



Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

A major feature of the papacy of Pope Francis has been his active concern for peace and justice in the world. This concern is shown in his words and powerful actions and gestures. His short visit / pilgrimage to the Holy Land recently highlighted how much needs to be done urgently to make peace there. It was a powerful move to invite the Israeli president Peres and the Palestinian president Abbas to Rome to pray with him for peace.

Pope Francis calls us too to pray in solidarity with the suffering and the peacemakers. He believes completely in the power of prayer and the power of God to change things in the world by changing human hearts. Our work for peace and justice in our parishes, groups and diocese are incomplete without a sincere and constant prayer for peace and justice.

With best wishes,

Fr Gerry Murray (Chair)

Birmingham J&P Commission 10th Anniversary Assembly

Saturday 11th October 2014

From 10.30am at St Peter's Catholic School, Whitefields Road, Solihull, B91 3NZ

"Unless a grain of wheat..." (John 12:24)

The example of Oscar Romero in Pope Francis' Vision for the Church

Guest Speaker: Julian Filochowski, Chair of the Archbishop Romero Trust

With a choice of issue-based afternoon Workshops

Cost: £8 (but for low income and students, only £5)

Please bring your own lunch again this year, and consider sharing with friends and family.

Programme/Registration Forms will be available soon so please record this date in your diaries.

REFLECTION ON A PILGRIMAGE TO EL SALVADOR

Ann Kelly, Pax Christi

In November 2013 I had the privilege of participating in the pilgrimage to El Salvador organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust. It was a journey which took us to the sites associated with Romero himself and with other martyrs and victims of the civil war of the 1980's. We heard testimonies of those who knew or worked with them. This is just one of them:

Anita's story: Anita is the youngest sister of Father Octavio Ortiz who was murdered by the death squads in 1979 at the parish centre of El Despertar in San Salvador, along with four youths who were there on retreat. Her story, she said, was typical of many families in El Salvador. Anita was the youngest of the family of *campesinos*. Octavio, one of five brothers, all killed during the war, another by the death squads and three who joined the guerrillas, the youngest aged 14. Her parents also received threats and were forced to flee to Honduras (and interestingly, news that they were safe came from Irish Franciscans who used Gaelic to communicate with each other by radio to avoid being understood by anyone listening in). They eventually returned, but had to give up their land. Her sisters were scattered in other countries in order to earn a living and send money home. The legacy of the war, she said, was of fractured families with little hope of being reunited.

Three themes that I took from those we met were:

Solidarity: A point made by so many of the people, that they really valued the solidarity of supporters from outside the country. In particular it was the response when we asked about the closure of the human rights office, Tutela Legal, the office set up by Romero's successor in 1982 to pursue human rights abuses through the courts, and which was summarily closed down by the current Archbishop on 30 September 2013. The reason for the closure may relate to the possibility that the Amnesty Law which was passed in 1993, preventing the prosecution of many of the perpetrators of atrocities, will be declared unconstitutional by the supreme court of El Salvador. Tutela Legal held many records and testimonies relating to these cases. The concern now is for the protection of those archives and the people whose evidence is recorded there.

Remembering: It was at a Mass to commemorate the four American women, three religious and one lay worker, who were raped and murdered by the military that, Fr Paul Schindler pointed to the need to remember. He is a priest from Cleveland, Ohio who had worked with two of the women, Jean Donovan and Sr Dorothy Kazel. This was also powerfully expressed

in the various memorials that we visited: the Monument to Memory and Truth which displays the names of more than 50,000 who were killed or disappeared during the war, the rose garden at the UCA (University of Central America) where six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter were murdered in 1989, and most poignantly, the memorial to the 141 children killed in the El Mozote massacre of 1981 which claimed around 1,000 victims in all. And murals everywhere...

Peace: I was struck by the emphasis put by some on the futility of war and the need to work for peace. Eva had worked with Rutilio Grande, a friend of Archbishop Romero whose murder was the turning point which led him to take a stand for the poor. Her answer to the question about what we should do was to work for peace anywhere in the world. Even the ex-guerrilla showing us around the museum of the revolution assured us that their purpose was to teach future generations to work for peace. Indeed the message of Romero was one of non-violence, as John Dear has explored in his booklet "*Oscar Romero and the non-violent struggle for justice*" (available from Pax Christi):

'Peace is a product of justice, but justice is not enough. Love is also necessary. The love that makes us feel that we are brothers and sisters is properly what makes for true peace. Peace is the product of justice and love.'

The challenge must be to work against the policies of our governments which support oppressive regimes, fuel conflicts through the arms trade, and destabilise countries through military interventions. The war in El Salvador was exacerbated by the heavy involvement of the USA in support of the military, including training at the infamous School of the Americas (the general responsible for the El Mozote massacre had been trained there); just as today civilians in Afghanistan & Pakistan are terrorised by Drone warfare, Iraq continues to be plagued by sectarian violence, & Syria has become a proxy war for Iran and Saudi Arabia.

The ongoing effects of the years of war are still being felt. It seems there was no real attempt at a process of reconciliation after the war. In the north, Sr Anne Griffin is working to establish a centre for peace and reconciliation in the area of El Mozote. Extreme inequalities remain, with the wealthy immured in gated communities and shopping malls, while many scratch a living on the streets or on poor land. Gang violence is also a major issue, much apparently a result of deportations of Salvadorans from the USA, bringing the gang culture with them. We visited a school in the slum area of La Chacra which attempts to divert children from gang involvement by providing a host of extra-curricular activities, as well as giving as many as possible the opportunity for a good education.

HOW TO STAND BY BRAZIL DURING THE WORLD CUP – AND BEYOND

Joe Andrew, CAFOD volunteer

For many people in Britain, women as well as men, the month or so from mid-June to early July will have been a roller-coaster ride that repeats itself every four years, of improbable hope swiftly followed perhaps by unnecessary despair. The former Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly, famously said that 'Some people believe football is a matter of life and death; I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that.' While this remark is often dismissed as a joke, the ongoing World Cup has indeed raised some real life and death issues for the people of Brazil.

That is, the World Cup threatens the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable citizens. It offers them little in the way of help or progress. In this context, CAFOD is asking us its supporters the question: 'Will you stand by Brazil?' CAFOD is calling on us to take action to protect Brazil's poorest citizens.

There are many ways that we can show our support for the people of Brazil. There is a petition on CAFOD's website we can sign that asks the Brazilian government to do a number of things for their people, including protecting people's rights to live in decent and sustainable housing, and access good education, health care, transport and sanitation. This is a chance for us to ask Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil, to ensure that all people, especially the poorest families and affected local communities, have a say and are part of their own communities' development. On CAFOD's website there are also some fantastic resources for teachers and youth leaders to use with young people during the World Cup focusing on Brazil and how sport can be used to bring peace to communities.

As we can see, the World Cup, while bringing pleasure and joy to many around the world, raises some very serious issues. Some people question whether relatively poor countries like Brazil should be hosting this kind of extravaganza. In fact, the £8 billion that the World Cup is estimated to cost would pay for more than two million new homes in a country where one fifth of the population, or 40 million people, are living in poverty. And beside all this there are the ongoing issues of rising prices of public transport, food and rent; while in the favelas of São Paulo, for example, 4,000 families were evicted so that a new road can be constructed from the airport to the stadium.

And so, while we may enjoy the World Cup in the

peace & comfort of our homes, we need to remember that for many people in Brazil it raises some very troubling issues, which are real questions of life and death.

To send your message to the President of Brazil please go to www.cafod.org.uk/brazil.

HIGH RENTS KEEPING PEOPLE STUCK IN HOMELESSNESS

Homeless people are finding it difficult to move on from homelessness and hostels because of a shortage of affordable housing Caritas Social Action Network has warned. The network said rents have risen in some London boroughs by 20 per cent in the last year and that around 32 per cent of people being supported by homeless agencies who want to move on from hostels and shelters into their own accommodation are unable to do so. They are being prevented from making the move because of a combination of high rents and the requirement of a large deposit, often two months' rent.

The current housing market has added to the challenges many homeless people already face in finding employment, with the result being that they have to remain in homeless services. CSAN surveyed over 450 homeless agencies last year and found that only 10% of clients successfully found paid employment. CSAN's Chief Executive, Helen O'Brien said: "To learn that over a third of people in homeless shelters are restricted by a lack of affordable housing is shocking. This is not only a drain on the services for those most in need, but highlights even more the necessity for housing that people can afford. "We're talking here about families and wage-earners being forced to rely on homeless services, simply because cost to rent has spiralled out of control. To be emotionally and spiritually ready to move from a shelter into your own home yet to be held back by staggering rent prices must be truly heartbreaking."

Chief Executive of Housing Justice, Alison Gelder, appealed to churches to respond to the crisis. "The word 'homeless' is most obviously associated with rough sleeping and it is the most visible way society encounters and understands housing need," she said. "But homelessness has many faces – and shelters, supported housing and overflow B&Bs accommodate many people who are navigating their way between the street and a home of their own. We are calling on churches and parishioners to do all they can to increase the supply of genuinely affordable housing. Without adequate and affordable housing, re-entering society is like trying to climb a ladder without rungs or foot holes."

Article provided by the Southwark J&P Office.

Diary Dates

People may doubt what you say, but will believe what you do.

JUNE

25th: "THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL~ THEN AND NOW ~ "From Archbishop Denis Hurley to Pope Francis". A Talk by Rt Rev Kevin Dowling, Bishop of Rustenburg at Archbishop Bernard's invitation. From 7pm to 8.30pm in the Grimshaw Room, Cathedral House, St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham. Preceded by Mass in the Cathedral at 6pm.

29th: "What can ACTA (A Call to Action) learn from Pope Francis?" A talk by Fr. Daniel O'Leary from 2pm to 4pm in Birmingham University Catholic Chaplaincy, Harrison's Road, Edgbaston, B15 3QR. Contact: Sr Anna O'Connor.

JULY

8th: Sea Sunday Apostleship of the Sea: www.apostleshipofthesea.org.uk or tel. 020 7012 8602

18th to 20th: NJPN Annual Conference "Called to Life in All Its Fullness: accepting the responsibility of our Baptism" The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. For full details and booking form contact NJPN tel.020 7901 4864.

23rd to 28th: World Youth Day local celebrations the year prior to the main event in Krakow 2016.

AUGUST

6th & 9th: Anniversaries of first use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima & Nagasaki www.paxchristi.org

SEPTEMBER

7th: CAAT Christian Network Day of Prayer and action against the Arms Trade. www.caat.org.uk

14th: Racial Justice Sunday Contact CARJ www.carj.org.uk or tel.020 8802 8080

21st: Peace One Day international day of global ceasefire & non-violence. See www.peaceoneday.org

OCTOBER

4th: CAFOD Harvest Fast Day

11th: J&P Commission Assembly St Peter's School, Solihull. Main theme: Archbishop Romero & Pope Francis' vision for the church. Speaker: Julian Filochowski, Chair of the Archbishop Romero Trust. See front page for details.

19th: Mission Sunday - worldwide. See Missio: www.missio.org.uk

19th to 26th: Week of Prayer for World Peace www.weekofprayerforworldpeace.com or tel. 020 8968 4340

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 Summer newsletter please send details to:

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

Autumn 2014 Edition: Last date for entries 1st Sept.

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 Diocese Justice and Peace Commission



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

For downloads from the J&P Resource Pack and much more.....access our website:

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk