toy or their plush doll, and they dream, they dream about what they'll be when they grow up, about what they will do, they think of all those people they might take care of or help; they dream about being doctors, and how many lives they might save, about being police officers and how many people they might detain so they don't commit crimes and they dream, and dream, and dream about having the best for everyone, because they still live in the world of "Peter Pan", but soon enough they will grow up, and without realizing it, they will leave behind that world of childhood, and yes, some will fulfil their dream, the dream they had when they were little, but some will become selfish adults, of which there are so many in this world, but there will always be little ants, who continue dreaming and who will help build a better world.

*Anna – Aged 14
Catalunya, Spain*

Article 18: Parental responsibility

Parents have joint primary responsibility for raising the child and the State shall support them in this regard.

12 December 2010

Sunday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 35:1-6, 10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11



I feel the earth is under great threat with the heavy pollution of the air around us. At the same time natural resources are being depleted causing the changes in the weather so that we do not harvest as much food crops as before. This causes people to in live in hunger and famine. In education the number of students is increasing faster than the number of teachers causing the teacher pupil ratio to go up. Unemployment too is growing higher.

*Joel – Aged 11
Malawi*

I feel there is unequal distribution of the earth's wealth. There are people that have more than what they need while others live is desperate poverty. This is true even in term of the basic needs of food, shelter, clothing and education facilities.

*Yankho – Aged 10
Malawi*



Article 19: Protection from abuse and neglect

State parties shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims.

13 December 2010

Monday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Numbers 24:2-7a, 15-17a
Matthew 21:23-27

“Many people probably know that there are also many families and children begging in the streets ...”



The truth is I do not see the world as being in very good shape: I see it as uncared for, because everyone must know that there are many wars, abuses, kidnappings, trafficking in not only drugs but also in children, young people, women, etc.

Neither do I see the environment in very good shape: it is very polluted, hardly anyone cares about it, including myself. Most people probably know that there are also many families and children begging in the streets, or homeless orphan children. But, more children do have an adequate diet and a home where they can live and study.

Summing up, I wish the world would have “LOVE AND PEACE”; then I would be content, with a world of liberty, security and optimism, where no one would be deprived of what they need. May there be no more discrimination and inequality.

Changing the world depends on all of us.

*Liz Andrea – Aged 13
Paraguay*

Article 20: Protection of a child without a family

Children have the right to special care and help if they cannot live with their families. Those who look after these children, including institutions and other families, must respect the child’s religion, culture, and language.

14 December 2010

Tuesday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Zephaniah 3:1-2,9-13
Matthew 21:28-32

"All I want is that people should have a heart and show to the world how much they care."



I see the world where people suffer. All I want is that people should have a heart and show to the world how much they care. I want this world to change; we are the ones to make it change, to show how much we care about other people, our world. All we have to do is to help those in need, and our world will be a better place.

*Mametaaki - Aged 17
Kiribati*

Article 21: Adoption

In countries where adoption is recognized and/or allowed, it shall only be carried out in the best interests of the child, and then only with the authorization of competent authorities, and safeguards for the child.

Article 22: Refugee children

Special protection shall be granted to a refugee child or to a child seeking refugee status. It is the State's obligation to cooperate with competent organizations which provide such protection and assistance.

Article 23: Disabled children

A disabled child has the right to special care, education and training to help him or her enjoy a full and decent life in dignity and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration as possible.

15 December 2010

Wednesday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25
Luke 7:18b-23

“Our life is under threat with diseases like HIV and AIDS, measles and TB ...”



Our life is under threat with diseases like HIV and AIDS, measles and TB that are out of controls and killing many people. The population growth too is leading people into wanton cutting of trees for fuel charcoal leaving the forest bare thus leading to soil erosion. This makes us wonder how the future generations will survive.

We also feel that the levels of unemployment discourage those of us in schools. We feel there is no need for education since we may not even find employment after school.

What gives us hope is the free primary school and the dedication of the teachers in our schools.

*James – Aged 15
and William – Aged 13
Malawi*

Article 24: Health and health services

Children have the right to the highest standard of health and medical care attainable. Governments shall place special emphasis on the provision of primary and preventative health care, public health education and the reduction of child mortality.

16 December 2010

Thursday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 54:1-10
Luke 7:24-30

“For me, the world is amazing in every sense of the word.”



*Diana María – Aged 14
Chile*

For me, the world is amazing in every sense of the word. In the world we can see the Creator and all his works of art, and what better work of art than ourselves, the human being, the only being with the ability to reason, but... such reasoning, do we know how to use it?

We want larger houses, but smaller families. There are more and more professionals but also more problems. We can construct great buildings, but we don't build homes, and it is in the home that everything begins.

But not everything is as I have stated: there are also marvellous things such as nature, a diversity of thoughts and understanding, the power of the human mind, the desire to learn and share, living out values and feeling proud of one's accomplishments.

After all of this I want to say: *Smile! Share in community!* To show how we appreciate everything we have, especially our loved ones, let us thank all those who make our world possible, and above all else, let us thank God.

Article 25: Periodic review of placement

A child who is placed by the State for reasons of care, protection or treatment in an institution or in foster care is entitled to have that placement evaluated regularly.

Article 26: Social security

The child has the right to benefit from social security including social insurance.

17 December 2010

Friday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Genesis 49:2, 8-10
Matthew 1:1-17



"I see the world as an adventure."

I see the world as an adventure. I would like all the boys and girls to have a school so they can learn to read and write, to add and subtract..., and a family and home. That people would help each other and love one another and care for the environment. We should follow the path that Jesus followed in order to be able to build the Kingdom of God here on Earth.

*Olga – Aged 9
Catalunya, Spain*



"We should invest in improving things..."

The world is not experiencing its best moment. I see it polluted because of factories; there is the crisis of global warming; we waste paper and cardboard. We do not recycle or reuse, and we don't respect others, neither is Earth the same for everyone. We should invest in improving things, in not polluting, so that our children might enjoy the world.

*Martí – Aged 10
Catalunya, Spain*

Article 27: Standard of living

Every child has a right to a standard of living adequate to his or her physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that a child has an adequate standard of living and governments should assist parents in this regard.

18 December 2010

Saturday, Third Week of Advent

Readings: Jeremiah 23:5-8
Matthew 1:18-25

*“Our teachers’ dedication
gives us hope ...”*



Our concerns: The change of the weather - that there is less rain and at times unpredictable affecting the growing of the food crops. The teachers at times do not teach well some subjects like environmental and social studies for us to understand the environment better.

What gives us hope is the efforts of the elders and the government to ensure that our education is ensured by building more secondary schools and giving some equipment - this is true for Malawi and seems to be the same in other countries. Our teachers’ dedication gives us hope that we shall have good education.



*Stonly - Aged 13
and Katte - Aged 12
Malawi*

Article 28: Education

Children have the right to an education. It is the State’s duty to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, that different forms of secondary education are accessible to every child, and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capability. Discipline in schools should respect children’s human dignity. The State shall engage in international co-operation to implement this right.

19 December 2010

Sunday, Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 7:10-14
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-24

*"I see the world as a sick person
who needs help."*



I see the world as a sick person who needs help. What we see most in the news are the consequences of global warming, people who suffer all kinds of violence, injustice, corruption among politicians, cruel murders... I know there are many people who do good; this is what makes me believe that all the world's problems can be solved. There are institutions and groups that promote peace, that attempt in some way to lessen the problems of humanity, so that the way many people live can change. It is enough that each one do what he or she can to cure this world."

*Douglas Vinícius – Aged 17
Brazil*

Article 29: Aims of education

Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. Education shall prepare the child for an active adult life in a free society and foster respect for the child's parents, his or her cultural identity, language and values, and for the cultural background and values of others.

20 December 2010

Monday, Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Isaiah 7:10-14
Luke 1:26-38

*“Our waterways are full
of rubbish and our lakes
are drying up.”*



Join together to protect nature

In our world today we see that nature is suffering. Our waterways are full of rubbish and our lakes are drying up. Wild animals are disappearing from our forests, our forests areas are getting smaller. The way people mine for minerals does not care for the environment. Greedy people are using our forests for timber without thinking about the future.

Farmers are suffering because the timing of the rainy season is changing or the rains do not come at all. Most of the people of Cambodia live in the rural areas and work on their small piece of land to produce enough food to support their family. When things go wrong on the farm the whole family suffers.

I want all the people of the world, not just in Cambodia to think about the future and how we can help our environment through good policies.

*Merk – Aged 15
Cambodia*

Article 30: Children of minorities or indigenous populations

Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language.

Article 31: Leisure, recreation, and cultural activities

The child has the right to leisure, play, and participation in cultural and artistic activities.

21 December 2010

Tuesday, Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Canticles 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Luke 1:39-45

"I think the human ability to always look up and see the silver lining behind even the darkest clouds is amazing!"



In today's day and age I think the world can be a fairly crazy place! An average person has so many pressures in their life Long work hours, education, family pressures and many more things; I feel these factors influence our lives in a significant way!

I think the human ability to always look up and see the silver lining behind even the darkest clouds is amazing! Even though we have all these pressures on our personal and professional lives we are still willing to help the needy and be there for our friends and loved ones!

I think the world is going through some unprecedented tough times with the economy, environment and natural disasters at the moment but I feel we have the unique gift in our beautiful world; to power through and come out better than ever, but I know we will be strong throughout these extremely tough times! And we will come out of them better than ever with added knowledge and faith!

*David - Aged 16
Australia*

Article 32: Child labour

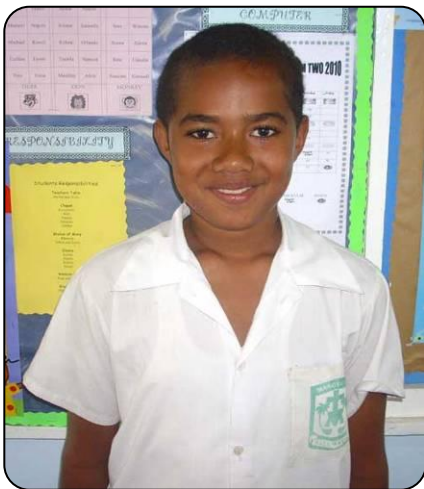
The child has a right to be protected from work that threatens his or her health, education or development. The State shall set minimum ages for employment and regulate working conditions.

22 December 2010

Wednesday, Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: 1 Samuel 1:24-28
Luke 1:46-56

“Children have been suffering bad things ...”



I am very sad about my country. Children these days have been changing cultures and religions. Children have been suffering bad things such as rape and child abuse. Some girls have been selling their bodies to men, and some girls should be aware of that. And it's not only girls, boys too. We should protect our body and don't use it anyhow. We should be very concerned about this because this is really happening in Fiji.

*Leone Joseph - Aged 11
Fiji*

Article 33: Drug abuse

Children have the right to be protected from harmful drugs and from being involved in their production and distribution.

Article 34: Sexual exploitation

The State shall protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography.

Article 35: Sale, trafficking and abduction

It is the State's obligation to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children.

Article 36: Other forms of exploitation

The child has the right to protection from all forms of exploitation which could harm his or her welfare and development.

23 December 2010

Thursday, Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24
Luke 1:57-66

“Parents don’t think that children can help the development of the country.”



By observing what some of the children are doing today I doubt where their future will end up. They are sent to sell matches, glue, chips, necklaces and other things but are not going to school. Parents don’t think that children can help the development of the country. The government must be strict to the law of sending all children from the age of 5 to 14 to school. Education must be compulsory as the government now is paying school fees and stationery.

*Justin - Aged 11
Samoa*

Article 37: Torture and deprivation of liberty

No child shall be subject to torture, cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest or deprived of liberty. Both capital punishment and life imprisonment without the possibility of release are prohibited for offenses committed by persons below 18 years. Any child deprived of liberty shall be treated with respect and in a manner which takes into account the needs of a person of that age. A child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the best interest not to do so. A child who is detained shall have legal and other assistance as well as contact with the family.

Article 38: Armed conflict

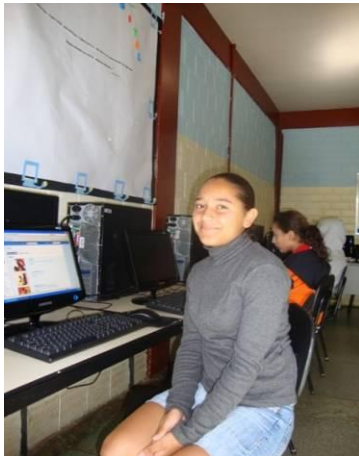
State parties should take steps to ensure that children under 15 years of age have no direct part in hostilities. No child below 15 shall be recruited into the armed forces. Children in war zones should receive special protection.

24 December 2010

Friday, Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-11, 16
Luke 1:67-79

“It is time for us to love one another, to be in solidarity, not only economically, but with words, love and attention, and giving good advice.”



For me Christmas is a very special day, since it is the birthday of Jesus and Advent is a time of awaiting his birth. We should prepare ourselves to forget the past and to live a new life, to begin again, to help others, to understand them. It is time for us to love one another, to be in solidarity, not only economically, but with words, love and attention, and giving good advice. Christmas for me is very special because it is the time when I forget what I did wrong, and begin again a new life. Sometimes at Christmas there is a party at my house, but usually it is just a normal day because my family is not in a position to exchange gift or to eat well. Despite this it is a happy day, because Jesus came into the world to give joy to our hearts.

*Alessandra - Aged 15
Brazil*

A few weeks after having written these words, young Alejandra was hit by a car and died. Let us pray that she is living an eternal Christmas with God and our Good Mother.

Article 39: Rehabilitative care

The State has an obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflict, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration.

25 December 2010

Saturday, Christmas Day

(Midnight Mass)

Readings: Isaiah 9:1-6
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-14

*"I believe I can help
save the world..."*



I dream of a better world where we are all equal, no matter our race, our religion or our way of thinking. Today's world is very violent. I would like it to not be that way. I would also like to see our rights respected so that we might live in a world free of corruption.

I hope some day to be able to say, *"There is no more war"*; it might be only for a time, but I will say it. I wish there would be no more poverty and that people would be more concerned with the environment.

I believe I can help save the world, at least doing what is within my reach to lessen pollution and save the trees so that in the future my children can enjoy them; even if it's only a little, I will do it.

*Elida – Aged 15
Colombia*

Article 40: Children in conflict with the law

A child in conflict with the law has a right to treatment which promotes the child's sense of dignity and worth, takes the child's age into account and aims at his or her reintegration into society. The child is entitled to basic guarantees as well as legal or other assistance for his or her defence. Judicial proceedings and institutional placement shall be avoided whenever possible.

Article 41: Respect for higher standards

If the laws in a particular country provide better protection for children than the articles in this Convention, then those laws should apply.

THERE IS NOTHING SO LOVABLE AS A CHILD

St Marcellin Champagnat

Father Champagnat joined with the community in adoring the divine Child lying in the crib: “There is nothing so lovable as a child; his innocence, his simplicity, his gentleness, his caresses and even his weakness are capable of touching and winning the hardest and cruellest of hearts. How, then, can we not help loving Jesus, who became a child to stimulate our confidence, to demonstrate the excess of his love and to let us see that he can refuse us nothing? No-one is easier to get on with and more pliant than a child; he gives all, he pardons all, he forgets all; the merest trifle delights him, calms him and fills him with happiness; in his heart is neither guile nor rancour, for he is all tenderness, all sweetness”.

Life of Joseph Benedict Marcellin Champagnat, Bicentenary Edition, page 321

**The Lord has sent me to bring good news to the poor.
Christmas is the feast of the poor— a very poor feast,
the birth of a child who was rejected by everyone.
And the first to come to the crib were simple people – shepherds, poor
people.
They were the first to hear the good news and to be told:
‘Today the Saviour is born for you.’**

Jean Vanier

(Founder of the “L’Arche” Centre for the Handicapped, b. 1929)



The Shepherds, He Qi, China

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The full version of the CRC in several languages can be found on the following website:

http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/rights/explore_2781.html

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

from the FMSI Team



