



Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission Newsletter

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk



Issue 28

Autumn/Winter 2014

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

Thanks again to all who attended the Justice and Peace Assembly Day on Saturday 11th October; please make a note in your diaries that next year's Assembly will be held on a similar date, Saturday 10th October 2015.

Julian Filochowski enlightened and challenged us on the life and martyrdom of Archbishop Romero and how his life and witness have influenced Pope Francis. It seems likely that Oscar Romero will be canonised soon. As those interested and working for peace and justice it would be good if we could play a part in advancing his cause in our own groups and parishes.

Of interest we have the Romero lecture by Rowan Williams on Friday 12th December, and the CAFOD Romero Mass on 24th March next year, both at St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham. Details of each event appear on page 4 of this newsletter.

May the Lord bless and make fruitful all that you do for justice and peace especially in this season of Advent.

With best wishes,

Fr Gerry Murray (Chair)

Justice and Peace Commission: New Website

We hope you will be interested to learn that a new website has been launched for the J&P Commission, using exactly the same web address: www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

It has been designed to be more user-friendly so we sincerely hope that you will find it easily-accessible and straightforward, providing the information you need quickly. Links to other J&P Agencies are being added to guide you direct to their own websites, and documents will be there to read easily and downloaded when you want the full article.

Latest news will appear on the Home page and, together with Newsletters and Mini-Newsletters posted for easy reference and downloading, we hope you will have the latest information on which to decide how best to offer your support.

Please, therefore, send us your feedback: comments, advice, recommendations etc. so that your needs are fulfilled; extensive work and time have been invested in getting this up and running (and is still being developed and information added) so we encourage everyone to make the best use of it.

In particular, local groups around the diocese are invited to advise us how they wish to be represented on the "J&P groups" tab, and how they can be contacted, as we are still encouraging groups to communicate together and share knowledge, experience and best practice to the benefit of all concerned. So, now it's over to you

“Letters to my Grandchildren” by Michael Hornsby-Smith

A review by Brian Davies

Some years ago I suggested in a review for the NJPN Newsletter that there was a resource which provided the most comprehensive treatment available on J&P, bringing together Gospel inspiration, official teaching and social analysis on a full range of contemporary issues. It also presented parallel secular thought and finally action responses. Nothing else has appeared that can compare with it.

The one disadvantage was that *An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought* by Michael Hornsby-Smith (CUP, 2006) was a rather large volume involving a considerable outlay and the rather uninteresting title is maybe the reason it has not received the attention it deserved. Fortunately the author has now produced a more accessible version aimed at 6th Formers, Students and Chaplains – in fact at anyone with Christian values trying to come to grips with the complex world of social justice. *Following Jesus as Pilgrims, Servants and Prophets in the 21st Century* is attempting to encourage precisely what the title suggests. It is written as a series of letters to Michael’s grandchildren.

The idea for this approach, Michael explains, arose from a conversation with the late Mildred Nevile, formerly General Secretary of the Catholic Institute of International Relations (renamed *Progressio*). On hearing that he was proposing to produce a book on the future of the Church she suggested that it might be more helpful to focus on the way we should be living in the 21st century. This meant a shift of focus away from the institution to how ordinary Catholics should live as pilgrim members of a servant Church in a world dominated, as it is, by economic power. As it happens, Pope Francis seems to be striving to bring about a very similar change of perspective.

Michael says of his grandchildren’s generation, “They’re growing up in a world of multiple challenges. It’s my hope that the suggestions this book offers will encourage them to find their own vocations and to follow the pilgrim paths along which the Lord is calling them as servants and prophets to others.”

The book follows the well-established strategy of the pastoral cycle with two letters on articulating the social reality (both domestically and globally), two on social analysis as to causes of needs and injustices, two on biblical and theological reflection and finally two further letters on offering suggestions responding with social action.

Anyone involved in Justice and Peace activity would find this a valuable and challenging resource – but particularly RE teaches, School and University chaplains and students themselves. “I hope,” says Michael, “that it might inspire them to take seriously the call to seek the kingdom of God here on earth through systematic and persistent justice-seeking.”

“Following Jesus as Pilgrims, Servants and Prophets in the 21st Century” (paperback £7, ISBN 978-178035-015-7) is available from bookshops, through the internet or from the publisher, website www.fast-print.net/bookshop

Christmas Greetings Campaign: ACAT

This year’s Action by Christians Against Torture Christmas Greetings Campaign has been launched in support of Prisoners of Conscience

Cards and messages of support can bring hope to those suffering torture, imprisonment or persecution because of their faith or their work as human rights defenders.

Whoever tortures a human being,
Whoever abuses a human being,
Whoever outrages a human being
Abuses God's image,
And the church takes as its own
That cross, that martyrdom.

(Archbishop Romero of El Salvador, murdered in 1980 because of his support for the poor and suffering people of his country).

For a list of prisoners to whom Christmas Greetings may be sent by you please contact the Administrator or see the ACAT and J&P Commission websites.

Please bear in mind the advice given to consider very carefully whether or not to send religious cards since some prisoners’ custody may be extremely precarious and issues of faith may cause distress or worse.

ACAT has campaigned for the tortured, those under threat of torture, those subjected to death threats and to extrajudicial execution since 1984. ACAT is an ecumenical charity with no paid staff. It produces a newsletter and takes part in the International Prayer Vigil for the Tortured at the end of June.

For more information contact ACAT UK at uk.acat@gmail.com

Do I have a mature sense of justice?

Tom Greene SJ

In 'Oscar Romero, Religion and Spirituality' J. Matthew Asley, writing in *The Way* (#44 / 2nd April 2005) lists four features (originally developed by Sr. Sandra Schneiders IHM) which I believe apply evenly to an examination of **whether one has a mature sense of justice**.

It is focused on **personal experience**.

It requires a **conscious involvement in a project**.

It is a **life-integrative principle**.

It is oriented towards a transcendent **source of ultimate meaning and value**.

I suggest that we might reflect on these components as a gauge of our commitment to justice.

1. Personal experience

There is no substitute for personal experience. Assuredly, one can hold positions on matters of justice without personal experience; however, our deepest commitments evolve from personal encounter. Just as a personal encounter with Jesus impels us to labour with Him, direct contact with people treated unjustly helps sustain a lifelong commitment to justice. Therefore, each of us ought to be able to point to one situation of injustice wherein one has direct personal experience.

Question for reflection: Where do I have direct personal experience of injustice?

2. A conscious involvement in a project

This signifies that one's prayer life **and** commitment to promote justice is not episodic or sporadic, but rather entails a consistent and extended commitment to a certain set of practices. None of us is able to maintain the same level of commitment to numerous justice issues. Justice issues demand that we make choices about where we spend our time. This does not mean that we cannot hold positions on a variety of justice issues. We can and should do so. However, each of us will be drawn naturally to certain issues, just as we are drawn to certain forms of prayer. Banning land-mines will be important for some, while others might feel a stronger call to work with victims of domestic violence. The goal of conscious involvement is depth of engagement in one cause rather than shallow, or even superficial engagement in a number of justice issues.

Questions for reflection:

Do I have a conscious involvement in one justice

issue or, am I involved in many issues without giving myself fully to any particular cause?

When I consider justice issues, which ones draw forth the deepest affective response in me?

3. A life-integrating principle

A Christ-centred spirituality is a life-integrating principle that defines in large measure how one relates to one's self, to other persons and to the world in general. Similarly, when we make a commitment to justice and begin to consider the sinful social structures and systems that oppress people, it changes how we relate to our neighbours, the environment and ourselves. We become more sensitive to our consumption or resources (oil, water, electricity) or aware of the people in our mist (migrants).

Questions for reflection:

Is my commitment to justice a life-integrating principle?

When I have taken a stance on a justice issue, how has it changed the way I relate to myself? Others? Our world?

4. Orientated towards a transcendent source of ultimate meaning and value

This dictates that our spirituality is orientated toward someone or something that is foundational to all that is. For us, Jesus is our transcendent source of meaning and value. As the spiritual writer Ronald Rohlheiser writes, "We have a God with skin!" to whom we dedicate our lives and in whom we find meaning and value. Similarly, a commitment to justice should give one meaning and value.

Questions for reflection:

Are my justice commitments directed towards God or myself?

Do my justice commitments help me find meaning and value?

Taken from an article by Tom Greene SJ in the World Christian Life Community publication '*progressio*', Supplement #68, 2012 and used with permission.

New Book from Clifford Longley

"Just Money: How Catholic Social Teaching Can Redeem Capitalism"

Published by Theos. ISBN: 978-0-9574743-5-2

A review to appear in the Spring 2015 Newsletter.

Diary Dates

We should give meaning to life, not wait for life to give meaning.

NOVEMBER

Prayer and Fasting for Peace in the Middle East in response to Pope Francis' call.

Parishes are encouraged to hold a Vigil of Prayer for Peace on the weekend of 29th/30th November, the First Sunday of Advent, linked to a period of fasting and abstinence on the preceding Friday, 28th November.

DECEMBER

10th: **“Human Rights and Hummus: Eye Witness Reports from Palestine”** on the International Day of Human Rights. 7.30pm at St Austin's Church, Wolverhampton Road, Stafford. Chris Venables has recently returned from three months working as a human rights observer in Hebron, in the West Bank. Come and listen to Chris talk about his experiences of life under military occupation. Hear the stories of Palestinians he has met. Learn and ask questions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Discover what we can do in the UK to promote a just peace in the Middle East. Find more information at: burungaar.wordpress.com

12th: **The Archbishop Romero Memorial Lecture 2014** will be delivered by Lord Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, entitled **“A saint for the whole people of God: Romero and the ecumenical future”**.

All welcome. At 7pm in St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham B4 6EU. Organised by the Archbishop Romero Trust and hosted by Archbishop Bernard Longley. Details at romerotrust@btinternet.com or website www.romerotrust.org.uk.

2015

FEBRUARY

27th to

28th : **“The Cost of Life on Earth: companies, climate change and your money”**

The Oxford Group of ECCR (the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility) Weekend and Day Conference at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, Oxford. Dinner with Keynote Speakers at St Hugh's College on Friday 27th. With Speakers and Workshop Leaders. For enquiries Email eccroxfordgroup@hotmail.com and see website www.eccr.org.uk/events

MARCH

21st: **J&P Commission/Diocesan Retreat** in St Paul's Convent, Selly Oak.

24th: **Archbishop Romero Mass** in St Chad's Cathedral.

OCTOBER:

10th: **J&P Commission Annual Assembly** In St Peter's Secondary School, Solihull.

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 Spring 2015 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 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