

Birmingham Justice and Peace Commission Newsletter

www.birminghamjandp.org.uk



Issue 49

Autumn 2021

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to present our latest newsletter at this time when COP26 is in full swing. Some progress seems to have been made in addressing the serious issues affecting the climate emergency and the care of our common home. Time will tell whether the words transform themselves into meaningful actions. We still have to keep playing our part in this great struggle and encouraging others to reflect and act at the personal and community level. There is hope. I hope you will enjoy looking at the material in this issue and find inspiration and hope. It is good to see that our diocese in company with other dioceses in the UK and beyond are working to decarbonise and increase sustainability and to divest from fossil fuels. May the good work continue and develop and be fruitful.

May the Lord inspire and bless us all in this work.

With best wishes,
Fr. Gerard Murray (Chair)

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Dates for your diary:

Monday 15th November
Commission meeting, 11am

Tuesday 23rd November
Discussion Forum, 7pm

COP26 UN climate conference, taking place
between 1 and 12 November 2021 in Glasgow.

2022

Tuesday 23rd January
Discussion Forum, 7pm

Monday 21st February
Commission meeting, 11am

**CAFOD Live Simply award -awarded to
St. Thomas More School, Willenhall
presented by
Canon Gerry Murray - 7th October 2021**



Students and staff at St. Thomas More Catholic school are delighted to have been presented with the CAFOD Live Simply award by Canon Gerry Murray on behalf of the Diocese. Canon Gerry is Chair of the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission and has particular responsibility for environmental policies in the Diocese and so it was very fitting that he was able to come into school to present the award.



The award is in recognition of the work that the school has done and continues to do in response to Pope Francis' invitation in *Laudato Si'* to "work with generosity and tenderness in protecting this world which God has entrusted to us". It is awarded to communities who can show how they have been living: simply; in solidarity with people in poverty; sustainably with creation.

Canon Gerry said: "It's wonderful to see a school achieving the Live Simply Award through their dedication and hard work. I hope this will provide an inspiration to other schools to follow in their footsteps". Students across all year groups have been involved in the planning and delivery of many of the events and

initiatives which contributed to achieving the award. Even during lockdown activities continued. Assemblies were delivered virtually focusing on CAFOD's campaigns. Students were able to participate in the "Walk for Water" campaign during Lent and, once back in school, many classes contributed to the "Eyes of the World" campaign in the lead-up to the COP26 conference to be held in Glasgow next month. During Advent when visitors were not able to come into school, students met in their bubbles and reached out to local Care Homes and charities by donating food, clothing, gifts and Christmas cards. Laurna, a Year 11 student commented that working for the award made her realise that, "When we care for the world we come closer to God as His stewards". Another student, Stephen, added, "If we take care of the world, the world will take care of us".



All departments in the school were asked to be involved with the Live Simply award. Students from the Youth SVP groups in school presented the initiative to Heads of Department and to governors. Each department was asked to identify how they could make changes to "live simply". Some of our Prince's Trust students took charge of the Peace Garden and bird boxes were made with the help of the Technology department. Students asked the catering company to replace the plastic cutlery in use with recyclable cutlery. KS3 students got involved in litter-picking as part of their pledge to look after the environment and all students across the school signed CAFOD pledge cards with a commitment to live simply.

The school's lay chaplain, Sarah McPhee, said that the school is committed to continuing this important work and recognises that, as CAFOD states: "The award celebrates what you have already done and inspires you to do more. It helps your community to live, not just more simply, but also more fully".

Article by St. Thomas More School

CAFOD
Just one world

Broken Angel art installations

Transforming a fractured past into a shared future, Broken Angel is a series of new site-specific installations to temporarily replace the vandalised Angel of the Eternal Gospel at Coventry Cathedral.

The installations will be on display from **1st November 2021 - 29th August 2022**. Cathedral opening times are 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 12pm-3pm Sun.



St Wilfrid and Blessed Carlo Acutis Celebrated on 12th October

Bishop. St Wilfrid was born in Northumbria in 633, the son of a noble family. He was educated at Lindisfarne, and later studied at Canterbury and then Rome. He returned to become Abbot of Ripon and introduced the Rule of St Benedict and the Western, or Roman, method of calculating Easter. This had been introduced by Kentish missionaries like Paulinus but rejected by monks of Lindisfarne who stuck to the old Celtic system.

At the Synod of Whitby, held in the monastery of monks and nuns presided over by St Hilda, in 663-4, his arguments for the calendar won. King Oswy, who opened the Synod, said that all who served one God should observe one rule of life.

Wilfrid built many churches and monasteries around the country and fell in and out of favour with the royal families of the day. He died in 709, aged 76, at his monastery near Oundle, in Northamptonshire.

The cult of Wilfrid centres on Ripon, where he was buried, and on Hexham, where his disciple Acca succeeded him as bishop and abbot. Forty-eight ancient churches were dedicated to him. The crypts of his churches at Hexham and Ripon survive.

St Wilfrid is considered one of the most important saints of the Old English church.
Blessed Carlo Acutis

Carlo was born in London on 3rd May 1991 to Italian parents and was baptised at Our Lady of Dolours church in Fulham, west London, on 18th May that year by Fr Nicholas Martin OSM, Parish Priest at the time. The family moved to Italy shortly afterwards where Carlo was raised as a Catholic. After making his First Holy Communion at the age of seven, he decided to attend Mass and pray the Rosary daily. He said: 'By standing before the Eucharistic Christ, we become holy.' He also had a routine of weekly confession. By the age of 11, he became a catechist.

"He was a remarkable young man, who had a great understanding of the sacraments and scripture," explains Fr Patrick Ryall OSM, current Parish Priest of Our Lady of Dolours.

Carlo learned about the known sites of Eucharistic miracles around the world and expressed a keen desire to go on pilgrimage to see these sites. To help others learn to grow in devotion to the Eucharist, he used his digital media skills to develop a website to catalogue each of these miracles. One of the Eucharistic Miracles that Carlo highlights is that connected with St Juliana, Foundress of the Servite Sisters on her death bed.

When Carlo developed a very aggressive form of leukaemia he offered his suffering for the Pope and the Universal Church. He asked his parents to take him to the pilgrimage sites of the Eucharistic miracles but his declining health made this impossible.

Carlo died on 12 October 2006 at the age of 15. His cause was opened in 2013 and he was declared a Servant of God. On 5th July 2018, Pope Francis declared him to be venerable. In February 2020, the Pope approved a miracle attributed to him. A young Brazilian completely recovered from a serious pancreatic disease after seeking his intercession. Carlo Acutis was beatified by Pope Francis on 10th October 2020 at the Basilica in Assisi.

Speaking before his beatification, Fr Patrick: "We're grateful that Carlo and his family had that time with our parish. We are sure he will be a source of blessing for us."

Watch a short video about Carlo here:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=yC_oZIY_f5w



You may or may not be aware that the Pope recently launched in May this year what is called The Laudato Si Action Platform. But what is that?

It is the work of the Dicastery for Promoting Human Integral Development, which is a relatively new department of the Holy See (2017), which has the responsibility for "issues regarding migrants, those in need, the sick, the excluded and marginalized, the imprisoned and the unemployed, as well as victims of armed conflict, natural disasters, and all forms of slavery and torture", which "takes place by attending to ... justice, peace and the care of creation." [Pope Francis]

What the Dicastery says is that "The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. The Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home."

So, what is this Laudato Si Action Platform? What has been gleaned so far is that it appears to be an attempt to get all of us in the Catholic Church, literally everyone, involved in putting Laudato Si', the Pope's famous Encyclical, into practice. The Pope wants us all to undergo an 'ecological conversion', because, he says, "We ... need a new ecological approach, which transforms our way of living in the world, our lifestyles, our relationship with the Earth's resources and in general the way we look at people and live our life" to respond to "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". It is a very ambitious programme to be introduced this October 2021 and lasting for seven years. It is aimed at "families, parishes and dioceses, schools and universities, hospitals, businesses and farms, organisations, groups and movements, religious communities, working together", which does not leave anyone out. And it is designed to address seven areas for action:

- Response to the cry of the Earth,
- Response to the cry of the poor,
- Ecological economics,
- Adoption of a simple lifestyle,

- Ecological education,
- Ecological spirituality and
- Community commitment.

In more detail, this means:

Response to the cry of the Earth: to work toward carbon neutrality through greater use of clean renewable energy and reduced fossil fuel use; support efforts to protect and promote biodiversity and guarantee water access for all.

Response to the cry of the poor: to defend human life from conception to death and all forms of life on Earth, while giving special attention to vulnerable groups such as indigenous communities, migrants and children at risk of trafficking and slavery.

Ecological economics: sustainable production, fair trade, ethical consumption and investments, investments in renewable energy, divestment from fossil fuels and limiting any economic activity harmful to the planet or people.

Adoption of simple lifestyles: to reduce use of energy and resources, avoid single-use plastics, adopt a more plant-based diet, reduce meat consumption and increase use of public transportation over polluting alternatives.

Ecological education: to redesign curricula around integral ecology, create ecological awareness and action, promote ecological vocation with young people and teachers.

Ecological spirituality: to recover a religious vision of God's creation, promote creation-centred liturgical celebrations, develop ecological catechesis and prayers and encourage more time in nature.

Emphasis on community involvement and participatory action around creation care at all levels of society by promoting advocacy and grassroots campaigns.

In October, there will be 'Laudato Si' Plans' made available for us all to use. What these are, we have yet to find out; that is a case of wait and see. But to back these up there will be resources and practical guidance provided on-line, which presumably is why it is called a 'platform'.

All this feels as though it is a very top-down in approach, although we are assured that it is a ground-up approach, since it is a collaboration between the Vatican and an international coalition of Catholic organisations, which are not identified as yet. How will this affect us? We shall see ... Watch this space!

This is the address for any questions about the LS Action Platform hello@laudatosimovement.org
You can find more about the Platform at <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/about/> and the goals are at <https://laudatosiactionplatform.org/laudato-si-goals/>



Divine Creator, how astounded we are to know how carefully and creatively you have fashioned us. Your patient tending began so long ago and continues in this very moment. Truly we are blessed. Help us to grow in awareness of how we are part of the Body of Creation, how we are connected to all that has been, all that is, and all that will be. Help us to be conscious of life, to understand how significant our role is, and to participate in your work by becoming co-creators with you. May we make choices that reflect care for our home in the universe, allowing your love to be expressed everywhere and to all. Amen.

Judy Cannato: "Radical Amazement".



Franciscan Ecological Examination of Conscience

(from *Care for Creation* p. 99-101, by Illia Delio, Keith Warner, Pamela Wood)



Sunday:

Is my whole life centred on God's overflowing love in my life, revealed through Jesus and through all of creation? Do I respond wholeheartedly to the call of this Spirit in my life?



Monday:

Do I accept with a grateful heart the gifts of God's goodness and diversity in creation? Do I respond, as Francis did, by building bonds of love, care, concern and companionship with all living beings? Do I value creation not as mine alone but first and foremost as God's home?



Tuesday:

Am I willing to accept Francis' invitation to live as a "lesser brother or sister" within the kinship of creation? Do I pray for the forgiveness of sins between humans and the created world, and for the healing and reconciliation of our broken relationship with creation?



Wednesday:

Am I caring toward my larger family of creation? Have I shown fidelity, humility, reverence and love to my Sister Mother Earth and all my brother and sister species? Have I used my God-given gifts to honour and protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings?



Thursday:

Have I lived in a state of un-relatedness, over and against creation? Have I used my God-given gifts to honour and protect the diverse, interdependent, fragile nature of all life and to preserve it for all future beings?



Friday:

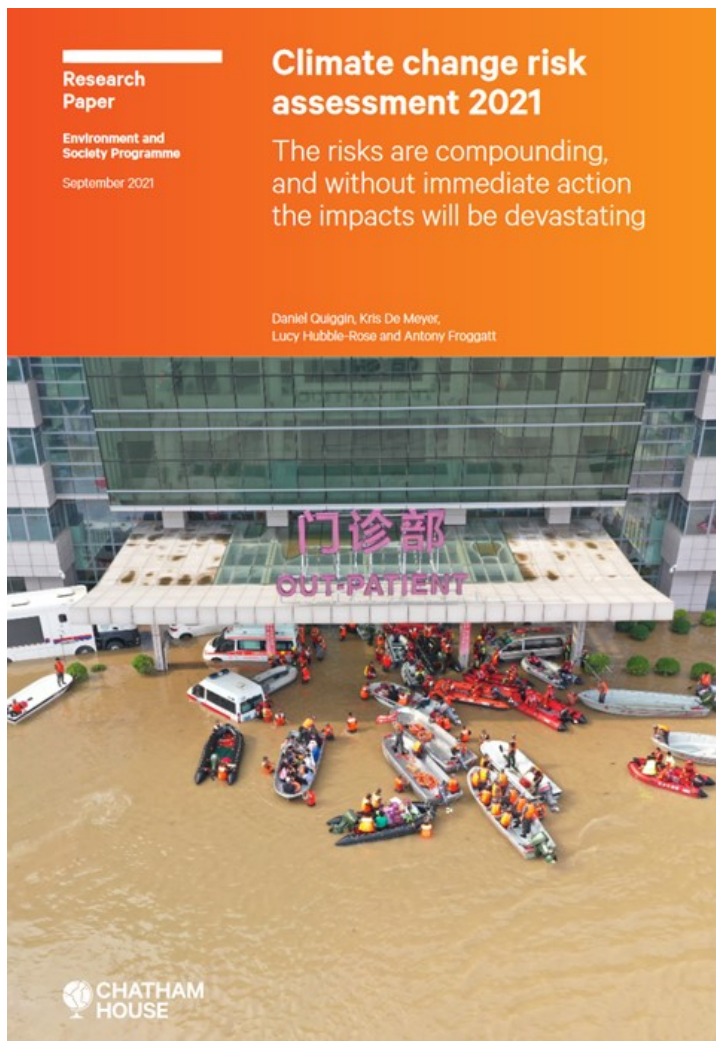
Do I seek to eliminate from the world whatever keeps all creatures in their full development intended by their Creator: pollution, greed, overconsumption, loss of habitat, disease, war, extinction of species, oppressive laws and structures? Do I support organizations that work for ecological improvement on a systemic scale, restoration of habitat and preservation of open spaces?



Saturday:

Have I committed myself to follow Francis' example of ecological conversion? Have I encouraged others to take care for creation seriously? Have I been judgmental or mean-spirited toward myself or others when we live imperfectly in our journey to heal our relationship with creation?

After spending time with your question of the day, hold in your mind and heart the ways in which you have lived in disharmony with creation. Ask the earth and the Creator for forgiveness for your transgressions. Offer these mistakes up to God and ask for the strength and the wisdom to learn to live with integrity within the web of creation. Resolve to amend your life in the spirit of penance and love for our world. Name one action you intend to take today to work for care for creation.



Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is a world-leading policy institute based in London. Our mission is to help governments and societies build a sustainably secure, prosperous and just world.

Introduction

Climate risks are increasing. Many of the impacts described in this research paper will be locked in by 2040, and become so severe they go beyond the limits of what many nations can adapt to.

In preparation for the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), to be held in Glasgow in November 2021, signatories to the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change are for the first time revising their climate mitigation plans, or nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

The Paris Agreement set the common goal of limiting global average temperature increases (relative to pre-industrial levels) to 'well below' 2°C and 'pursuing efforts' to 1.5°C; and envisaged a five-year revision process to NDCs to encourage increasingly ambitious national pledges. However, the commitments made in line with current NDCs fall far short of limiting global temperature increases to 2°C above pre-industrial levels, let alone 1.5°C.

By 2030, under current policies, the gap in annual emissions compared with a 2°C least-cost pathway will have reached 14–17.5 GtCO₂, equivalent to nearly half of current energy sector emissions.

This research paper highlights the risks and likely impacts if the goals set under the Paris Agreement are not met, and the world follows an emissions pathway consistent with recent historical trends. Simply updating – i.e. without significantly enhancing – NDCs will not guarantee the Paris Agreement goals are met; nor will enhanced pledges without swift and decisive delivery of those pledges. The governments of highly emitting countries have an opportunity to accelerate emissions reductions through ambitious revisions of their NDCs, significantly enhancing policy delivery mechanisms, and incentivizing rapid large-scale investment in low-carbon technologies. This will lead to cheaper energy and avert the worst climate impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the interconnections and interdependences between nations, as well as the potential for cascading sectoral impacts with far-reaching consequences for society. This shows, too, the critical need to consider whether existing systems are sufficiently resilient, not only to domestic sectoral shocks but to global adverse trends and events. Climate change is among the greatest such risks.

Risk assessments are a critical tool in enabling decision-makers to allocate appropriate resources, within finite budgets, to the various challenges society faces. Climate change risks are increasing over time, and what might be a small risk in the near term could embody overwhelming impacts in the medium to long term. Risks can be defined by a probability of occurrence and severity of impact; climate risks are no different. This paper presents high-probability, high-impact climate risks as well as low-probability, high-impact climate risks, recognizing that a low-probability outcome may still correspond to a high risk if the impact is severe. Many of the impacts described are likely to be locked in by 2040, and become so severe they go beyond the limits of what many countries can adapt to.

To read the this report in full please visit our website:

<https://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/news-and-events.html>



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christians in
parliament

Environment & Climate

Christian Foundations for Policymaking

Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the impact that humanity is having on the world around us. Environmental problems were prominent in the World Economic Forum's Global Risk Report 2020, with climate-related issues dominating all the top-five long-term risks in terms of likelihood.¹ The problems facing our planet are many and varied: from climate change to plastic pollution, from loss of biodiversity to water issues, from poor air quality to the overconsumption of the earth's resources. This paper will not rehearse the data on these issues again but seeks instead to offer biblical foundations for Christian engagement with our environmental and climate challenges. The problems are well-known and governments and international bodies are to varying degrees trying to respond, but the heart of the problem lies deeper. This is where Christian foundations can help form the right and effective response.

Biblical themes

To read the rest of this document please visit our website: <https://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/news-and-events.html>

bank.green

BANKS

One way that we can all divest from fossil fuels is to choose an ethical bank. We may be doing lots to make our lives more sustainable, but still be funding environmental catastrophe.

During the 5 years following the Paris Agreement (an international agreement to limit global warming to well under 2 degrees Celsius) the world's top 60 private-sector banks put \$3.8 trillion into fossil fuels.

Pressure from customers will force banks to defund fossil fuels.

Just click on your bank's name to see the extent of their involvement: <https://bank.green/>

The UK ethical banks, according to Bank Green, are Triodos Bank, the Co-operative Bank and Nationwide Building Society:

<https://bank.green/sustainable-ethical-banks>

Bank.Green have a pledge which people can sign to put added pressure on the fossil funding banks:

<https://bank.green/pledge>

Information supplied by Virginia

Flowers in Church



At a recent Laudato Si meeting they were talking about Live Simply and if it was right to have cut flowers in church. They thought that plants, locally grown flowers or fair trade flowers should be used and that we should think about the air miles etc before buying cut flowers.

So I asked the question to my local Denary Justice and Peace group and here are some of their replies.

I think the same.

Many imported flowers are grown under conditions that exploit the workers and also subject them to working where pesticides etc are used frequently.

Fairtrade flowers are flown in of course, but the conditions are not exploitative.

As with food, local and organic is always best and Fairtrade for things that cannot be local.

Better not to have glamorous floral displays if people and environment are being exploited and damaged.

More widely, it seems to me that many churches/communities have forgotten about Fairtrade or let it slip and we need to push it more again.

Sent in by Ann

I agree with Ann's comments. Also, could we not decorate the church with what we naturally have plentiful supplies of here even in winter, sprays of leaves and berries, seeds and fruits from bushes and trees. There are still geraniums and some other flowers until hard frosts set in.

Sent in by Cathy

Local, seasonal are more appropriate anyway.

Sent in by Ruth

Flower arrangers need to give up using oasis to arrange flowers as it is a plastic and degrades easily to micro plastic. I know that St Thomas More arrangers have already done this.

Sent in by Kris

I would be interested to know what you think and what the policy is in your church, especially if you are a Live Simply Parish.

admin.jandp@rcaob.org.uk



Flowers in Cemeteries and grave yards

On the previous page in this newsletter we looked at flowers in Church.

For the 1st November many people visit and clean graves. They buy flowers and candles. In at least one parish I know the Parish Priest has been asking his parishioner's to reuse candle holders, stop using plastic flowers—take home their old flowers—recycle and reuse. But when you look around markets and shops in countries like Poland the amount of plastic used when people are remembering their deceased relatives and friends is incredible.

(photograph of part of the Thursday Market in Koronowo Poland in preparation for All Saints Day)

Comments from Laudato Si community members

Flowers are lovely but a lot of what is sold comes from afar, has a large foot print and has been grown in vast areas, using pesticides, to the detriment of other cultures. Do we know exactly how much damage we are doing by buying them?

Laudato si', Rita

Thanks for asking for our thoughts.

The photo is lovely, but Rita is right. The Animators will be discussing an article, at some point, which includes the issue of fresh flowers, and also beeswax candles, as they both have some negative associations. Speaking just for myself, I think potted native flowers would be fine in church. In graveyards, how about planting a flower beside the grave? Permission would be needed before planting anything, to avoid problematic species. Another suggestion is placing a potted native plant instead of cut flowers at the grave. I do hope that your article will put some pressure on church authorities to allow potted flowers in church.

Laudato si', Virginia

I agree with both Rita and Virginia regarding cut flowers in church and to be honest on commemorative benches and in graveyards.

I can add a slight slant to this too - as a member of our local South Northumberland Blyth Links Conservation group; we do a fortnightly litter pick along our beach and sand dunes. We regularly pick up plastic flower coverings along with ribbons and balloons which have blown from a cemetery across a main road! We also collect the same along with various plastic flowers and even plastic plants that have become dislodged from benches along the sea front.

Many years ago I recall taking flowers with my Mother from my Dads garden to place on their parents graves, this was quite normal then as was the planting of bulbs or placing a small plant and in many cases nothing at all just a neat grave. With the excess of consumerism and I hate to say it 'one up man ship' it would seem that excess in some form or another has become the norm. Many councils have rules about such things which we have read about and heard people object to.

Personally I think that graveyards should be a place of solace a place where people can sit or wander and quietly contemplate. Perhaps this could be emphasized and in some way a gentle reminder be given to all concerned.

Obviously church grave yards vary in size but I wonder if perhaps people could be discouraged from excess and instead be encouraged to donate to a tree planting scheme or the development of a wild flower meadow, or even a beautiful native hedge, wildlife trusts can give excellent support and information on these things.

Likewise in church, I looked in despair today at the stunning flower arrangements in our little church, yes very beautiful but they will be replaced in a couple of weeks time with yet another arrangement. And horror of horrors I am know for sure that when the couple who supply and arrange the flowers are away on holiday they will be replaced with expensive plastic and silk flowers. But this time I have a plan, I will be offering to substitute the silk and plastic for plants and for the spring I will be planting bulbs in baskets which can then be transferred outdoors for the following year.

As you see this is a subject which I have been contemplating for quite some time!

Laudato Si, Clare



Peace and Climate Pledge

Climate Change is probably the biggest threat not just to our children's lives but also to world peace. You can do your bit to reduce the risk by taking action to reduce your carbon footprint.

Use this form to pledge to take action.

Note: You do NOT need to Sign into Google!
[Sign in to Google](#) to save your progress. Learn more

My Pledge (select one or add your own)

- ⇒ Fly less
- ⇒ Eat less meat
- ⇒ Walk more
- ⇒ Install solar panels
- ⇒ Cycle more
- ⇒ Turn heating down
- ⇒ Vote for green policies
- ⇒ Switch to green energy
- ⇒ Drive electric
- ⇒ Waste less food
- ⇒ Wear clothes that last
- ⇒ Repair and re-use
- ⇒ Green my money
- ⇒ Insulate my home
- ⇒ Eat seasonal food
- ⇒ Recycle more
- ⇒ Other:



**LAUDATO SI'
MOVEMENT**

*formerly
Global Catholic
Climate Movement*

The Laudato Si Movement.

Six years ago the Global Catholic Climate Movement was inaugurated in response to Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter Laudato Si'. Earlier this year the GCCM underwent a process and decided to change its name to the Laudato Si Movement. This name more accurately reflects its mission and values. Here are the values of this movement.

VALUES

Grounded in faith
Committed to spiritual transformation
Caring for one another
Being prophetic
Taking an integral approach
Cultivating unity within diversity
Being in the Church and in the world
Building bridges
Embracing contemplation and action
Living in hope

Grounded in faith

Our Catholic faith motivates us to act. Laudato Si' inspires our mission. As followers of Jesus, our decisions are guided by Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching. We serve the Church by lifting up the integrity of creation and recognizing the value of caring for God's creation in our faith tradition and our Christian lives.

Committed to spiritual transformation

We commit to "ecological conversion," the ongoing transformation of our hearts toward greater love with our Creator and creation. We take time to listen to God's message in creation "with awe and wonder" (LS 11). We reflect on our words and actions, humbly acknowledge where we are falling short, and practice new ways of living simply and in solidarity with creation.

Being prophetic

We heed "the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (LS 49) by urging ambitious action for ecological and climate justice. We act in solidarity with communities that carry an unjust burden of the ecological crisis, including future generations. We strategically challenge structures of sin and call for "radical change" (LS 171), while being open to dialogue. Our prophetic work is always nonpartisan and nonviolent.

Taking an integral approach

"Everything is connected" (LS 91). We embrace a worldview of integral ecology, which sees ecological,

cultural, and social issues as intertwined. We commit to the protection of all human life, from womb to tomb, and to the protection of other species.

Cultivating unity within diversity

We are nourished by the rich diversity of creation and the diversity within the Church, striving for unity in caring for our common home while honoring the unique gifts each individual or organization brings. We live a "spirituality of global solidarity" (LS 240), which unites us for globally-coordinated action that is adapted to local contexts.

Being in the Church and in the world

We serve alongside the whole Catholic family, from the hierarchy to the grassroots, from clergy and religious to the laity. We build relationships between the Church and the environmental movement, being "Christian environmentalists" who are environmentalists among Christians and Christians among environmentalists.

Building bridges

We open space for collaboration between organizations and individuals across borders and regions. We work hand-in-hand with other Christians, other faith communities, and social and environmental movements as a single human family.

Embracing contemplation and action

We are contemplatives, and we are activists. We delight in creation's song and compassionately respond to creation's cry. We practice a slow-paced "ecological spirituality" of reflection and prayer, and we practice fast-paced activism to match the urgency of the crisis.

Living in hope

"We know that things can change" (LS 13). With Resurrection joy, we celebrate stories of resilience and life. We rejoice in this ministry as an expression of God's love in our life and for all creation. We entrust our efforts to the Holy Spirit and Mary Queen of Creation.

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If you think that you can play a part in spreading these values why not become a Laudato Si Animator? The training is interesting and thorough and takes about six weeks. Visit the website for details of when the next Course begins.

Phil Mayland



Prof Rita Tvrtkovic

India: Conference on Mother Mary, Christians and Muslims

Lakshmi Menon Bhatia Institute of Dialogue with Cultures and Religions, Loyola College, Chennai and Islamic Studies Association, Delhi organised a webinar on Mother Mary: Christians and Muslims on 24th October 2021. The webinar was presented by Professor Rita George-Tvrtković (Associate Professor of Theology, Benedictine University, Illinois, USA).

Prof Rita George Tvrtkovic in her lecture highlighted the representation of Mother Mary both as a bridge between Christians and Muslims and also a barrier to mutual relations between these two sets of believers. She used various documents ranging from the 5th century Byzantine records to the Spanish Cantigas to illustrate her point.

She also pointed out that in an outburst of missionary zeal, the Dominican scholar like William of Tripoli (d. 1291) in line with Thomas Aquinas believed that faith cannot be imparted to the other in intellectual fencing matches. He affirmed that the points in common to both religions such as 'doctrines on Jesus and Mary' could be used as 'stepping stones' (bridges) for better understanding between Christians and Muslims.

William of Tripoli did praise the piety of Muslims and their reverential fear of God despite being critical of Islam in his writings (Treatise on the Saracen State).

Further, Professor Tvrtković pointed out that Mother Mary has been represented as per the various socio political interests and compulsions of those times. The Portuguese in medieval times represented Mother Mary as a barrier for Muslims and as someone who only represented the interests of the Christian Faith. She was also pulled into various intra religious tussles between the Catholics and other branches of Christianity.

Prof Tvrtkovic then went on to highlight various shared shrines that are dedicated to Mother Mary across the world, where people of multiple beliefs gather in Faith. These range from shrines in Syria, Lebanon to India and show how uniting is her holy Presence. The works of the French Catholic Scholar of Islam, Louis Massignon who coined the term "Abrahamic Faith" in

the late 1950's once again throws light on Mother Mary's role as a bridge between the Christians and the Muslims.

This enlightening presentation was followed by a discussion moderated by Fr Mary Arul Raja. The 50 odd participants from all across the world share their thoughts and views and raised some important questions. The discussions ranged from queries about why God couldn't be known by a similar name across traditions, to how Shared shrines could be used as a starting point as dialogue spaces and what can be the associated risks as well as opportunities for the same. It was also shared as to how the Sufi understanding of Islam can help one bridge the gaps in the understanding regarding Mary and Jesus and the two faiths.

The Session was moderated by Professor Mary Arul Raja SJ, the director of IDCR, Chennai. The Session began with Sanskrit Prayers dedicated to the Divine Feminine in the form of Goddess Saraswati & Goddess Gouri from the ancient Vedic Tradition and ended with a vote of thanks by Joseph Victor Edwin SJ, secretary of Islamic Studies Association.



The Climate Emergency Action Group.

For the past twelve months, the Justice and Peace Commission have been trying to formulate an Environmental Policy for the Archdiocese. We have arranged a series of meetings online, beginning with our Assembly last year, and continuing by submitting drafts of the Policy for discussion, amendment, and alteration, until we finally agreed on a substantial document.

Canon Gerry Murray, our Chair, and I, met with His Grace Archbishop Bernard and the Trustees at the end of April and we discussed the document with a view to the Diocesan authorities adopting this as a way forward for the whole Archdiocese. Following further discussion, and amendments, the Archdiocese have published a Statement of Intent for us all to follow. They have appointed a Climate Emergency Action Group to promote, support and encourage all members of the Archdiocese, -- parishes, schools, communities, to understand the need for all of us to make changes in our own lifestyles.

The main points are the Archdiocese aims to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Trustees have already decided to divest from fossil fuels. All parishes, schools, and communities to sign up for the CAFOD Live Simply Award by the end of this year. All parishes and schools should join the green energy scheme which the Archdiocese has already agreed.

The Live Simply Award allows groups to decide their own targets under the headings of Living Simply, Sustainably and in Solidarity. This may mean adopting new practices, but in reality, we find that we are already doing much that can be included. It is not as difficult or daunting as some may think.

The Climate Emergency Action Group clearly has much to do. We have met and listened to Dr Emma Gardner from Salford Diocese. We hope to maintain close links and learn from the experiences of all Dioceses as they make fundamental changes in lifestyles. We are also awaiting with interest the details of the Laudato Si Action Platform, due to be revealed from the Vatican, later this month.

The Justice and Peace Commission will be happy to receive any comments you may have and contributions about how you are responding to the Climate Emergency.

Phil Mayland

Commission Member and Action Group Member.



CARJ Listening Sessions on Synodality

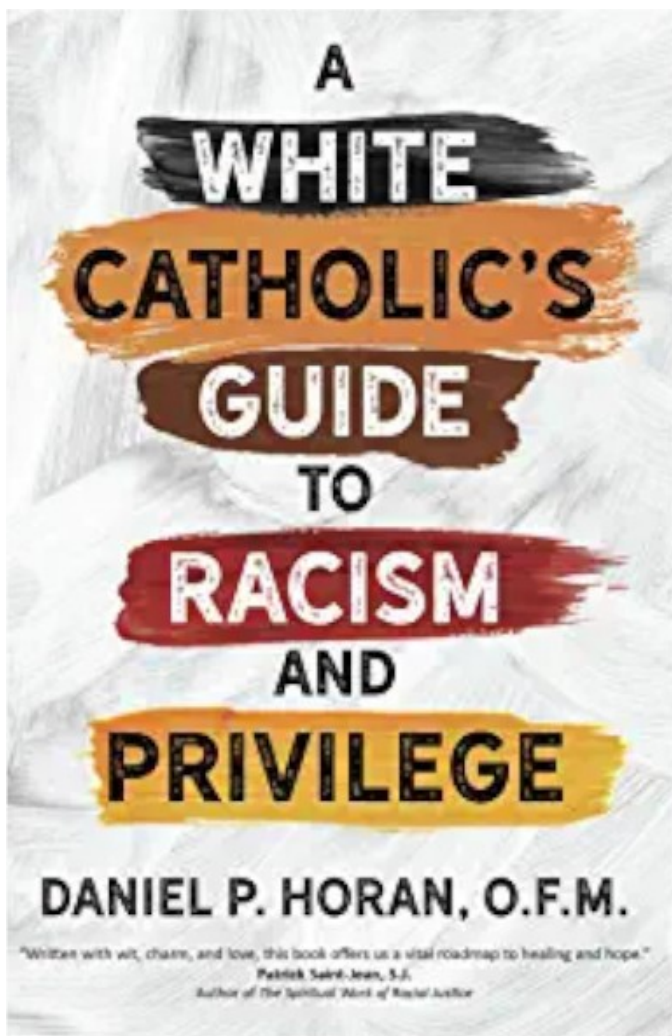
Saturday 20th and 27th November 10am-1pm
Pope Francis has invited Catholics and the entire world to enter into a conversation on the theme of Participation, Communion and Mission.

In response to this, and the invitation from the Bishops of England and Wales, CARJ will be running two listening sessions on the 20th and 27th November from 10am-1pm.

We will be considering the theme of Participation, Communion and Mission, through our distinct lens of racial justice and inclusion. For full details, please see the attached document.

You are warmly welcome to join these sessions.
Please register by emailing our CARJ Administrator,

Gloria at info@carj.org.uk



CARJ Briefing

New book praises Bishops of England & Wales for their recognition of Institutional Racism in the Church
Fr Daniel Horan's new book, *A White Catholic's Guide to Racism and Privilege* (Ave Maria Press, September 2021) is a reflection on racism and racial justice in the USA. He reviews Catholic Social Teaching on the issues and quotes *Gaudium et Spes* - "The Church always has the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel." Then he adds, ".....one of the most urgent signs of our times is the persistence of systemic racism."

Fr Horan highlights the positions taken by Bishops Conferences in India, South Africa and the UK. In relation to the UK, he discusses the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the outrage over the 'apparent lack of police interest or effort to investigate the crime', which led to Parliament asking Sir William Macpherson to lead an investigation into the police response. The Macpherson Report was published in 1999 and outlined extensive evidence of 'institutional racism'.

Soon after publication of the Macpherson Report, the Catholic Bishops' Committee for Community Relations published *Serving a Multi-Ethnic Society*, in which the Bishops welcomed the Macpherson Report and went

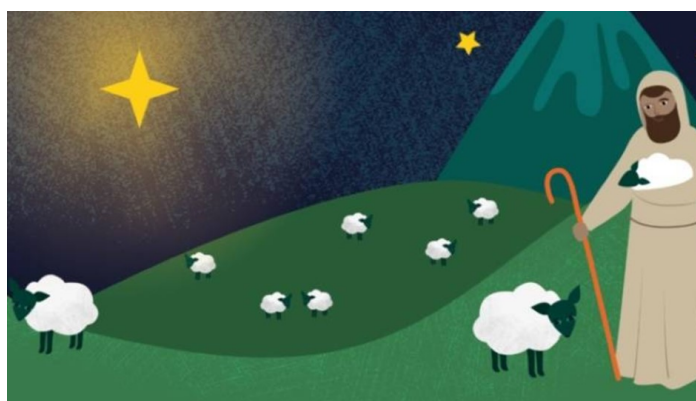
on to say: 'knowing that institutional racism exists in some of the key institutions of our society, we cannot assume that Catholic organisations and institutions are unaffected.' The Bishops asked that Catholic institutions in England & Wales review themselves in the light of the Macpherson Report. In response, some 65 Catholic organisations became involved in the process and 21 committed themselves to undertake such a review. The results were reported back to the Bishops in April 2001.

Fr Horan suggests that this response by the Bishops of England and Wales, along with similar interventions by the Bishops in India and South Africa, offer a 'model for how Catholics in the United States might think about responding to racial injustice in the Church and world.'

CARJ welcomes Fr Horan's book, which reminds us that the Bishops' positive acknowledgment of 'institutional racism' was an important moment in our history, and something we might want to revisit in the light of recent events.

Fr Daniel Horan OFM is an American Franciscan theologian and author. He is currently the Director of the Center for Spirituality and Professor of Philosophy, Religious Studies, and Theology at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana

CARJ, 9 Henry Rd, London N4 2LH. 020 8802 8080. Info@carj.org.uk. The Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) is an independent charity committed to working with others of diverse backgrounds and beliefs to bring about a more just, more equal, more cooperative society.



The Live Simply Christmas

The word we hear so often in the weeks before Christmas is "Tradition". It is particularly promoted by the glossies who like to sell us the concept of "the perfect Christmas". But do we want Christmas to be about things - or about family? Will we do what the commercial world wants us to do (spend) or what WE want to do (celebrate with love)?

The following are just ideas - to make you think about ways to get more out of Christmas whilst reducing the waste.

1. For adults, why not have a "Secret Santa" instead of buying individual presents for ten or a dozen people. This means you choose just one present with care rather than a dozen or so in haste. There is also the fun of wondering "who bought for whom". £10 is often considered a suitable value, but each to their own.
2. Alternatively ask for a "World Gift" or a donation to a charity in your name. Knowing that you have met somebody else's need is truly in the spirit of Christmas.
3. Consider Fairtrade products. There is a wide range of crafts, Christmas decorations and even Christmas cakes available from Traidcraft. Supermarkets stock a wide range of Fairtrade goods, including some excellent wines.
4. Consider a subscription to something useful that also benefits the community. For instance a year's membership to the National Trust or similar organisation - you can look forward in the dark days of winter to summer outings with the family.
5. Where possible, make rather buy things. A little "making" project can be very relaxing at the end of a busy day. Why not start by making Advent Calendars for the children? Choosing the quotes for the windows is, in itself, a spiritual exercise.
6. Make some of your Christmas cards. Deliver local ones on foot or by bike as a little outing.
7. Leave an empty place at the Christmas table as a reminder of those who will not have enough to eat that day.
8. We often hear that "Christmas is for children" – but how often do we really INVOLVE them, not just in Christmas, but in the preparation too? Here are some ideas:
 - Have fun planning Christmas as a family, starting with Advent
 - Get them to make the decorations rather than buying them
 - Ask them to make, rather than buy your present - it will be something made with love for you to treasure
 - Ask them to prepare a special grace for the Christmas meal
 - Ask them to do something "extra" for Christmas that helps take the strain off you. For instance, young children to have a "special" quiet time or teenagers to give the house a "special" clean before putting up the decorations
9. If you do buy presents:
 - Look for things that are durable rather than being in landfill in three months. Also where, possible, things made of natural products rather than plastic, or crafted by hand rather than machine-made.
 - Take children for a good browse in a craft shop rather than just heading straight for the toyshop.

Christmas is what YOU make it. It should be a time of love both for your own family and for the brothers and sisters in our worldwide family.



The case for rationing vehicle fuels

In 1973 the UK Government introduced vehicle fuel rationing because of shortages caused by the oil crisis when the OPEC countries cut exports to boost prices. It was largely accepted by the public.

As we face climate catastrophe, I suggest that the time is now right to start planning for future rationing to reduce fuel waste. There will no doubt be howls of protest from the "entitlement" lobby, but there will be many benefits.

We waste fuel because we can. We do not value it because we consider it to be inexhaustible. Higher fuel prices alone have limited effectiveness. They may cut use by people who can only just afford to run a car, but have little effect on those who can afford to pay the extra. At current prices, fuel is only about a quarter of the cost of running a car. Paradoxically, the more fuel costs, the more the rich and vain may value using a gas guzzler as a statement of affluence.

Rationing would focus our minds on using our vehicles wisely and avoiding wasteful and pointless journeys (see box). Just a look at some of the journeys made in contravention of COVID rules is enlightening - a 100-mile round trip for a burger, for example. Then there is my neighbour who drives to the paper shop every morning rather than getting it delivered - yes there is still a paperboy! There are also people who drive because of long-held prejudices about public transport. There needs to be a change in mind-set from seeing car use as a right to seeing it as a privilege; from seeing the value of fuel, rather than its price.

Clearly, rationing would need to be accompanied by huge improvements in alternative means of travel and communications. This is already beginning to happen as COVID 19 has shown the practicality of working from home for many people. Public transport needs to be in public ownership if it is to truly serve the public good and be affordable. We spend billions on new roads, but penny-pinch on improvements to public transport which are essential for people who do not have cars.

Rationing is a much more equitable way of reducing waste than just pricing, but must be done correctly. In 1973, the fuel allocation was per car and the bigger the engine, the more you got! So the wasters got not only got a bigger allocation, but the rich among them could just go out and buy another car and get even more. Therefore, a fuel ration should be allocated to specified individuals with a specified car. There would be a flat rate based on the assumption that each car would do, say, at least 50 mpg. Thus people with more efficient cars would derive greater benefit. There could be a year-on-year expectation of increased efficiency leading to a ratcheting-down of allocations.

Such a system would have a collateral benefit in largely eliminating illegal motoring. A person would only receive a fuel allocation if they had a valid driving licence and their car was taxed, tested and insured. Furthermore, penalty points could be accompanied by cuts in fuel allocation. Thus a banned driver could be kept off the road or a person wasting fuel by speeding could have their allowance cut. All these measures could lead to huge improvements in road safety and would probably be welcomed by the police.

Furthermore, car sharing would be encouraged and other forms of community transport made more viable. There would be additional benefits in encouraging the move to electric and hybrid cars, a powerful driver for innovation in the motor industry. There would be less congestion, improving journey times for essential trips, less need for “smart” motorways, reduced pollution and less of our green and pleasant land lost to tarmac.

But what about the practicalities? I would envisage an electronic fuel debit card, similar to the photocard driving licence, which would need to be presented at the pump before delivery. DVLA already has computers which can check, in an instant, my licence, tax, MOT and insurance and it would seem to be realistic to upgrade to establish a fuel allocation system based on the existing databases.

As with any system there are many areas which would require exemptions, for instance freight transport, public service vehicles, taxis and legitimate business use, such as service engineers and the construction industry, including plumbers, small builders and electricians. However, fuel used in hired vehicles would come off the hirer’s allocation and a fuel use deduction would be made for passengers on internal flights to stop people using alternative carbon-intensive transport means to conserve their allocation.

Let us, as a first step, get this issue on the public agenda by demanding that the Government commit to introducing a fully-operational fuel rationing system by the start of 2025 at the very latest. Time is needed to get it right! It is essential for the Government to fully analyse the issues, look at ways in which a rationing system might be equitably managed and carry out the necessary consultation. There would need to be a lead-in time to develop and (test!) any new software and hardware required. It may sound ambitious, but public opinion on the climate is changing rapidly and there may well be a surprising support once COVID no longer commands the headlines.

Phil

CARJ Briefing on Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Introduction

Critical Race Theory began to emerge in the USA during the 1970s in the work of Derrick Bell and others who felt that the progress gained by the Civil Rights Movement had stalled and in some cases was being rolled back.

The first meeting of the CRT Movement was in 1989. The meeting included 24 Scholars of colour, and after that meeting the movement continued to develop, drawing on feminism, critical legal studies, the civil rights tradition and other sources. The movement came to the UK around 2002..

The following is a brief introduction to CRT in the USA and the UK.

Critical Race Theory in the USA Derrick Bell and the Origins of Critical Race Theory

Derrick Bell (1930 – 2011) is known as the Father of Critical Race Theory. Bell was born in 1930 and grew up in a black neighbourhood of Pittsburgh. He graduated from university in 1952, served two years in the Air Force and earned a law degree at the University of Pittsburgh in 1957.

From 1960 – 1966 Bell worked on the staff of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. During his years with the Fund, Bell worked on some three hundred school desegregation cases across the southern states.

Bell joined the Harvard Law faculty in the fall of 1969. A few years later, he obtained tenure and became the first black law professor at Harvard Law School.

In 1980, he was offered the position as Dean of the University of Oregon Law School. He accepted the offer and stayed there for five years. Bell returned to Harvard in 1986 and resumed his teaching, writing and advocacy on racial issues.

From 1993, Bell taught at New York University Law School. That was a productive time for him. He produced nearly a book a year.

Bell is critical of the standard version of American history as it is commonly understood. Where some might see steady progress towards equality and racial justice, Bell sees occasional symbolic advances followed by retrenchment.

This can be seen in Bell’s discussion of the history of a number of symbolic events – eg the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, the Supreme Court decision: Brown v the Board of Education, and the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s. In all of these, Bell explored the compromises

that had been made in the wording of these key documents and in their implementation.

Bell saw storytelling as an important means by which people could be invited to pause and reflect on American history and the historical struggle for equality. The Chronicle of the Constitutional Contradiction is one example of the many fictional Chronicles that Bell included in his writing. In this Chronicle Geneva, a fictional character, is time-travelled back to the time and place of the Constitutional Convention where she challenges the founding fathers over why they are compromising and allowing slavery in the Constitution

Since CRT is often attacked for its rigid, anti-racist approach, it is interesting to note that Bell became known for his very participative pedagogical approach. In speaking of his pedagogy, he mentioned the approach of Paulo Freire - where students become teachers and teachers become learners.

The importance of religion in Bells writing became increasingly overt in books such as Gospel Choirs and Ethical Ambition. Bell spoke of his religious upbringing in the Protestant black church and his continuing religious faith. He describes himself as 'Christian', but his faith is not narrowly contained within traditional Christian doctrine.

Bell sees critical race theory as a serious attempt to change American culture, but changing culture must begin with a radical assessment of that culture. Radical assessment can involve illustration, anecdote, allegory and imagination, as well as analysis

For Bell, CRT is a body of scholarship, a majority of whose authors are both people of colour and committed to the struggle against racism, particularly as institutionalized in the law. CRT is often disruptive because its commitment to anti-racism goes well beyond civil rights, integration, affirmative action and other liberal measures.

The first meeting of the CRT Movement was a 1989 Critical Race Theory workshop in Madison, Wisconsin, attended by 24 scholars of colour. The Workshop was entitled "New Developments in Critical Race Theory". The Workshop was spearheaded by Kimberle' Crenshaw and organized by her, Neil Gotanda, and Stephanie Phillips. Among the participants were Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Patricia Williams and others. The following are very brief descriptions of a few participants who became important figures in the CRT Movement as it grew and developed from 1990.

Born in 1959 in Canton, Ohio, Kimberle' Crenshaw is an American lawyer, civil rights advocate, philosopher and scholar of 'Critical Rights Theory'. She went on to write and speak about 'inter-sectionality'. She is today a Professor at Columbia Law School and UCLA School of Law.

Richard Delgado is the son of a Mexican American

immigrant. He is a legal scholar who taught at the University of Alabama. He edited The Derrick Bell Reader with his wife Jean Stefancic. He is interested in some of the different racial minorities in the United States, and in 'how society racializes one group at the expense of another.'

Patricia Williams was born in Boston in 1951, received her bachelor's degree from Wellesley College in 1972, and went on to study at Harvard Law School, where she was research assistant to Derrick Bell. Soon after the 1989 Workshop, Patricia Williams published The Alchemy of Race and Rights, (Harvard University Press, 1991).

The Critical Race Theory Movement has continued to develop in the USA. In or around 2002, it came to the UK and has developed here over the past twenty years.

Critical Race Theory in the UK

Critical Race Theory (CRT) crossed the Atlantic, from the US to the UK, in the early 2000s, where it was educationalists, rather than lawyers, who were at the forefront of the Movement.

In November 2006, the first CRT International Seminar took place in the UK, at the Education and Social Research Institute (ESRI) at Manchester Metropolitan University. It sought to explore CRT's value as an analytical tool for making sense of enduring inequalities across the globe.

In the following year, 2007, at The British Education Research Association (BERA), at least six CRT-focused papers were presented. In addition, there was a symposium entitled, "Guess Who's Coming to BERA? Has Critical Race Theory Arrived in UK Education Research?"

This was a clear indication of a growing interest among educationalists in the CRT movement.

Since then, CRT has become a significant intellectual space for race-conscious scholars and activists, and it has made its way into public life and institutions in Britain.

Its practical influence in mission statements, professional development and human resource policies, has grown much more widely, especially since the Black Lives Matter protests in the summer of 2020.

Many educationalists and activists find CRT to be a useful way for thinking about contemporary British inequalities. They are drawn towards CRT's structural understanding of racism, which makes it possible to understand certain persistent inequalities, such as the overrepresentation of people from minority ethnic communities in underemployment, and the fact that nearly half of these households in the UK are living in poverty.

CRT views these inequalities as the result of structural factors in British society, including migration histories, housing segregation, unequal funding of schools, and the makeup of the economy.

CRT became headline news in October 2020, following a debate in the House of Commons, motioned by the Labour party, to discuss Black History Month. The focus was to look at structural racism in education and explore ways of decolonising the curriculum.

In the ensuing debate, Kemi Badenoch, the Equalities Minister, stated emphatically that Critical Race Theory had to be rejected because it was “an ideology that sees my blackness as victimhood, and their whiteness as oppression. And I want to be absolutely clear that this government stands against Critical Race Theory.”

Despite Government objections, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many factors that perpetuate the vulnerability of minority ethnic communities in the UK.

A report by the Runnymede Trust found that people from minority ethnic communities are more likely to work in ‘key worker’ jobs. They are also more than twice as likely to rely on public transport to get to work, and, despite on average living in smaller properties than white British people, are more than twice as likely to live in households of four or more people.

Consequently, members of minority ethnic communities are more likely to be exposed to the virus in getting to their jobs, and more likely to pass on the virus to household members, due to overcrowding.

CRT scholars examine carefully the complex causes that lead to and perpetuate such disparities, what actions might positively change the situation, and what actions might be ineffective or counterproductive.

CRT requires us to rethink how we approach topics like racism and anti-racism. If racism is not an issue of individuals, but of structures, then successful anti-racism is not about the conversion of individuals, but rather about the much more complex task of transforming how our economic, political, educational, and social institutions work.

Conclusion

This Briefing and the earlier Webinar [video here](#) meant to provide an informed introduction to Critical Race Theory in the USA and the UK. CARJ takes the view that CRT is an important movement of people and ideas that deserves to be heard. We can learn much from CRT. We may sometimes agree and sometimes disagree, but it presents us with a critical point of view on the important but complex issues of Diversity, Equality and Racism. There are many voices in the CRT Movement. We may find ourselves closer to some than others, but we intend to continue this dialogue and hope it helps us to see the way forward to bring

about a more just, more equal, more cooperative society.

Brief Bibliography

The above Briefing draws mainly on the following publications:

Critical Race Theory: the Key Writings that Formed the Movement. Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil T Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas. Forward by Cornel West. New Press, 1995.

The Derrick Bell Reader. Ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. New York University Press. 2005

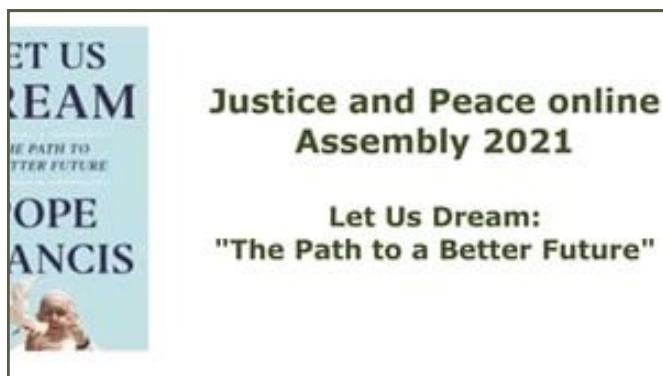
Critical Race Theory – An Introduction. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic. Dev Publishers and Distribution, 2017.

Over-Exposed and Under-Protected: The Devastating Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Minority Ethnic Communities in Great Britain, The Runnymede Trust 2020

This Briefing is a summary of the discussion at a CARJ Urban Network Meeting on 3 August 2021, which addressed the topic of Critical Race Theory. A recording of that Session is available from CARJ.

CARJ, 9 Henry Rd, London N4 2LH. 020 8802 8080. Info@carj.org.uk. The Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) is an independent charity committed to working with others of diverse backgrounds and beliefs to bring about a more just, more equal, more cooperative society. CARJ Briefings are primarily intended to give readers accurate and relevant background information on current issues. Occasionally, a position or argument may be put forward provisionally for reflection and further discussion.

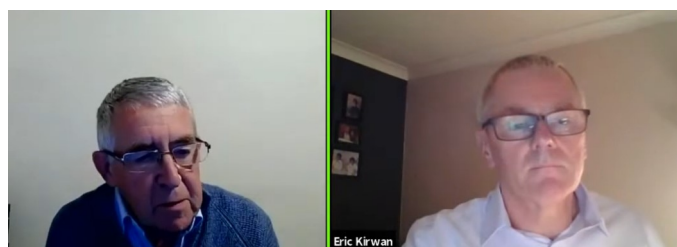




Justice and Peace Assembly

This year's Annual Assembly of the Justice & Peace Commission for the Archdiocese of Birmingham, as last year, took place via Zoom and the four sessions were paced over the week commencing 27th September and took as its theme Pope Francis' book 'Let us Dream: "The Path to a Better Future"'.

In this book Pope Francis explains why we must make the world safer, fairer and healthier for all people and that if we have the courage to change, we can emerge from the challenges of today better than before. The sessions produced much lively and fruitful discussions and the Commission thank all those who attended. For the first session, however, we were delighted to welcome Eric Kirwan, the Chief Operating Officer for the Archdiocese, who kindly agreed to explain the new Diocesan Plan for the Environment.



Eric explained that the programme of actions to be undertaken by the Archdiocese had three main principles: how to revitalize the diocese after the pandemic, what practical steps are needed to support our parishes and parish communities and how best to support our mission and vision for the diocese. The plan, it is hoped, will serve as a springboard for the whole of the Diocese to respond to Pope Francis' plea to hear the 'Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor' and to begin or continue the journey of ecological conversion. It had been decided rather than call this document a 'plan' or 'policy', both words seem to have a passive connotation, it would be called a 'Statement of Intent' which gives a more immediate implication and should be understood as a call to action. All diocesan life will be guided by this document by asking the question 'what impact do our actions – both collectively and individually – have on the climate?' Already actions such as working from home, use of electric/hybrid cars are being implemented and the

diocese has divested from all investments which receive more than 5% of its income from fossil fuels. The Archdiocese encompasses a large area and, therefore, has a large carbon footprint but its very size gives us a greater opportunity to reach out to the many parishes, school and population to reduce our footprint. A Climate Action Group was in the process of being formed to look at the many ways diocesan actions can be changed or formulated and, it is hoped, the diocese can get climate action champions in every school and parish to look at both short term and long term improvements. The initial focus is on short term fixes such as encouraging all parishes and schools to join the Live Simply programme. Eric's talk provoked great discussions in the break-out groups and we all look forward to doing what we can to help the diocese in moving forward with this Statement of Intent.

Milestones 2021

- **Season of Creation** – 1 September - 4 October
- **Laudato Si' implementation plans available** – 4 October
- **Vatican meeting. Faith and Science: Toward COP26** – 4 October
- **Climate Sunday** - any Sunday in run up to COP26
- **Diocesan Climate Action Group formed** – October
- **Trustees review Statement of Intent for climate** – October
- **UN Climate Change Congerence: COP26** - 31 October- 12 November
- **All Diocesan parishes and schools signed up to livesimply award** – target to complete by end of 2021
- **Deanery reorganisation** – complete by end of 2021

The next three sessions were based on Pope Francis book which he divides into three sections: 'A Time To See', 'A Time to Choose' and 'A Time to Act' and we discussed each section in turn. Pope Francis sees that the isolation and helplessness many are feeling during this time of pandemic as an opportunity to reflect on what we are experiencing individually, as Church and as community. Sometimes thinking globally can paralyze us as there are so many areas of conflict and areas of suffering and need. To focus on the concrete realities of our lives, the sacrifices made and our individual struggles, can help us ponder and respond with hope: trusting in God who is involved so closely with the world and all its people. Our breakout groups discussed many aspects of the personal, lived experiences of the past year or so. Covid has shown up many inequalities that need to be addressed. Perhaps by standing with those at the margins of society, we can see more clearly the problems within our own society and of communities round the world and give voice to those who are without a voice. Much respect has been shown to people like nurses and carers but we must not go back to the 'old' way of doing things: we need to keep adapting to new ways of doing things. People need to be valued and shown that they are valued. The many neighbourhood friendships and kindnesses need to be retained and flow outwards to eventually include all people. This outreach should be with those of other faiths or of no faith at all – the world's problems are not experienced just by Catholics! There is a certain amount of complacency, of people being overwhelmed by the

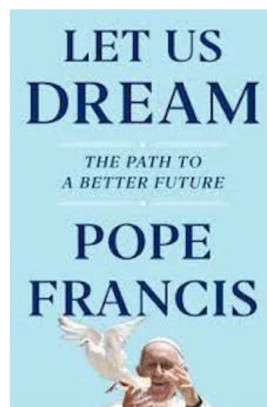
enormity of the problems we face, but this should be seen as a challenge to take small steps with love. Regular contact with each other would help with this challenge and, hopefully, lead us to a more contemplative way of life.

Once we have seen the problems we face, Pope Francis says there is an essential intermediate stage: to discern, and to choose, a time of distinguishing the path of the good that leads to the future from those paths that lead nowhere or backward. We need clarity to enable us to choose the first.' For this step we need not just openness to reality but a robust set of criteria to guide us: discernment is vital if we want to create a better future. We need to ask ourselves, 'How can I engage with the Other?' in a respectful and mutual way free of ideology and predetermined agendas. During our discussions, it was generally felt that, whilst the pandemic had caused great damage in many varying degrees throughout all our society, globally as well as locally, it had been a Path to Good in that it gave our communities to come together, irrespective of age, race or creed and was of itself a pathway to God. It brought out the best in people – an example of Church in the street and in our homes. It gave us all an important opportunity to listen to God and allow the Holy Spirit to work within us and to reconnect with nature, to find space to listen to God, open our minds to discernment and find the direction God wants us to go. It was felt that something fundamental had changed during the pandemic and this was something we need to build upon as we move forward. The shock many of us felt at our vulnerability, despite all the 'mod cons', resulted in an outpouring of community spirit and, in the isolation, we realized how interconnected we all are and because of this we need to open to the Other, to our differences. Faith and non-faith groups came together to help each other. Masses on zoom were seen as being very important as it helped with our spiritual experience and this is something that needs to be built upon. Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life'. Perhaps we need to reflect on the whys and hows of this, questioning ourselves and make room for doubt and to challenge ourselves with an open mind and a healthy cynicism. In all things we need to be open and listen to each other always keeping in mind that only God has the full Truth.

Our final session was on 'A Time to Act'. Pope Francis writes that 'we must not let the current clarifying moment pass us by. Let it not be said, in years to come, that in response to the coronavirus we failed to act to restore the dignity of our peoples, to recover our memory and to remember our roots'. Discussions on how we can move forward were wide and varying but whatever way we go we need to work together, with prayer and reflection, to ensure that our solutions are God's will and not our own. The pandemic is pushing us towards change and whether we are helping developing countries (via organizations such as Cafod or the Refugee services) or locally (such as supporting carers, people with learning difficulties, anyone found on the margins of society) the important thing is to listen what they see they need rather than dictating to

them what their needs are. Their sense of dignity and self-worth is of paramount importance. Solutions should come from the people and forums should be created in which they are allowed to speak and where we can: we have as much to learn from them as they have from us. Should we become more vocal such as writing to M.P.'s, retailers, to ensure goods are ecologically safe; protest about debt relief especially in view of the fact the U.K. are cutting its overseas budget. Our lives and way of thinking has been driven by a market economy with the idea that wealth will 'trickle down'. This is obviously not working and we now need a more localized economy but how do we encourage politicians to engage with this. A long term project! Universal Income could be of great benefit depending on how it actually works. All employees, both rich and poor, should be treated with respect and not as some resource or an item on the balance sheet. Much of what was discussed can be found in Catholic Social Teaching which is a wonderful guide as to how we can move forward. Several people commented on how little of this was known to parishioners and the suggestion was the C.T.S. should be made more widely known throughout the parishes.

In all things, however, we need to be open and listen to each other always keeping in mind that only God has the full Truth.



Our Assembly can still be found on our YouTube channel

<http://bit.ly/BirminghamJP>

Our next Discussion Forum will take place on Tuesday 23rd November at 7pm

If you have a contribution you would like included in the **February 2022** newsletter please send it by Email for consideration to:
The Administrator, J&P Commission.
Email: bham.jandp@gmail.com

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