PROVINCE EXPRESS

REVIEW

Doing Justice

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Anniversary histories often say much more about organisations than those who commission them intend. They spell out what matters to the organisation. Sometimes what matters is success. The history will be handsomely produced and bound, with annals of the great and good, and the history of the enterprise's inevitable rise to esteem and power. *Doing Justice* mercifully fails by such standards.

This book is short and simple, has pages that fold out and a half-size section bound in. It is illustrated by photographs of the people whom the programs serve, with few pictures of flash buildings or people in suits.

The artless but attractive presentation echoes the tendency of human beings to expand beyond the neat categories within which we place them. In *Doing Justice*, it is clearly people who matter. The book begins with the story of George, who came from gaol in 1977 to stay at the newly founded Four Flats in Hawthorn, Melbourne. The house offered accommodation to young men after their release from prison.

Only after George has told his story does the book turn to the conditions that led young men to be sent to gaol and to the effects of gaol on their spirit. And finally, it records the reflections of those involved in this work from which Jesuit Social Services was born. They include Peter Norden, the founder of Jesuit Social Services. The humanity of George and of so many people like him is at the centre of the book and of the organisation. Other things flow from this humanity.

The order of the book is shaped by the needs and, more importantly, by the gifts of people whom Jesuit Social Services meets. The different branches of the organisation nurture such activities as gardening, painting and camping, which allow young people to recognise unformed desires and to discover unrecognised gifts.

Any sustained commitment to the human value of people who are not valued by society is bound to be full of struggle. The burdens of confronting daily the effects on young people of government policies and administrative procedures that place efficiency and uninformed public opinion above humanity are only hinted at in the book. So is the strength needed to press for better ways of doing things.

The heart of *Doing Justice* is the story of young people who want to live more fully but lack the necessary encouragement. Many have clearly found encouragement from the generous and modest people who accompany them and plead their cause.

All that is celebrated and aspired to in this little book is caught in a poster designed by one of the young people:

Doing Justice: Reflections from thirty years Jesuit Social Services 1977-2007, by Josephine Dunin, Jesuit Social Services, 2010. The book is now available for purchase. Contact 9427 7388 for more information.

Reviewed by Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ.

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