



Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission Newsletter



www.birminghamjandp.org.uk

Issue 32

Spring 2016

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

Writing this shortly before we enter Passiontide and Holy Week I just wanted to share a thought from Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* on the power of the resurrection which can inspire and drive our life of faith and our work for peace and justice in our complex and troubled world.

'Christ's resurrection is not an event of the past; it contains a vital power which has permeated this world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force. Often it seems that God does not exist: all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads.

Each day in our world beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises, and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection, and all who evangelise are instruments of that power.' [EG276]

And I would like to add: and so are those who strive for justice and peace.

Wishing you a happy and blessed Easter and the new hope and courage it brings.

Fr Gerry Murray (Chair)

Important dates in 2016 are no longer contained in this newsletter, since they are always available on our website www.birminghamjandp.org.uk where they are more up to date.

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Two forthcoming Conferences to note in your diaries:

15th to 17th July: National Justice & Peace Network Conference, Booking Form attached

Saturday 15th October: Birmingham J&P Assembly, St Peter's School, Solihull: "A Response to Laudato Si'". Details soon.

Please note: The J&P Commission will be standardising on Emailed editions of this Newsletter from now on and not sending paper copies in future unless specifically requested. If it is essential that you receive a paper copy please write to the Administrator at the home address on page 6 or on the [website \[contact us\] page.](#)

The Catholic Church and Nuclear Weapons

Pax Christi

Integrity will bring peace, justice give everlasting security (Is 32:17)

Action needed NOW

A decision on whether to replace the Trident submarine fleet, the UK's independent nuclear weapons system, is expected to be taken in 2016. Our government plans to replace Trident. Our voices must be heard **now** if we are to change this policy.

Did you know?

Between them Russia, USA, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea possess more than 17,300 nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons create health and environmental catastrophes around the world. Testing in the Pacific, Kazakhstan, the United States, Africa, South Asia, and China has caused profound damage to the environment and local communities.

The UK alone has 225 nuclear warheads. Each Trident submarine carries eight missiles with five warheads. Each warhead has an explosive power eight times that of the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

The cost of replacing Trident is now over £100 billion and government spending on research and development for nuclear weapons is over £320 million a year.

One-third of British universities have received funding from the Atomic Weapons Establishment which designs and manufactures the UK's nuclear weapons.

England and Wales

Our Catholic Bishops of England and Wales stated in November 2006:

“The very existence of nuclear weapons has always posed grave moral questions...

The Church has always been clear in its teaching about the vital necessity for eventual total nuclear disarmament. Our judgement is that, by decommissioning its nuclear weapons, the UK now has a unique opportunity to offer the international community an approach to security and legitimate self-defence without the unconscionable threat of nuclear destruction.”

.....and Pope Francis said in December 2014:

“Nuclear deterrence cannot be the basis for an ethics of solidarity and peaceful coexistence among peoples and states.”

A moral concern

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and humanity. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation.

Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965, #80

A legal concern

There exists an obligation* to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

*Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
Legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, International Court of Justice 1996

A humanitarian concern

Nuclear weapons are unique in their destructive power and the threat they pose to the environment and human survival. They release vast amounts of energy in the form of blast, heat and radiation. No adequate humanitarian response is possible. In addition to causing tens of millions of immediate deaths, a regional nuclear war involving around 100 Hiroshima-sized weapons would disrupt the global climate and agricultural production so severely that more than a billion people would be at risk of famine.

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

What you can do

Be informed...and inform others

Use the facts available from [Pax Christi](#) and other organisations listed to keep yourself and others up-to-date with the issue.

Prayer and reflection

Discuss the moral and humanitarian aspects of nuclear weapons and Trident.

How does government policy square with what the Church teaches?

What should our response be as Christian citizens?

Continued on next page

.....continued from page 2:

Ensure that prayers are included in your church community that will guide the decision-making of government away from security that is based on weapons and war.

Action

Host a meeting of local faith groups to reflect on what you might do and say together on this issue. Perhaps you could arrange a meeting with your local MP.

Join others in regular prayer vigils at Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment <http://bit.ly/1f3HKJW> and other nuclear establishments around the country.

Rethink Trident Statement

Do you think that the government should scrap plans to spend over £100bn replacing Trident? Support the Rethink Trident statement. **Pax Christi** has endorsed this statement with the following Church leaders *Archbishop Malcolm McMahon and Bishops Marcus Stock, Philip Egan, William Kenney, Terence Brain, Peter Doyle, Thomas McMahon, Stephen Cottrell and Paul Bayes* <http://www.rethinktrident.org.uk/>

Scrap Trident Petition

The government is cutting billions from public spending on health care, education, welfare and services and at the same time it is spending billions every year on Trident nuclear weapons. Sign the petition at <http://www.cnduk.org/campaigns/no-to-trident/scrap-trident-petition>

You can also download [a paper copy of the petition here](http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/petition2016.pdf) <http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/petition2016.pdf>

Useful organisations and websites

Action AWE (Atomic Weapons Establishment) www.actionawe.org

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament www.cnduk.org

Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament www.cnd.gn.apc.org

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons www.icanw.org/unitedkingdom/

Nuclear Morality Project www.nuclearmorality.com

Nuclear Information Service www.nuclearinfo.org

[Based on the Pax Christi leaflet "The Catholic Church and Nuclear Weapons"](#) (January 2015)

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

This prayer was developed for the New York State Labour-Religion Coalition's seventh annual 40-hour fast. It was also part of Prayers for a Just Economy, a prayer service calling for an increase in the federal minimum wage held in Washington, DC, July 24th, 2013.

Pray for those who are hungry.
Pray harder for those who will not feed them.

Pray for those who struggle each week to pay their bills.
Pray harder for the wealthy who do not care.

Pray for those who are homeless.
Pray harder for those who deny them shelter.

Pray for the sick and lonely.
Pray harder for those who will not give them comfort.

Pray for those who cry out for dignity.
Pray harder for those who will not listen.

Pray for those oppressed by unjust wages.
Pray harder for those who exploit them.

Pray for those who bear the yoke of prejudice.
Pray harder for those who discriminate against them.

Pray for those whose basic needs are denied.
Pray harder for public officials who cater to the greedy and ignore those bound unjustly.

Amen

by Rebecca Sutton, Program Coordinator of Global Women's Exchange.

Taking Responsibility for Our World

"Climate change is a challenge for all of us....not just governments and industrialists" writes Father [Pedro Walpole SJ in a recent article in *Jesuits & Friends on Climate Change, Spring 2016.*](#)

For further information see www.jesuitmissions.org.uk and jesuitsandfriends.org.uk

[This document is available on the J&P Commission website to be read and downloaded.](#)

“Step into The Gap” Experience in Birmingham by Alice Bowers

This time last year I was working in a clothes shop having just finished my degree and never dreamed that by now I would have just come back from south America, been standing up in lectures speaking and promoting CAFOD’s (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) work and the role of chaplaincy in such a way. My year with CAFOD’s *Step into the Gap* placement at Newman University, Birmingham, certainly has been a real treat!

Speaking in front of people was something I found and still do a bit, really daunting. However this year working in the chaplaincy has been all about promoting CAFOD’s work around campus and trying to get students and staff involved with social justice issues, so getting out and about is part of the job. From running a fair trade stall to a soup kitchen for staff and students, talking to people has extended to being able to talk in front of a lecture room.

The chaplaincy side of things ranges from helping the guardian angels at the start of the year get the fresher’s settled in, to general pastoral care. From aiding on foundation days, to decorating Christmas trees! The staff and students have been so welcoming and friendly. Part of the year involves setting up an International Development group on campus. This year it focuses on CAFOD’s *One Climate One World* campaign and therefore climate change. In light of this the International Development group has had a gardening project on campus and we have done an upcycling session filling old jam jars with homemade face cream and candles. For Fair Trade Fortnight we are also getting involved, holding a fair trade wine tasting and guess how many fair trade sweets in the jam jar day. So really it’s all about getting staff and students fired up and putting their faith into action regarding social justice in any way possible.

Part of this year has been the overseas visit to Peru which lasted for three weeks from mid-January to early February. This trip has been really inspiring and uplifting and really put into perspective the work of CAFOD and what the International Development group are doing on campus. While away we got to observe the work of CAFOD’s partners.

One, Warmi Huasi, looked after children while parents were at work, but more than this encouraged advocacy and the right to play amongst children; quite often elder siblings were looking after the younger ones and children’s rights weren’t recognised. Another partner *Solidaridad* helped women set up businesses and escape the trap of being in a violent relationship, violence amongst families being something prevalent in Peru. *Solidaridad* taught things to

the women such as baking, hairdressing and knitting. Hortencia one of the women first to sign up to the baking initiative said that she ‘didn’t know what it was like to have self-esteem’ before she joined the group.

From Lima, where the work of Warmi Huasi and *Solidaridad* lies we headed up to the mountains of An-cash and in particular, Cruz de mayo and Caraz where the people were predominantly farmers and subsistence farmers. They were facing many challenges around mining companies wanting to come onto their land and a big hydroelectric company releasing water at odd times, or not at all, affecting their crops. CE-AS, the partner of CAFOD working there, helped the community come together to combat, non-violently, these issues. For example, measuring the base line of the pH and turbidity of the water at the moment gives the local people an argument if the mining companies do come in and play havoc with the condition of their water. CEAS also provides information on political and legal aspects.

The generosity and passion for change and a better future of the people of Peru was something that really hit home while overseas. It’s been a real pleasure to share experiences with them and then to come back and share the stories with you, Newman University and the local community.

Alice Bowers

Some thoughts on the Refugee/Migrants Crisis

Philip Mayland

I am constantly moved whenever a news item is broadcast or printed about refugees seeking a safe place to live and they are rejected; fences are built; armed police and soldiers confront them; Bishops pronounce edicts that they are not welcome, or that we should not welcome people of different faiths.

I cannot help but wonder what Jesus would have said. Well this is what he did say “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Matthew Ch. 25.

The crisis facing the world is immense and urgent. We have no choice but to help in every way we can. However the media use language which is designed to demonise refugees and migrants and therefore make it acceptable that we do little or nothing. Do you remember how the tone of reporting changed when we saw pictures of a three year old boy dead on a beach? Have we reverted to an attitude of indifference?

In Calais, there is a migrant/refugee camp called the jungle”. What sort of picture does that conjure up? Is that name designed to allow us to think that the people

living there are somehow animals, and therefore salve our conscience because we have done nothing to welcome them? I imagine many Catholics, and Christians, Muslims and Jews, people of faith and of no faith have wrestled with their consciences to determine what is a proper response to the situation facing Britain, Europe, the world. I have tried to ascertain some of the facts and numbers and to process the numbers into something I can relate to. I have also sought out Catholic Social Teaching which might shed some light on what my attitude should be.

Some facts which strike me as important are:

59.5 million people worldwide are forcibly displaced. (This is close to the total population of the UK).

Developing countries host over **86%** of the world's refugees. This is an increase from 70% ten years ago. That is six out of every seven refugees is given help in a developing country.

On average, almost one out of every four refugees is Syrian. 95% of Syrian refugees are in the surrounding countries: Lebanon, over 1 million; Jordan, over 600,000; Turkey, over 1.6 million.

There are over 12 million Syrian refugees who are internally displaced. i.e. an equivalent population of all of London and Wales put together.

Over 300,00 British citizens left this country during 2014-2015. Over 5 million British citizens live abroad. (We label these expats, not migrants).

Pope Francis said "We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected and loved." That is clear. I notice that the Holy Father uses two words, migrants and refugees. Many people seem to use these as interchangeable, but they are not. These are the definitions:

Refugees – *have to* move in order to save their lives or preserve their freedom.

Migrants – *choose to* move in order to improve their prospects.

Refugees are the subject of the United Nations Convention on Refugees 1951, and 1967. This Convention establishes their rights and also the responsibilities of member states. (You can find the detail by visiting the UNHCR Website, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>.)

Why do people move? In most cases it is because their lives have become untenable. Their governments cannot provide the conditions for a peaceful, dignified way of life. Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan (parts of), Somalia are examples where it is manifestly unsafe. There are those also, who have to move because of the

climate. Drought has meant they cannot grow the crops they need, they haven't the water they need to survive. Are these also refugees?

What should I do? What can I do?

First of all, because we live in a democracy I have a responsibility and a right to make my views known. I can write to the Prime Minister to tell him that the Government's response is just not enough. We are a very rich country and we can take in many more, given the political will. We can write or speak to our own Members of Parliament and we can contact our MEP to do the same. We can also ask that they take a lead in bringing about a European wide consensus to do a lot more.

We can support CAFOD in their work with refugees. Join their campaign asking the Prime Minister to increase the number of resettlement places available to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees - [email David Cameron today](mailto:David.Cameron@10 Downing Street). CAFOD also have a Refugee Crisis Appeal. You can donate: <http://cafod.org.uk/Give/Refugee-Crisis-Appeal>. This goes to sister agencies in the Caritas network across Europe, the Middle East and Syria to support refugees. They also have other resources for schools <http://cafod.org.uk/Education/Secondary-schools/Refugee-crisis> CAFOD have already disbursed over £2.5 million to support refugees.

One other aspect of the Crisis has to be to become aware of those in our own communities who are asylum seekers and refugees who are already here. Many of them are living desperate lives. Find out what is happening in your own locality and join those who are already helping. Archbishop Bernard, last November, asked for a collection for Refugees and Migrants, which is being administered by Caritas, Archdiocese of Birmingham – see

<http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/caritas/news/Diocesan-Asylum-Seeker-and-Refugee-Appeal>;

<http://www.sanctusmarks.co.uk/>;

<http://burslem.org.uk/jubilee.html>;

[Brushstrokes launch initiative to help parishes welcome and support refugees](#)

If nothing is being done, and there is a need, this can be an opportunity to work with those from other churches. Finally, we must pray. Pray for guidance, for inspiration, for courage and perseverance.

Pope John XXIII said "*Every human being must also have the right to freedom of movement within the confines of his own country and when there are just reasons for it, the right to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there.*"

I AM A STRANGER; WILL YOU WELCOME ME? :

News From Pax Christi

Ann Kelly

Opportunities in 2016

2016 is being called the 'Year of Conscience' because it marks the centenary of the introduction of conscription - and the first legal recognition of conscientious objection - in the Military Service Act. Plan an event in your area to honour those who said 'No' to war. Some groups are organising for 2 March (the date conscription came into force) and others working towards International Conscientious Objectors' Day on **15 May**. Let's make 2016 significant in towns and villages across the country.

18 April (Mon) National Global Campaign on Military Spending

An opportunity to talk about, show, discuss the choices we have: military spending or human needs and the protection of the environment. On-line resources available here <http://demilitarize.org.uk/>

21 May (Sat) Leeds Pax Christi Annual General Meeting

will be held at Oxford Place Methodist Centre, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS1. More information on our website.

Pax Christi ICON of peace. There has been a new surge of interest in the ICON. It has been in several parishes around the country and used in Advent services. The ICON is now booked until late spring. More on the ICON at: <http://paxchristi.org.uk/resources/pax-christi-icon-of-peace/>

Government restrictions on local councils supporting boycotts on ethical grounds:

Putting a stop to public procurement boycotts - www.gov.uk/government/news/putting-a-stop-to-public-procurement-boycotts.

[Jeremy Moodey in Christian Today](#) *The UK government is set this week to announce [see here] which threaten "serious penalties" for local councils, NHS trusts and other publicly-funded bodies, including universities and possibly even student unions, which seek to impose boycotts on Israeli goods. The new regulations have been linked to a separate move to impose tighter rules on local authority pension funds, preventing them from the government calls "politically-*

motivated boycott and divestment campaigns against UK defence companies and against Israel".

Five arguments against this:

- 1. They fly in the face local democracy.*
- 2. They confuse boycotting Israel with boycotting the occupation and settlements.*
- 3. They contradict the government's own policy on trading with Israeli settlements.*
- 4. They ignore the historical examples of South African apartheid and fair trade.*
- 5. They could be the thin end of the wedge.*

This might also affect Paul McGowan's campaign re: the West Midland's Pension Fund's investments in arms companies... and those seeking Fairtrade status for towns and cities.

Resources:

Study/reflection guides:

'Step Gently in the World', publ. Iona Community
'Reconciliation: The Heart of Peace' – based on the Pax Christi Icon

'Be Still and Know', based on 'The Miracle of Mindfulness' by Thich Nhat Hanh

Cards:

Icon of Peace – prayer cards and greeting cards;
'Resurrection' greeting cards;
International Women's Day postcards

School pack: Fly Kites not Drones.

All available from www.paxchristi.org.uk/resources
www.paxchristi.org.uk/peace-education
or email: info@paxchristi.org.uk

Ann Kelly

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.

If you have a contribution you would like included in the Summer 2016 newsletter please send it for consideration 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