

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you have come across "Justice" magazine published by Gabriel Communications which brings us the Universe and other Catholic papers and magazines. It comes out every 2 months and is packed with interesting, well illustrated articles about justice and peace at home and abroad.

Many of the writers are well known in justice and peace circles. It aims to give a Catholic view of social issues and in my opinion does it very well. It has just produced its third issue. People might question paying £3.50 for a magazine but it could be bought and shared around a small group and become a valuable source of information and inspiration. You may, like me, read New International and get very fed up with its regular put down and negative attitude to religion in all its forms with a particular spite for Catholicism. You search in vain for any acknowledgment or credit for the tremendous work done by the church .

This new magazine deserves the support of the justice and peace community and I commend it to you. More information at www.justicemagazine.co.uk

Circulation and subscriptions at andrea.black@totalcatholic.net

Fr Gerry Murray

CAFOD marks 50 years of Lent Fast Day

Abigail McMillan

Over the last 50 years more than £65 million has been raised by ordinary people at Lent Fast Day, which has transformed the lives of thousands of people living in extreme poverty throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Lent Fast Day was started in 1960 by a small group of Catholic women from the National Board of Catholic Women (NBCW), Catholic Women's League (CWL) and Union of Catholic Mothers (UCM). They were motivated to help mothers and babies dying of starvation in Dominica, a project inspired by Belgian nun Sister Mary Alicia. This amazing group were so moved by the plight of others, their fundraising effort was not a one-off event. Supported by the now deceased Cardinal Godfrey, who argued in a pastoral letter that the money spent on pampered poodles would be best spent helping 'our hungry brethren', two years later the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales agreed that CAFOD would be their official development agency. Without Fast Days, CAFOD would not exist today.

Over the past 50 years Lent Fast Day has offered an opportunity for Catholics to put their faith into action by making a personal sacrifice, as well as making a donation to help some of the world's poorest people. This Lent CAFOD is encouraging us to **Give it up!** Instead of indulging in our favourite treat, to give it up throughout Lent so the money saved can help to transform the lives of someone who is less fortunate through no fault of their own.

For further details see website www.cafod.org.uk or contact CAFOD Birmingham:

23 Glebe Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 3NX tel. 01922 722944 or E-mail birmingham@cafod.org.uk

News from the Parishes

St Wulstan and St Thomas of Canterbury

STOURPORT JUSTICE AND PEACE GROUP – A HISTORY

The Group was founded as an ecumenical Catholic initiative in 1991, and this ecumenical status has been fully sustained with support from Anglicans, Methodists, members of the United Reformed Church and Quakers. Meetings are occasionally attended by those with no religious background. We meet monthly at different church venues in the town; attendance has grown from an initial six to an average of twenty over the last three years, with maximum in excess of thirty.

The annual programme (which appears on the Birmingham J&P Commission website is planned in advance by the Group as a whole every November and comprises talks, some interactive items and an annual shared meal with a spiritual component. Each event concludes with a short reflection and silent and communal prayer. We do not necessarily have themes but we try to achieve a balance between international, national and local issues. Our speakers are both lay and clerical and they range from those in the local community and representatives of non-governmental organisations, to bishops (three to date), our MP and two members of the House of Lords. However, a strong inter-faith theme has emerged over the last six years not only involving speakers but also visits to a mosque and Sikh, Hindu and Buddhist temples, with another to a synagogue being planned.

Basically our aim is to provide a focus for the presentation and discussion of Christian social teaching in the broadest sense over a wide range of practice and we have developed a strong tradition of interactive discussion. We are, as one of our members recently put it, with no smugness, a “thinking” group struggling to understand and explore our Christian faith in the context of the positive and negative aspects of contemporary society, to name but a few.

We do not as a Group involve ourselves in practical action since we are too small and lack adequate resources apart from making donations in support of our speakers’ interests.

However, our members are encouraged to get involved as individuals and there has been commitment derived from our meetings to local initiatives such as those concerned with homelessness, substance abuse, victim support and immigration to name but a few. At national and international levels, there has been support for individual and non- government organisations in developing countries, dealing with torture and its consequences and the injustices of Arab/Israeli conflict. Also the highly successful Strategy Group which established Stourport as a Fairtrade Town sprang from within our J and P Group.

Two couples, one Anglican and the other Catholic, and occasionally others, organise and run the Group on not-for-profit lines based on voluntary contributions at meetings, currently set at £1.50 per person. Communication is via e-mail and post with a circulation of around 50. A brief report of each meeting (also on the Commission website) is sent to all including the local press; its contents are occasionally used in various local church newsletters.

Is the Stourport model, or parts of it, more widely applicable? A difficult question to answer since so much depends upon parishes and local ecumenical situations which are enormously variable. What are the key components of whatever success has been achieved? We would place at the top of the list having an attractive and varied programme planned and publicised well in advance and involving strong and continuous lay commitment. We would add clergy support, if possible, shared responsibilities for the initiation, organisation and running of meetings and good and uninterrupted communication in terms of publicity, record keeping and circulation.

Finally, don’t be worried initially about low numbers attending meetings!

Derek Smith (Co-Chairman)

(Administrator’s note: It would be good to hear from other Parish Groups about their structure and activities - please send this to me for the next edition.)

“Each one of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he senses it.

But with deeper reflection one knows from daily life that one exists for other people.”

Attributed to Albert Einstein

CAFOD "A Wave of Hope Sweeps Through London" Joe Andrew

December 2009 may be remembered as the month that could literally have changed the face of the world. This was the ardent hope and prayer of the tens of thousands of people who gathered in London on Saturday 5th December 2009 to take part in The Wave, the largest demonstration for Climate Justice ever seen in this country. Their united purpose was to send a loud and clear message to Gordon Brown and all other world leaders gathering in Copenhagen for the Climate Change Conference, that it is time to put a stop to climate chaos, and to strike a deal that will bring about climate justice.

These talks were a vital opportunity to come to a binding agreement before it is too late. Climate change is already damaging our world, especially the security and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable people. The people in The Wave were determined that the processes that have led to this situation must and can be reversed.

An inspiring day from beginning to end, fittingly, the weather itself seemed to echo the whole situation. After heavy overnight rain in London, by mid-morning the sun was shining as thousands made their way to the Methodist Central Hall in Westminster for an ecumenical service led by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster. Long before the scheduled start at 11am the hall and an overflow video-linked room were packed with people of all ages and backgrounds, most wearing blue, many with faces painted the same colour.

After an opening address, a very youthful and lively rock band led the enthusiastic congregation through a thrilling version of 'O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder'. It was to set the tone and theme of the service: that we are all responsible for God's creation; we are all at fault for the destruction already caused by climate changes that we have allowed to happen.

This theme was immediately brought into very moving focus as speakers from Bangladesh and Burkina Faso gave testimonies about the floods, the devastation and human suffering wrought in their already impoverished countries by recent extreme weather events. Following readings from Job and Romans, which again emphasised the interconnectedness of all of God's creation, Rowan Williams took as his inspiration Christ's words to his disciples - and to us - to go out and to share his good news with *all* creation. This was why we were here, Archbishop Williams suggested, to ask ourselves whether we as human creatures have really been good news for the rest of creation; whether our Western, developed civilisation has brought good news to the rest of the world, or perhaps the opposite.

Today, he said, and in the weeks ahead we need to seek justice and peace for *all* God's children and for his entire creation. 'Steps of courage and generosity need to be taken,' he argued, 'We must speak good news to the poorest and hungriest, the exploited, abused, and those made hungry by us.'

Archbishop Vincent developed these ideas as he called this day a day of solidarity and compassion. The poverty of so many members of the human race, and the destruction of the environment are interconnected, and are deeply interwoven with 'how you and I live each day'. Demonstrating how this campaign has evolved from earlier issues, he urged us to look hard at the way we live our lives, we must 'live simply so that others may simply live.' Only if we change the ways we live will the politicians be convinced that we want change, and so will act on the larger, international stage. Later in the service he asked us to see the relevance of the words of St Teresa of Avila to the Climate Justice campaign: 'Christ has no body now on earth but ours [...] Ours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the earth.'

The crowds at this moving and inspirational service then merged with many more as we marched down from Grosvenor Square, through Trafalgar Square, along Whitehall and then round Westminster to conclude with a mass call for justice as Big Ben struck 3pm. The estimated 40,000 were in great heart and voice and the march was also a riot of colour: alongside the bright blue of hats, scarves, faces and coats, were many banners from CAFOD, all the other leading aid agencies, and many other charities.

It was possible to feel that we were really making a difference, that this truly was an historic day. Indeed, it was tremendously encouraging that leading British members of the government were keen to be associated with the occasion. Ed Miliband, Climate Change Secretary, talked with campaigners out on the streets, including one from the Birmingham CAFOD contingent, while Gordon Brown invited a group of 24 (including CAFOD's director Chris Bain) to meet him on the day. He recorded a special message for campaigners, beginning: 'I strongly support the Wave demonstration today,' and continuing: 'Four years ago public commitment and huge demonstrations changed the world through the Make Poverty History campaign, and it can be done again.'

There is much still to be done. Copenhagen failed to produce real results in a binding agreement, so this will not be the end of the struggle, nor even the beginning of the end. We must all continue our efforts to change our ways of living, and keep up the pressure on our leaders so that they will make the real and effective changes the whole world, all of God's creation needs. In the words of one of the inspirational pieces of music from the service: 'Keep your Eyes on the Prize - Hold on!'

Joe Andrew

Friends of the Holy Land



Established in 2009, the Friends of the Holy Land assists the Christian Community in the Holy Land in many ways, working in close co-operation with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The objectives of the Friends are threefold:

- to raise awareness of the difficulties experienced by the Christian Community in the Holy Land;
- to encourage and to provide for prayers to be offered for their intentions;
- to generate financial support to aid their well-being.

Financial support is provided to Parishes and Schools and families within the Christian Community to enable them to live a fruitful and rewarding life in their homeland. This is carried out through:

- Funding for Parish activities
- Assistance to schools
- Financing small self-help projects in the community
- Providing humanitarian aid to the needy

This is all achieved with the backing and blessing of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The FHL is non-political.

Patrons

The Most Rev Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster
The Most Rev Patrick Kelly, Archbishop of Liverpool

National Chairman

Dr Michael Whelan

Registered Charity Number 1130054

Organisation

The Friends of the Holy Land are organised through groups within many of the Catholic Parishes across the Dioceses of England and Wales.

Each Group is managed by a working Committee which organises events and raises funds to be allocated towards the various projects and needs that are being met at that time.

Local contributions raised are passed to the central management team together with a request (if appropriate) for the application of their funds to a particular aspect of the work. Wherever possible that request is honoured.

The Friends have a central management team which maintains close contacts with the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem and ensures that all contributions reach their intended destinations and are well managed.

Parish Groups

Enquiries to support the FHL are very welcome. A "Starter Pack" for those interested in setting up a "Friends of the Holy Land" group in their Parish is available for viewing and printing on the "Download" page of the website www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk

Donations

If you would like to make a direct donation then please click on the link on the website which will take you to a donations website organised by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). This will enable you to make a direct donation to the Friends of the Holy Land and has the added advantage that if you are a tax payer the Friends of the Holy Land can benefit from Gift Aid on the donation. Just follow the simple instructions.

NJPN urgently needs your support now !

The National Justice & Peace Network:

- Links people who have a concern for justice and peace.
- Acts as a hub for the exchange of information.
- Offers support and encouragement for groups and individuals.
- Provides a channel between issues and campaigns.



But now NJPN is facing dramatic reductions in its core funding and urgently needs your support to continue its vital work. You can help by:

- Giving a donation - Cheques payable to "NJPN", send to NJPN, 39 Eccleston Sq., London SW1V 1BX
- Committing to a regular donation - Standing Order forms downloadable on the NJPN website www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

Diary Dates

January 2010

30th -
7th Feb. Poverty & Homeless Action Week
www.actionweek.org.uk
Resources from Housing Justice & Church Action on Poverty
www.housingjustice.org.uk and
www.church-poverty.org.uk

February

9th "The Sanctuary Pledge"
Training to convince MP's to sign the Sanctuary Pledge at the General Election. Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham. 11am to 4pm.
Info: www.sanctuarypledge.org.uk

17th Ash Wednesday and start of CAFOD "Give it Up!" Lent 50th Anniversary Campaign (see Newsletter front page)

20th World Day of Social Justice
United Nations & European Union

22nd -
7th March FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT
Featuring the "Big Brew" and the "Big Swap"
Many events in our Diocese.
www.fairtrade.org.uk and
Email maranda@ccow.org.uk

26th CAFOD Lent Fast Day

27th Witney Fair Trade Market
Langdale Hall 10.30 to 4.30pm
www.waftag.blogspot.com or
phone 01993 881364

March

5th Women's World Day of Prayer
www.wwdp-natcomm.org
01892 541411

6th "Living Hope: Green Churches, Green Schools" 10am to 4pm
A day conference for anyone connected with a church or school and interested in how we carry out our mission in an age of environmental change.
Email: maranda@ccow.org.uk

17th "Home from Home?" Forum
Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women, responding to Migration. 10.30am to 4pm. Pershore
Contact Ruth Clarke on 01539 720248
or Email ruth.clarke4@btinternet.com

March (cont.)

19th -
21st International Conference,
Las Casas Institute, Blackfriars, Oxford
"Renewing the Catholic Social Conscience"
NB. Half price for J&P members.

Includes a simultaneous residential weekend for 16 to 18 year olds, especially from Diocesan Secondary Schools: "Leaders to Come", plus a colloquium of the International Young Leaders Network.
For full details Email: lascasas@bfriars.ox.ac.uk

24th Mass at St Chad's Cathedral on the 30th anniversary of the Archbishop Romero's assassination. More details soon.

July

16th NJPN Annual Conference, Swanwick, Derby
- 18th "Our Daily Bread - Food Security, People and Planet" Details soon.

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH

The Birmingham Justice and Peace Newsletter is sent to everyone on our mailing list free of charge. If you would like to be added to the mailing list please send your address, including EMAIL details, to the Administrator.

Also, if you have an event you would like advertised in the Autumn newsletter please send details to:

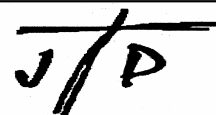
David Jenkins, Administrator,
Birmingham Justice & Peace Commission,
Home: Yew Tree Cottage, Hailey, Witney OX29 9UB
Email: jenkins@woxon.freeserve.co.uk
Tel: 01993-702654 (home), 07919 325203 (mobile).

Spring 2010 Edition: Last date for entries 18th March.

More information about the Commission can be found on our website: www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

The views expressed in this newsletter are the views of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission or the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham.

**The Birmingham
Diocesan Justice and
Peace Commission
website.**



Birmingham Diocese

For information on the J&P calendar and links to J&P organisations....

For downloads from the J&P Resource Pack and much more...

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk