

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

As you might expect there is much in this issue of our newsletter concerning the forthcoming General Election taking place in a few weeks' time. It seems that more and more material has been coming from the Catholic Bishops and other organisations to help us focus on the important issues for us as Christians and people interested in justice and peace.

Election time is an opportunity for us to join with others to see if we can bring the important issues we have been concerned about, and campaigning about, to the attention of the candidates and our fellow electors.

I wish you success in making the voice for justice and peace and the Common Good heard at this time.

Fr.Gerry Murray (Chair)

6th Birmingham Diocesan Justice & Peace Assembly

Saturday 16th October 2010

10.30am to 4.30pm

St Peter's Catholic School, Whitefields Road, Solihull, B91 3NZ

“Steering Through the Rapids”

A Spirituality for Justice and Peace

Guest Speaker: The Rt Hon John Battle, currently MP for Leeds West

Local Responders: Sr Helen Ryan RSM, Convent of Mercy, Handsworth

and Fr Paul Nicholson SJ, Manresa House, Harborne

with a choice of Workshops led by Justice & Peace organisations

Cost: £10, low income and students £5

Includes refreshments and sandwich lunch (for those that book in advance)

Applications can be downloaded soon from our website above, or requested from the Administrator

Why does it matter for Catholics, Christians, people of faith to engage in the political process?

A comment from John Battle, currently MP for Leeds West, who will be addressing our Annual Assembly in October :

The most central concern is not the necessity of a checklist to be told of what issues to look out for but for an awareness of the dignity of the human person that all those engaged or dislocated in the political process ought to consider.

In Caritas in Veritate, Pope Benedict focuses on “integral human development” and the need to address “identity, the meaning of human life, and the dignity of the human person”.

By encouraging people to engage in reflecting on basic questions of “who we are” and “where we are to go” perhaps sights could be raised above competing for short term advantage in a frantic public political fight. Raising the larger questions of “who we are” opens up space that the political debate now seems to be unable to create.

What is desperately lacking is the need to inject vision into the shared political project (“without vision the people perish”) in terms of opening up new horizons and wider-ranging contexts that include all humanity.

THE ROBIN HOOD TAX: How it Works

The Robin Hood Tax is a tiny tax on banks, hedge funds and other finance institutions that would raise billions to tackle poverty and climate change, at home and abroad. It can start as low as 0.005 per cent – and average 0.05 per cent . But when levied on the billions of pounds sloshing round the global finance system every day through transactions such as foreign exchange, derivatives trading and share deals, it can raise hundreds of billions of pounds every year.

And while international agreement is best, it can start right now, right here in the UK. That can help stop cuts in crucial public services in the UK, and aid the fight against global poverty and climate change.

Visit www.cafod.org.uk/robinhoodtax for more details

Therefore it is necessary that people of faith are reminded of the huge gulf which exists between the extremely poor and the extremely rich.

The following words of Archbishop Oscar Romero seem particularly pertinent at this time:

“The guarantee of one’s prayer is not saying a lot of words. The guarantee of one’s petition is very easy to know: how do I treat the poor? Because that is where God is. The degree to which you approach them and the love with which you approach them, or the scorn with which you approach them - that is how you approach your God. What you do to them. You do to God. The way you look at them is the way you look at God”.

Archbishop Oscar Romero,

Living God’s Justice

An increasing number of commentaries on political issues relevant to justice and peace leading up to the General Election should be accessed on the NJPN website :

www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

CBCEW General Election Message

The Catholic Bishops Conference have issued a message in advance of the General Election, stating that : “Shortly we will be choosing our next Government. It is an important responsibility and all Catholics should use their vote.”

Please visit their website to read the full statement, accompanied by “Some issues and questions for Parliamentary Candidates” highlighting a selection of key issues for our consideration, which might help to inform our decision on who to vote for.

Website: www.catholicchurch.org.uk

Paper copies of both can be sent to you if required by the Administrator, and they are both available to download from the Commission website

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Reinhold Niebuhr, American Protestant Theologian

CAFOD Put Climate Change on the Election Agenda

Joe Andrew



Thousands of local Justice and Peace campaigners living in Archdioceses will have the opportunity this Spring to put Climate Change firmly on the General Election agenda. One key way to do this is to support the [Ask the Climate Question](#)

campaign, which is being launched in 51 key marginal constituencies across Britain, aiming to get all parties to raise the profile of climate change in their election campaigns, and secure bold commitments by party leaders in the run up to the election. [‘Ask the Climate Question’](#) is encouraging everyone who wants to see stronger action on climate change to ask candidates and party workers how their party would tackle the issue, on doorsteps and at hustings, or by email and social networking sites such as [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

[Ask the Climate Question](#) is an unprecedented coalition made up of CAFOD, WWF-UK, RSPB, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund, Greenpeace, Stop Climate Chaos Coalition, Green Alliance and others. On average these organisations have around 8000 supporters in each constituency. Supporters have joined forces to ‘Ask the Climate Question’ of local candidates in target marginal seats to ensure climate change is kept at the top of the political agenda. The Ask the Climate Question campaign is calling on party leaders to make bold commitments to action on climate change in the next parliament, before the General Election, though the campaign itself is independent from all political parties and candidates, and does not seek to influence voting behaviour. We believe that this issue should be at the very heart of

the campaign, because climate change is already killing some 300,000 people a year in developing countries: we have to act now.

Climate change is a priority for many people living in marginal seats. A recent IPPR study showed that almost one in five people in marginal seats consider climate change to be amongst their three or four top priority issues, and four out of five people support the target to generate 15% of renewable energy by 2020. Supporters getting involved in [Ask the Climate Question](#) are calling on political parties to act fast to keep global warming under two degrees and ensure the UK benefits from the economic opportunities of the transition to a low carbon society. We are asking the parties to commit, firstly, to putting the UK on track to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, through strong domestic action. Secondly, we want them to ensure at least 15 per cent of all energy to come from renewables by 2020. Thirdly, they should protect the poor from the impacts of climate change and help developing countries curb their emissions, by undertaking to provide the UK’s fair share of climate finance to the developing world for adaptation and low carbon development, in addition to existing commitments on overseas development aid.

‘Climate Question Time’ husting events are being organised in each of the campaign’s constituencies so that supporters and members of the public have the opportunity to ask their local candidates about their climate change views and their parties policies and commitments to action.

For further details on Ask the Climate Question, to find your local Climate Question Time, or to discover other ways to ask your climate question visit www.asktheclimatequestion.org.uk; or call the Diocesan CAFOD office, 01922 722944

JUBILEE DEBT CAMPAIGN - A VULTURES LAW PASSED !

The UK became the first country in the world to legislate to stop vulture funds profiteering off the debts of the poorest countries in the world. We were convinced the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Bill, Andrew Gwynne’s Private Member’s Bill, was dead. But, thanks to ongoing campaigning by you, and the determination of a few MPs, the Government agreed to select this measure for the ‘wash up’, a process of passing a few laws quickly, with cross-party support, at the end of a Parliamentary session. In explaining why, Harriet Harman, Leader of the Commons, said it was because the Bill had “considerable support in the country”.

This campaign victory should mean that **we never again have to see a country as poor as Liberia or Zambia sued in a UK court** on the basis of a debt which dates back to the 1970s and has been bought by a vulture fund for pennies in the pound. Once again, thank you for all you have done. Yet again, the debt movement has proved that **campaigning really works!**

Best wishes,

Nick, Jonathan, Helen and the amazing team of volunteers at Jubilee Debt Campaign

Diary Dates

April

25th World Day of Prayer for Vocations to the Priesthood

May

8th World Fairtrade Day

8th Fellowship of Reconciliation Annual Council 10.30-4.30pm
Wesley Memorial Church Hall,
New Inn Hall Street, Oxford
Em: office@for.org.uk
tel. 01865-250781

9th-15th Christian Aid Week
www.christian-aid.org.uk
tel. 0207 620 4444

15th International Conscientious Objectors' Day
www.wri-irg.org.co

15th OxPeace Day Conference
St John's College, Oxford
Em: salih.solomon@oriel.ox.ac.uk

21st Blessed Franz Jagerstatter Feast Day
www.paxchristi.org.uk
tel. 0208 203 4884

June

5th World Environment Day
www.unep.org.uk/wed

14th-20th Refugee Week
www.refugeeweek.org.uk

15th Housing Justice Annual Conference
Carrs Lane Church Centre,
Birmingham B4 7SX
Em: info@housingjustice.org.uk
tel. 0207 920 6440

19th Pax Christi AGM
Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford
10.30 for 10.50 start
Em: admin@paxchristi.org.uk
tel. 0208 203 4884

19th-27th Campaign Against the Arms Trade STOP Week
www.caat.org.uk
tel. 0207 281 0297
Em:enquiries@caat.org.uk

July

11th Sea Sunday
www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk

16th - 18th NJPN Annual Conference, "Our Daily Bread - Food Security, People and Planet", Swanwick, Derbyshire
www.justice-and-peace.org.uk
tel. 0207 901 4864

Aug.

6th & 9th Anniversaries of the first use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima & Nagasaki

Sept.

12th Racial Justice Sunday
www.carj.org.uk

Oct.

1st CAFOD Harvest Fast Day

17th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
www.unmeditation.org.uk

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:

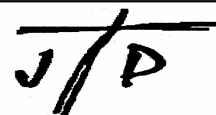
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More information about the Commission can be found on our website: www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

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