



Supporting your work for Justice and Peace with young people

Introduction

Welcome to the fifth edition of the imaginatively titled 'BOVA'd?'. This newsletter is produced by Bosco Volunteer Action, the Salesians of Don Bosco's overseas volunteering organisation in the UK. It aims to encourage and support instances of development education within youth work; raising awareness of problems confronting developing countries and presenting actions which can be taken. Sent out 6 times per year and then available from www.boscovolunteeraction.co.uk, 'BOVA'd?' brings together information, links and resources relevant to justice and peace issues from a large number of charities and campaign groups. In time it is hoped that it will also include materials sent in by those on the mailing list.

An explanation of the format:

Section	Explanation	In this edition
Hints and tips	Suggestions of best practice in development education	Justice and peace and young people
Focus	Drawing your attention to useful resources available on the web	Using the news as a resource
Odds and ends	Other resources, events and links	LiveSimply community challenges

Our aim is to support you in your work, so please contact bova@salesianyouthministry.com with any feedback, suggestions or items for inclusion.

Best wishes

James

Hints and tips

Action for Justice and Peace; what's it got to do with working with young people in a Christian context?

Previous hints and tips (available from <http://boscovolunteeraction.co.uk/bovad.aspx>) have looked at:

- The 3 barriers to action:
 - “I don't know about the issue”
 - “It's nothing to do with me”
 - “There's nothing we can do”
- How we use images of developing countries (and the danger of only telling the ‘horror stories’)
- The causes and consequences of poverty (using the ‘pover-tree’)
- Which comes first: action or understanding?

This ‘Hints and Tips’ will first concentrate on the relevance of Justice and Peace to Christian ministry, then in work with young people and finally in the work of the Salesian Family.

I recently attended a meeting at St Joan of Arc's Parish in Farnham. The Parish had invited a trainee Deacon (and father of Salesian past and present pupils) to speak to them about ‘Catholic Social Teaching’ and how, if lived out as a witness to faith in action, it could bring young people back into the Church. The excitement in the room was so powerful – the people were inspired and recognised the effect their example of Christian service could have. It reminded me of the scene in ‘Sister Act’ in which the nuns ‘clean up the neighbourhood’ and see an immediate change in people's perception of church (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d8iF3B09zQ> for a feel good 3 minutes!).

So is there a particular relevance to young people? Yes, certainly. Research shows (a wonderful expression!) that although the stereotype is that young people are lazy or apathetic, in actual fact they often feel strongly about poverty in developing countries – and take action. Youth and student-based campaign groups such as ‘People and Planet’ continue to grow and the Government wasn't sure how to feel about pupils' absence from school to attend the demonstrations against the Iraq war (truancy or an example of ‘Citizenship’ classes making an impact?).

Young people have passion and will find things to be passionate about – especially when it comes to questions of justice (“That's not fair!”). Why not the arms trade, for example? They will find heroes and role models. Why not Sean Devereux (who campaigned against Britain's role in the easy availability of small arms in Africa)? Young people can often see that Justice and Peace issues are relevant to their lives and futures.

Finally, how does the work of the Salesians fit into all this? The Salesian Family exists in over 100 countries and I have been privileged to visit a number of these. It always amazes me how much young people in Salesian settings have in common – the life of the family stretches across borders. This is our first focus; similarities not differences. When young people in the UK can identify with other youth around the world the injustice stands out and they want to find ways of acting in solidarity with them.

Don Bosco's aim of forming “good Christians and honest citizens” is still the Salesian goal, but we must recognise that in today's globalised world, citizenship has a wider meaning. Just as he took his boys to serve the sick of Turin, we must encourage a global consideration in the young. In the words of the Rector Major, Don Bosco's successor, Fr Chávez:

“The Preventive System and the spirit of Don Bosco are today calling us to a great effort, individually and collectively, aimed at changing the situations of poverty and under-development, to make ourselves promoters of human development and to educate to a culture of human rights, and the dignity of human life. Human rights are a means for human development; education to human rights is

instrumental in bringing about human development both personal and collective and therefore to achieving a world that is more equitable, more just and more healthy. Each one of us, whoever we may be, precisely because we are educators and are following the Christian anthropological view of life that inspired Don Bosco, can become a defender, a promoter and activist in the cause of human rights.”

Focus on using the news as a resource

There are many advantages of starting from current affairs when exploring justice issues with young people – often they start with some level of prior knowledge, they can see that these are ‘serious’ issues, it helps make the link to their lives and often there are a variety of resources already available.

An excellent starting point is the British Red Cross ‘News think!’ emails. These are a fantastic free resource, looking at the stories behind recent headlines, with ideas for further exploration in schools, helping you to use them to explore justice/citizenship issues.

See the most recent and sign up at: <http://www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=43285>

They also have quick starter activities and lesson plans around topics such as stabbings, land mines, child soldiers and torture (see links from page above).

Other useful websites:

- Ideas for using global news in the classroom
http://www.globalnews.org.uk/teacher_activity%20bbcworld.htm
- BBC world news
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>
- Newspapers from around the world online (examples)
<http://www.nation.co.ke/> (Kenya)
<http://www.times.co.sz/> (Swaziland)
<http://www.sunstar.com.ph/cebu> (Philippines)

Previous ‘Focus on’ topics (available from <http://boscovolunteeraction.co.uk/bovad.aspx>):

- Oscar Romero
- Debt
- Trade
- Climate change

Odds and ends

LiveSimply Community Challenges – highly recommended!

These are fantastic – and many of them are youth friendly and well resourced.

Examples include:

- Making a peace garden
- Finding out about poverty in your local area
- Putting on a play

Find out more at

http://www.progressio.org.uk/livesimply/AssociatesInternal/96806/community_challenges/