

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin Easter 2021

The e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com

UK PLANS TO INCREASE ITS NUCLEAR ARSENAL

Source: ICN 16 March 2021: The government announced today plans to massively increase UK's nuclear arsenal. In a foreign policy overhaul, the cap on the number of warheads will now increase to 260, having been due to drop to 180 under previous plans from 2010.

The Anglican Bishop of Rochester Roger Morris commented in a series of tweets: 'UK Government: Authorised £1.39bn arms sales to Saudi Arabia from July - Sept 2020. Cut foreign aid from 0.7% to 0.5% GDP Cut aid to Yemen while it is being bombarded by UK weapons.' 'Now plans to increase number of nuclear warheads by ~ 50%.' This is moral bankruptcy.'

Bruce Kent, Vice President of CND and of Pax Christi said: "Increasing our arsenal of nuclear weapons of mass destruction, as our Government now proposes, is dangerous, foolish and immoral. We would do so much better if we signed up, with the great majority of nations, to the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. That is the best direction for our country and the world to be heading. If we have billions to spare far better to spend them on the NHS."

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), said in a statement today: 'Today's announcement of a dramatic increase in the UK nuclear arsenal reverses Britain's longstanding principles and commitments to non-proliferation, disarmament and international security. The UK's Integrated Review...abandons the UK's previous commitment of a cap of operational nuclear warheads set at 120, and raises the overall cap on the UK's stockpile from 180 to 260 - an increase of more than 40%. The UK says the move is necessary due to the "evolving security environment" without giving any evidence how more warheads will protect British citizens.'

'This dangerous U-turn will be a huge blow to UK allies in the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of which the UK was a founder member 50 years ago. The NPT, which is set to meet later this year for a crucial 5 yearly Review Conference, requires the UK and 190 states to work in good faith to prevent proliferation and accomplish the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The UK government's decision to enhance nuclear weapons will also raise global security concerns and strain relations with over 130 states that support the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - a new treaty which makes nuclear weapons illegal under international law and which entered into force in January this year. This dangerous decision panders to right wing 'punch above weight' ideologies that have nothing to do with British security. It flies in the face of Britain's genuine security needs and appears ignorant of the widespread and increasing opposition to the UK's continued possession of nuclear weapons.'

'Scotland's First Minister and Government are unambiguously committed to the TPNW, seeking to be in

a position to join and publicly oppose all aspects of the UK's nuclear weapons policy including the transportation of lethal warheads between Faslane, Coulport, and Berkshire's bomb factories, Aldermaston and Burghfield. Major international banks and financial institutions are divesting from nuclear weapons production, informed by ICAN's "Don't Bank on the Bomb" campaign. Cities across Britain, including Manchester, Edinburgh, Oxford, Brighton and Hove, Norwich and Leeds, have signed up to support the Treaty's implementation. Many more Councils will follow.

'Since October, Anglican and Catholic leaders in the UK and a range of Scottish and other UK celebrities have openly endorsed the TPNW and called on the UK government to change its stance. 59% of the UK public think that Britain should sign up to the Treaty, while 77% support a total global nuclear weapons ban, according to new polling by Survation for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.'

Dr Rebecca Johnson, co-coordinator of ICAN UK partners, said: "Increasing nuclear weapons will undermine British security when responsible governments around the world are prioritising Covid, cyber threats and the climate emergency. This dangerous nuclear step will become another of Boris Johnson's reckless and expensive mistakes. It will undermine the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty], alienate Britain's allies and increase fears that the UK is on a hell-bent road to sabotage our future and the collective norms and laws on which our security depends."

Ben Donaldson, Head of Campaigns at UNA-UK said: "The Integrated Review's combination of militarism and hubris is toxic and this decision feels like a move to impress a second Trump administration that never came to pass rather than a responsible step to protect British citizens. We need the UK Government to invest in measures to combat climate change and pandemics, not trigger a dangerous new arms race. It will strain diplomatic relations with over 130 countries who oppose nuclear weapons, it contradicts the UN Secretary-General's call for accelerated progress on disarmament and it undermines the UK's claim to be a responsible member of the UN Security Council."

Janet Fenton, Scottish co-coordinator of ICAN's UK partners said: "The UK has now abandoned any pretence of gradual nuclear disarmament for the sake of a provocative and arrogant policy that puts the world and any possibility of addressing the climate emergency at risk. Scotland has a special concern, as the UK's nuclear weapons are hosted here, despite the clear opposition of the Scottish Government. At Scotland's May election, voting for candidates who will prioritise nuclear disarmament in Scotland (and, consequently, in the UK as a whole) will be at the top of the agenda."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41772>

CATHOLIC BISHOPS OPPOSE INCREASE IN TRIDENT NUCLEAR WARHEADS

Source: CCN 16 March 2021

Church leaders across seven denominations have issued a statement following the publication of the UK Government's integrated review of foreign and defence policies.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference Chair of the International Affairs Department, Bishop Declan Lang, and the Lead Bishop on Peace and Disarmament Issues, Bishop William Kenney, have signed the statement.

The full text follows:

"The Government's decision in the integrated review of defence, security and foreign policy to increase the number of Trident nuclear warheads the UK can stockpile by more than 40 percent is a retrograde step that will not make any of us safer.

"Our Trident submarines already carry warheads that in total have an explosive yield equivalent to hundreds of the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima. It is immoral that the UK government is committing resources, which could be spent on the common good of our society, to stockpiling even more.

"Over the last 50 years, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has restricted the increase in the number of nuclear weapons worldwide as well as the number of new nuclear-armed states. This announcement puts those gains in jeopardy and weakens collective action on non-proliferation.

"Progress on reducing the threat from nuclear weapons will come through dialogue, diplomacy and principled action. The Government's announcement today will complicate rather than aid this process.

"The entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is an encouraging development. As people of faith, we join with millions across the world who are working towards the elimination of nuclear arsenals.

"Living up to our responsibilities under the Non-Proliferation Treaty would be a step towards realising that vision. We believe that 'Global Britain' should strive for peaceful and cooperative international relationships, and joint endeavour on climate change, global poverty and other challenges. This announcement takes us in a worrying and wholly wrong direction."

Signatories - The following Christian leaders signed the statement:

Most Revd and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York; Most Revd John Davies, Archbishop of Wales; Revd Clare Downing, Moderator of General Assembly, United Reformed Church; Bob Fyffe, General Secretary, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland; Bishop William Kenney, Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham, International Affairs Department, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales; Bishop Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, Chair, International Affairs Department Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales; Carolyn Lawrence, Vice-President of the Methodist Church; Revd David Mayne, Moderator of the Baptist Union Council; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk, Quakers in Britain; Revd Dr Joanna Penberthy, Bishop of St Davids; Revd Richard Teal, President of the Methodist Church

LINK

Integrated defence review: www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41773>

J&P SCOTLAND SADDENED BY GOVERNMENT PLAN TO INCREASE NUCLEAR ARSENAL

18 March 2021: In response to the UK Prime Minister's statement on Tuesday 16 March 2021, about plans to increase the UK's nuclear warhead stockpiles by 40% from 180 warheads to 260 warheads Justice & Peace Scotland have issued the following statement:

'Justice and Peace Scotland is deeply saddened at the decision announced today that the UK government intends to increase the stockpile of nuclear weapons.

This decision reverses nearly 30 years of gradual disarmament and is in breach of the government's commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Since 1982 the Bishops' Conference of Scotland has condemned the use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons as

immoral. In 2017 His Holiness Pope Francis noted that the very possession of these weapons is to be firmly condemned.

After more than a decade of austerity followed by year of the COVID pandemic for the government to squander more money in this manner, when men, women and children in this country and around the world are in desperate need is a failure of leadership. We have lived with these weapons for far too long. The threat of nuclear arms poisons the soul of humanity, just as their use is the most immoral evil any state, or leader could commit against creation.'

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41788>

JRS RENEWS CALL FOR END TO DEGRADING ASYLUM CAMPS

17 March 2021: The Jesuit Refugee Service UK has renewed calls for an end to the use of military barracks as asylum accommodation in the wake of news that Penally Camp in Wales will close on 21st March. JRS UK supports people held at Penally camp's sister site Napier barracks in Kent, which according to the Home Office will "remain in operation in accordance with current needs." despite damning evidence that conditions are "impoverished, run-down and unsuitable for long-term accommodation"

The Home Office has been using emergency planning powers to operate the Penally camp as asylum accommodation - powers which are only in place until 20 March 2021. Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart, has now confirmed that after many weeks of discussions the Home Office has agreed to return Penally to the Ministry of Defence by 21 March, closing the site as asylum accommodation. It remains unclear how or when those accommodated in the camp, many of whom have faced torture, trafficking and modern slavery during their journeys to reach the UK, will be moved to alternative accommodation, or what this accommodation will be.

JRS UK's Detention Outreach Team continues to support men accommodated at Napier barracks in Kent, the sister site to Penally.

Naomi Blackwell, JRS UK Detention Outreach Manager said: "While we welcome news that vulnerable people seeking asylum will no longer be held at army barracks in Penally, we now call on government for the urgent closure of Napier barracks in Kent. All military barracks offer dangerously inappropriate accommodation particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"People who have been forced to flee their homes from torture, persecution and violence arrive in the UK only to find themselves trapped in unsafe, undignified, and inhumane conditions. We have seen first-hand the damaging effects of these inadequate conditions at Napier, which were found to be even worse than at Penally.

"One gentleman I met described Napier as, 'like being in a hospital or prison, there are people rapidly becoming more and more mentally unwell around you, one has just tried to kill himself, another is in pain, another is very stressed and cannot cope.... I did not feel like a person when I was there. I felt I had lost who I was. The way we were treated, it denied us all freedom.'

"The ghettoisation of vulnerable people in appalling, degrading conditions at all military barracks needs to end."

In a written statement, Chief Whip of Welsh Government Jane Hutt commented on the negative effects of Penally camp in the community. She said: "The decision to use the Penally camp has undermined our ability to implement an effective migrant integration policy. Responsibility for the asylum system is reserved to the UK Government but the

Welsh Government is responsible for integration, community cohesion, local government and the health system - all areas which have been impacted negatively by the Penally site implementation."

News of the closure of Penally camp came after an extremely damning report on conditions at both Napier and Penally barracks by inspectors from the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) who visited the sites last week.

Initial findings from the report concluded that 'resources, skills and assurance systems required to support long-term communal accommodation were inadequate' and that there were 'failures of leadership and planning by the Home Office.'

At both sites, residents described feeling trapped in poor conditions and feared that if they moved out they would jeopardise their only source of support and possibly their asylum cases.

In a resident survey, all of those who responded at Napier and the vast majority at Penally said they had felt depressed at some points. At both sites about a third of respondents said they had mental health problems; about a third of respondents at Napier said they had felt suicidal.

Key findings also showed that 'the environment at both sites, especially Napier, was impoverished, run-down and unsuitable for long-term accommodation. Cleanliness at both sites was variable at best and cleaning was made difficult by the age of the buildings. Some areas were filthy.'

Napier and Penally barracks have housed hundreds of asylum seekers since the beginning of their use as asylum accommodation by the Home Office in September, and throughout this time have been challenged by politicians and human rights groups who have condemned poor access to healthcare, legal advice, and crowded conditions.

Napier barracks was also found to be intentionally risking the lives of those held there, after a fire broke out and a substantial Covid-19 outbreak was reported in January this year, which saw at least 197 confirmed cases, more than half of its resident population at its peak of 3806.

JRS UK continues to support the men who are held at Napier barracks, and suffering from the mental and physical effects of being held in inadequate accommodation, as well as the ongoing trauma they suffer from their perilous journeys seeking safety in the UK.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41778>

LINK
JRS-UK - www.jrsuk.net/

COLUMBAN COMPETITION: LET'S CREATE A WORLD WITHOUT RACISM

The following article is the winner in Britain of the Columban Schools Competition, 'End Racism'. The writer is **Kashaf Zahid**, a 15-year-old pupil at Gumley House Convent School in Isleworth, West London.

Mr Steve Byrne Headteacher at Gumley House Convent School, said: "I am truly delighted to see Kashaf win this competition. The theme of a world without racism is at the heart of our school's value of Justice, and Kashaf reflects this perfectly. She is a true ambassador of the school! I am very grateful to the Columban Missionaries for encouraging our young people to share their voices on such vital issues, and for their work in supporting the sanctity of all human life."

My sister was sitting on the seat in front of mine, in a double decker bus. The bus is known for its distinctive red colour, which to some may represent a well-known feature of London but is a different story for not only my family, but also for other ethnic minority citizens all over the UK. She sat patiently, while a stranger was hurling racist abuse at her. According to Tuc.org.uk, 1 in 3 BAME (Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic) people had faced racial abuse on public transport in the UK. Although we did not know one another, the stranger hated us; she despised 'our kind,' she wanted all immigrants gone. These same immigrants were the ones who helped rebuild our country and grow the economy after a series of destructive events. These same immigrants were wrongly treated, with some being deported in the Windrush Scandal in 2018, despite being invited here decades ago. I wonder what a world without hatred would be like.

My mother was out shopping during the earlier stages of the pandemic. Wanting to keep herself and others safe, she wore a face mask, kept a sanitizer on hand, and was cautious with what she was in contact with. She was refused entry to a shop, despite not having symptoms or needing to isolate. When demanding a reason for their actions, she was told - "You are part of the BAME community, you're more likely to have Covid-19." During lockdown, many articles appeared claiming that majority of cases are in the BAME community due to cramped multi-generation households. This went on to cause xenophobia, especially in less diverse areas of the UK. The pandemic itself caused a lot of fear, but a xenophobic fear. Originating from China, many Asians were and still are subject to racism in the form of abuse, jokes and much more. This is only the beginning of seeing into our world filled with prejudice and racism. I wonder how the world would be with no prejudice.

Recent movements and campaigns, such as the Black Lives Matter movement across the world, has shown a start of change to problems existing for centuries. This makes us wonder, if God has made us all equal, in the image of God, why does humanity categorise itself? Why are some races superior and others inferior? Why do some religious groups go against their beliefs by imposing fake prejudiced information on their followers? Scientifically speaking, Carl Linnaeus did not make a classification for humans based on race, so why do we do this?

Most of our 7.8 billion population would like to have a world without racism, but how can this be done? It would be a dream, some may even think it's inaccessible, but it can be done with the right education and right action. Feeling unsafe in a developed country where I was born does not feel right. In fact, wherever you are from or wherever you live should be a place of comfort, a place in our hearts. Charity and kindness to me is not only a main principle of my religion, but also something I like to live by. One of my

favourite Hadiths (a narrative from the Prophet Muhammad) - "O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no favour of an Arab over a foreigner, nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin, nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness. Have I not delivered the message?" - shows that religion is against prejudice of any kind, and that God wants a world under the stewardship of people who do not care about power and money, but instead those who care about everyone, no matter what religion or race.

A story from the Bible, which my teacher introduced me to, clearly shows this message. The story of Ruth and Naomi from the Old Testament is a story of a lady, Naomi, and her two widowed daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. In this melancholic time of losing her two sons, she instructs Ruth and Orpah to return to their tribes. Orpah follows her instructions, whilst Ruth shows an unlikely loyalty and wants to stay with her mother-in-law. "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die - there will I be buried." (Ruth 1:16-17). I interpret this as despite their differences and being from different tribes, she wants to stay with her because of love, and nothing can be done to separate them. This reflects the idea of a world without racism, as love has trumped all other factors.

Human dignity, a theme of Catholic Social Teaching, shows that every being has value. Following, this idea God's plan of world peace can only start to take shape once us humans realise what our role is. Mother Theresa is a fine example of someone who showed dignity and excellence in all she did, but mostly her unconditional love for everyone despite who they were.

The next question is, what can be done to unite all stewards of our common home, the Earth? Racism, and other types of prejudice, start from ignorance, miseducation, and influence. This can be from an early age, or from life experiences. Whatever way it has been imposed, is utterly wrong, but can be changed for good. A small act of kindness can change our perspectives. Deciding to be fair can make someone's day. Choosing not to hate may inspire others to follow your ambition of wanting change, of wanting a world without racism. This journey to a world of love will not be smooth, unsupportiveness will be prominent, and this movement will not be taken seriously, but, remember, one good deed turns into a hundred and God will be by your side.

Altogether, we can create a world without racism.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41786>

LINK

Columban Competition: www.columbancompetition.com/

COLUMBAN COMPETITION: IT'S JUST NOT CRICKET

The following article by **Zane Sekhon** is the runner up in Britain of the Columban Schools Competition, 'Let's create a world without racism'. The writer attends Worth School in West Sussex. Competition results have been released in the lead up to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2021.

There are two types of racism I usually encounter: the 'cool covert', "I'm not racist but just checking where your loyalties lie - who do you support in the World Cup?" or the 'very cool', 'we're with our friends so we're just going to scream "Paki" at you and increase our street cred racism. Between these two there were many other blurred lines, things that white people say because they're curious but shouldn't.

These are normally things that are offensive to brown people but they are so used to the questions they don't take offence - "where are you from? Not Surrey, where are you really from?"

For instance, I'm an average kid, no real hardships in my life, from an average family, living an average life. I love gaming, I love music and I love eating; this last hobby is a bit of a problem, leading to my being a tubby brown kid in a very posh predominantly white private school of athletic boys. I should have just got a 'rush me' sign and pinned it to myself, I was an easy target. This didn't deter me however from my love of chicken and eating it. I wished I would eat less but my insatiable hunger meant that just never happened.

I go to a Catholic school, the ethos of fairness and sharing, of accepting and being accepted is wonderful to me. Why doesn't this always translate in our real world?

Being one of the only Muslims in a Catholic school didn't matter at all. It was an accepting place where the teachers would share and impart knowledge and I could draw comparisons directly with my own faith. In essence, it was learning the same thing, just in a different language. I loved this, I loved the peace you found in the notion of God, of things being preordained and most importantly that everything will work itself out in the end.

My gran calls me a coconut, apparently my privileged education means I might be brown on the outside but inside I'm all white. I get that a lot, at the mosque, at my cousins house 'posh white boy', at cadet practice I often hear 'don't blow me up terrorist! Shaan's a jihadi, he's got a gun'. So here I am, on a pendulum swinging from Paki to Coconut, unwanted to unfamiliar.

Not ever really being accepted by anyone hasn't made me think I should change or adapt, mainly I don't know where to start or how? How can I be browner? Or how can I be less brown? Sometimes the very question makes me laugh.

I don't feel sorry for myself - it would be ridiculous - for the country is full of kids like me - third generation brown kids, who grew up sitting with their Indian grandfathers, watching them rooting for India in the World Cup while putting up the Christmas tree in otherwise English households.

It bothered the English though - "why do you support India? You're English". I asked my friend born and bred in Surrey, "why do you support Leeds football club?" He replied, "because my dad does". Some things are just familial heritage, some things are just because India have a great team.

Overt racism, though hurtful, is so much easier to deal with; you can answer back, confront, discourse. It's the covert one I hate, it leaves me seething inside, like someone lit a small match in the pit of my stomach and though the smouldering flame is burning me it feels rude to do anything about it.

"Why are all terrorists Muslim?" Well, the majority of terrorism is carried out by white supremacists but though they get cast as 'lone wolfs' (which I've always thought is quite a flattering macho term) any crime committed by a Muslim is an act of terror.

I can address these overtly ignorant questions. Question like "Where are you from? Surrey? No before that, where are you really from; where are your parents from? Also, Surrey? No, I mean before that, where are your grandparents from?" This is the most ridiculous line of frequent questioning I ever encounter. Why does this question even get asked? What will you do? Do you think I have connections to cheap saffron dealers? Are you curious about the weather and food of a country that you have no idea about yet? What clarity will my lineage provide to you? Apart from assisting in making some form of biased opinion on what I must be like 'aha Saudi, oppressive, aha India, must do yoga, aha Morocco, what the heck does that mean?'

Other than these biases, I can't imagine why the interest. I'm clearly British, sitting on the fence - not out of choice - waiting to be embraced by my people, whoever they may be. I know lots of people who have suffered endemic and outward racist assaults that have left life-changing damage, so I feel a bit self-indulgent talking about myself in this way, but this isn't a once in a while attack; this is just how most brown kids live in England.

This is the average story of an average boy. I am the friend when people say, "I'm not racist, my best friend's brown". I'm the kid who is always explaining his lineage and I'm the kid always fake laughing when other kids ask if there's a bomb in my backpack. I'm the kid that gets rushed at break for no reason, I'm the kid who loves India as his cricket team, like it's a guilty secret, and I'm the kid who loves England because it's his home. I'm the kid who loves his Catholic school and his Muslim faith, if they can both coexist within me why can't I coexist in a brown and white world?

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41795>

LINK

Columban Competition: www.columbancompetition.com

COLUMBAN COMPETITION: WHAT WILL IT TAKE FOR A POST-RACIST WORLD?

The following article by **Cara Treacy** came third in the British section of the Columban Schools Competition, 'Let's create a world without racism'. Sixteen-year-old Cara attends Sacred Heart of Mary Girl's School, Upminster, in East London. Competition results have been released in the lead up to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2021.

One day, there may be a world where people can learn and look at racism as something that happened generations ago, as something that has transcended from the present to the past. As something that is no longer present in streets and organisations, but in textbooks and museums. As something that is no longer utilised and weaponised but remembered and considered. A world where racism becomes as inexplicable as the atrocities we now study and look back on centuries later.

That world is still far from the one we live in now. Racism is its own kind of unique mutating virus, constantly and persistently evolving and surviving through each decade despite the wearing attempts to stamp it out.

Martin Luther King is best known for his speech where he hoped his, "four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character." That speech took place in 1963, and five years later it was recorded that black households earned around 60% as much as a white household in the United States. Now, 52 years later, that figure is still the same.

Racism hasn't diminished in the half-century since the racial revolutions in the way most people have expected. It lurks in the workplace, where black men statistically face the highest rates of unemployment in Britain, it lurks in our bank accounts and incomes where 50% of black and minority children live in poverty, and it lurks in the crevices of our most trusted organisations.

Many people may feel that the majority of people no longer hold racist views. It is not just through someone's verbal abuse or physical attacks that racism is present, but through their subconscious and biased thoughts that our society structurally imposes. This covert form of racism is what restrains our world from ridding itself from racism; it is what creates the impenetrable structural and institutionalised racism.

The Guardian reported once that the group most likely to self-admit they were racist were 'white, professional men' aged between 35 and 64, 'highly educated and earning a lot of money.'. The omnipresence of the 'white, professional' man in almost every position of power that upholds society is unequivocal, and when groups of people who admit they hold racist views are granted positions that dictate and control our world, that world becomes infected with that unique, mutating virus of racism.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41801>

LINK

Columban Competition: www.columbancompetition.com/

A Christian is someone who follows in the example of Christ, who once whittled down the entire religion to the sole belief of loving one's neighbour. There is no clearer message for the remedy to racism: love - an inherent and infallible love that does not falter at the difference in skin colour or race is the vaccine of the mutating virus of racism. That vaccine is in short supply.

Pope Francis said in his reaction to the death of George Floyd that, "we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism."

When people deny the existence of an institutionally racist society, we allow racism to seep further and further into the crevices of our society. When we don't point out and illuminate inequalities and injustices, we blanket and hide what is fundamentally wrong. Those of us who are eager to declare the world rid of racism and state that we are living in the utopia of post-racist world, are not tackling the issue of racism and are instead helping its clandestine growth by refusing to acknowledge it.

Vatican II stated that 'any kind of...cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of ... race, colour... must be curbed and eradicated', and this idea has been consolidated and echoed by many other significant Catholic figures.

The Pope's most recent encyclical '*Fratelli Tutti*' extends to the notion of 'as a single human family', a world that does not divide itself on the premise of race but unites itself for the opportunity for diversity and growth. It is in our individual desire to learn and develop as Christians that we will progress to a post-racist world. When we educate ourselves on the inequalities that black people and minorities are confronted with, we will be capable of understanding the necessary routes we need to take to remove the obstacles they face.

The vaccine for racism does not lie within stagnant laws and empty promises or facades people show, but in the motivated love we need to show and use to harness change.

We cannot wait for world leaders to solve these problems. It is in our own personal choices and conscious choice to unroot racist bias that permeates through society that our own actions will eventually accumulate to create a world without racism. A world without racism is not an eventuality, it is something that can only be galvanised and created by the actions and thoughts of the people of today.

BLACK LIVES SOAR: THE PROPHETIC CALL OF A BEATLES CLASSIC

*Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to arise.*

The Beatles' song "Blackbird" is either a civil rights anthem or a response to transcendental meditation in India, depending on whose story you believe. Paul McCartney claims to have written it in honour of the 1960s movement for black equality; other members of the band have their own recollection of the song's origins. Perhaps both explanations are true. Certainly, the idea of "Blackbird" being about *being* black had crossed my mind. But what was it actually saying to me today?

*Take these sunken eyes and learn to see
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to be free.*

Whether McCartney was actually invoking an image of black struggle when he wrote "Blackbird" in 1968 is less important to us interpreters and listeners who are dark. Today, it would be nearly impossible for African-Americans not to interpret the meaning in this Beatles classic through our contemporary experience of struggle and liberation.

The subject is a blackbird singing, flying and seeing light in the dark, black night. Her wings may be broken, but the poet bids her, learn to fly. Her eyes may be sunken and tired, but the poet bids her, learn to see. Arise and be free: there is light in the dark, black night.

McCartney's song is not the only art to use a blackbird to evoke freedom. In the early 1970s, Father Clarence Joseph Rivers, the pioneering African-American liturgist, commissioned his designer and collaborator David Camele to create an image of the Holy Spirit. Instead of a white dove, the Spirit of God is depicted as a blackbird. The image became a hallmark of not only Rivers' work but also the ongoing inculturation of African-American culture into Catholic worship and theology. The image was even used in a series of red, black and green pectoral crosses for the country's black Catholic bishops.

So, when I listen to "Blackbird" in 2016, given the most recent campaigns advocating on behalf of the dignity of black human bodies, it is not surprising that I, or any one of us, hear this classic with fresh perspective. When Alicia Keys covers the song, she makes the connection more explicit, singing some of the lyrics in the first person: "I was always waiting for this moment to be free."

Being black in the United States poses a risk of a very particular form of socially conditioned despair. Certainly, everyone's experience is different; and yet most black people are at least somehow aware of this gnawing, nagging existential problem. In our country's social

mythos, blackness has for so long been connected with deep-seated racial fear, sexual menace and predatory violence. It is not just white Americans whose unexamined racism reflects this attitude. To be black in the United States means having to wrestle with this toxic legacy. Across the country a new generation of young African-Americans and their allies are joining a long line of activists who have fought to reclaim black identity. But as important as community organizing and political protests are, nothing can transform one's self-image, indeed the whole trajectory of one's life, like poetry, music and religion.

This year during Holy Week I found myself praying the Liturgy of the Hours with "Blackbird" still on my mind. The texts of night prayer reached down and grabbed me in the gut:

The night shall be no more. They will need no light from the lamps or the sun, for the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever (Rev 22:4b-5).

*Night holds no terror for me sleeping under God's wings
(Good Friday Antiphon).*

Through Christ, our very relationship to night is transformed. Perhaps the night is not eradicated, but instead the light of Christ illuminates its beautiful and glorious opacity. I cannot sufficiently communicate the depth of my experience here in prose. The words of the Beatles' song are far more effective: blackbird fly, blackbird fly. Not only do black lives matter, black bodies soar on wings once broken, and see with eyes once sunken. Even in the midst of a bleak social crisis, we can sing our way into freedom.

Not only is "Blackbird" a classic; in the hands and voice of a gifted black artist, it can be prophetic. Music is a symbolic language of sound and poetry. And symbols, unlike mere flat signs, can participate in the reality to which they point; the best art reaches toward sacramentality, communicating God's grace. And if, as I believe, the human body is a privileged sacramental bearer of God's word and grace, the very act of a black artist singing into the dark, black night can move the listener toward a deeper experience of the truth.

Concern for the flourishing of black life is not and should not be the exclusive purview of black folks. God will reveal God's self in the stuff of life, using human experience, and in this case human artistry, to gift us with revelation. This is the sacred potential of art, too: its ability to move our minds and hearts toward the living God, to use symbol and metaphor—always imbedded in the murky particularity of human experience—to move us toward the transcendent.

*Blackbird fly,
Blackbird fly, into the light of the dark black night.*

Eric T. Styles, campus minister for liturgy and faith formation, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in Winona. Published 3 May 2016. https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2016/05/03/black-lives-soar-prophetic-call-beatles-classic?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=3877&pnespid=grN2sKdRDw2NkLrqFnu4TUC.ac2Hpx8WJvDLigBZ

WORLD WATER DAY - HOLDING EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TO ACCOUNT

Ellen Teague 21 March 2021

When an overwhelming wave of toxic red sludge crashed through her front door Kati Holtzer grabbed her three-year-old son. She threw him up onto their uprooted sofa and held him in place even while she herself was chest-deep in caustic waste. We know this because she called her husband to say goodbye, despite the chemicals eating into her skin.

The catastrophe followed weeks of torrential rain in southwest Hungary during October 2010, when a crack in a reservoir at the Ajka alumina processing plant burst, inundating 2,500-plus acres of countryside with highly alkaline red mud. The sludge, a byproduct from refining bauxite rock for industrial powder, was like a "mini-tsunami." Ten people died and 700 fled their homes, marking the spill as the nation's worst ecological disaster. The local River Marcal, a tributary of one of Europe's main waterways, was inundated. Within days fish were dying in several rivers and by the end of the week a plume of the caustic waste had reached the River Danube which was winding through half a dozen more countries.

There is a long history of mine accidents in the Philippines. In 1996, millions of tons of mine waste from a dam of the Marcopper Mining Corporation spilled into a river on central Marinduque island, creating an environmental disaster. Several brave journalists who spoke out about the hazards of mining were murdered. Even priests were threatened. One found a gift box on the altar of his church containing two bullets and a bar of soap - two bullets for him and the soap to wash away the blood. This toxic waste killed significant freshwater and marine life. The 25-mile Boac river, which was the main source of livelihood for those who did not work for Marcopper, was declared unusable by government officials.

And in Latin America, earlier this month, BHP, the Anglo-American mining giant, resumed its operations at the Samarco mine in Brazil, five years after a dam disaster killed 20 people and polluted over 500 miles of rivers with toxic mine waste. BHP claims it is safe to restart operations. However, many in the affected communities whose homes were destroyed are still waiting for the promised 355 new dwellings.

The hazards involved in mineral extraction are regularly in the news, but do most people realise how regularly vulnerable communities and ecosystems are destroyed by the fallout from large-scale mining? Water resources are particularly at risk. The Bishops Conference of the Philippines is among the hierarchy who have warned about the dangers of large-scale destructive mining.

On World Water Day - 22 March - it is timely to point out that extractive industries by big mining corporations are often a threat to water quality and access, and there is little accountability when things go wrong. Water is essential for life, but extractive industries are increasingly destroying watersheds and demanding huge amounts of water for production. They are in competition with human, agricultural and environmental needs. We see that water pollution, as well as damage to and depletion of water basins, often creates extreme vulnerability for both the natural and human world.

The tension is that our society is very dependent on minerals. Nickel, for example, is important in the entertainment industry. CDs and DVDs are manufactured using a mould formed from pure nickel. However, when a Nickel mine was proposed for the beautiful tropical island of Mindoro in the Philippines, local people and church campaigners campaigned against it. They warned that acid leaching, which is often used to extract the nickel, would contaminate the fresh water and rivers in the mine's vicinity.

Many missionary groups are sympathetic to the fears of local communities and they have long supported mine-affected peoples in the global south. Some are members of the London Mining Network which holds London-based mining companies to account by working closely with mining-affected communities.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41810>

LINKS

London Mining Network - <https://londonminingnetwork.org/>

Tailings dams: an explainer from London Mining Network: https://londonminingnetwork.org/get-informed/tailings-dams-explainer/?fbclid=IwAR2IU7U3-X0zalG-0Av_DQQkxIUN0VJwonLYBSIk8Nff4k23z26QQ8qo6zo

Red Mud:

www.researchgate.net/publication/320246856_MATERIAL_COMPOSITION_AND_PROPERTIES_OF_RED_MUD_COMING_FROM_DOMESTIC_ALUMINA_PROCESSING_PLANT"

15 years on from Samarco: <https://londonminingnetwork.org/2020/11/5-years-on-from-samarco/>

Water Resources: <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Secondary-and-youth-resources/Water-resources-young-people>

CAMPAIGNERS RESPOND TO VATICAN BAN ON BLESSINGS FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

16 March 2021: LGBT Catholic groups have expressed their sadness and disappointment at yesterday's announcement by the CDF banning blessings for gay couples.

The Global Network of Rainbow Catholics (GNRC), a network of more than 40 organizations supporting LGBTIQ Catholics around the world, said: "This document is indeed a reactionary cry in response to the fresh air that is filling the Church from those parishes and lay communities around the world where blessings for same-gender couples are already a factual reality. The Vatican document released today, called 'Responsum of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to a dubium regarding the blessing of the unions of persons of the same sex,' uses dubious theological arguments to reject the claims of a living Church that wants to reform outdated Catholic teachings on sexuality."

Michael Brinkschroeder, a Catholic theologian and member of the German GNRC member group said: "Many German bishops have expressed their support of blessing ceremonies in the past and it is a relevant issue of the conversation of the Synodal Path. The Chair of the German Bishops' Conference has received the argumentation as a contribution to the ongoing conversation, but also said that it requires major and deeper theological arguments."

The spontaneous discussions that have arisen in Germany and elsewhere about blessing ceremonies are for him a sign that the people of God are more empowered than in the past and are asking for real theological argumentation that is not based on old prejudices and biased authorities. "We can't consider an argument about sexual and gender diversity that comes from the Catholic Catechism as theologically justified simply because it's described there, especially since there are many studies that have already demonstrated its lack of biblical and scholarly support," said Brinkschroeder.

Thomas Lofaro, Chairperson of LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council said in a statement: "It's very disappointing, but the church has again issued a very negative statement regarding blessings for same-gender couples. The conferring of a blessing is the smallest acknowledgement that the Church can give to our identity and to the holiness of same-sex relationships. It appears that even this is to be withheld from us."

The Church goes on to state that same sex relationships are a "choice". I suppose they are - as much as a heterosexual relationship with one person and not another is a "choice". However, there is no admission that orientation and gender identity are not choices, and that the need for love and human contact are part of our biology.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41769>

LINKS

New Ways Ministry - www.newwaysministry.org/
LGBT+ Catholics Westminster - www.lgbtcatholicswestminster.org

We are yet again confronted with real proof of the Church's fallibility and sinfulness. I encourage you not to give up on the message of Jesus to us all, that God is love - even though his Church gives the impression that it is not. I encourage you to pray regularly for the Mother Church, that it may be a better symbol of God's love in the world.

And remember to pray for our community, that none of us may be as insensitive and ignorant of the plight and suffering of others around us." In Christ.

The head of the German Catholic Bishops' Conference has expressed his disappointment with the Vatican's recent statement banning the blessing of same-gender unions, suggesting the question is not settled.

Katholisch.de report that Bishop Georg Batzing of Limburg, has repeatedly stated his support for blessing same-gender couples. Batzing said he was "not happy" with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's intervention in the debate over such blessings. The report continues 'This gives the impression that the theological debate, which is currently being debated in various parts of the universal Church, including here in Germany, is to be ended as quickly as possible,' said the Bishop of the KNA. But that is not possible at all. 'Because the discussion is intense and with good arguments in many places, and the theological inquiries about pastoral practice today cannot simply be put out of the way with one word of power,' said Batzing.

Batzing also released a statement on the website of the German Bishops' Conference, saying (via Google Translate): "In Germany and in other parts of the universal Church there have been discussions for a long time as to how this teaching and doctrinal development can generally be advanced with sound arguments - on the basis of fundamental truths of faith and morality, ongoing theological reflection and also in openness to newer ones results of the human sciences and the living situations of people today. There are no easy answers to questions like these.

"The Synodal Path, which the German Bishops' Conference has initiated with the Central Committee of German Catholics, therefore endeavours to discuss the topic of successful relationships in a comprehensive way that also takes into account the necessity and the limits of church teaching development. The viewpoints put forward by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith today must and will of course find their way into these discussions."

Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, a supporter of blessings for same-gender couples, commented: "We will continue to accompany all people in pastoral care if they ask for it, regardless of the life situation."

PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE – PAX CHRISTI FUNDRAISER 15-21 May 2021

Between 15 May, International Conscientious Objectors' Day and the 21 May, Feast of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, we are encouraging Pax Christi members, supporters, friends, volunteers and staff to make their own *Pilgrimage for Peace*. Walk, cycle, row, run, pray, read out ... whether as an individual, a group, a school, or a family, the possibilities are endless.

Set yourself a challenge, get sponsored for it, and raise funds to support Pax Christi's vital work for peace.

- Make 1,000 origami cranes.
- Spend a weekend creating a peace garden.
- Organise a prayer marathon.
- Take a walk to one of the many landmarks with a peace connection. (Coventry, London, Leeds, Manchester, Cambridge all have Peace Trails that could help you plan)
- Or donate to support one of the planned events listed on the Go Fund Me page: https://www.gofundme.com/f/Pax-Christi-Pilgrimage-for-Peace?utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=customer&utm_campaign=p_lico+share-sheet

GET INVOLVED: <https://paxchristi.us1.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=a00b2a7e312e04fbcebd51713&id=de3ace8df4>

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST: <https://paxchristi.org.uk/register-you-interest/>

SEE BELOW FOR ACTIONS ALREADY PLANNED – WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Matt Jeziorski (Pax Christi Executive)

On International Conscientious Objectors' Day (15 May) I will be making my Pilgrimage for Peace, cycling from my home in Warrington to the graves of Tom and Peter Allen in Barrowford, Lancashire – Catholic Conscientious Objector brothers of the First World War. My route is a little over 50 miles and takes in various other sites of CO interest.

Matt says: "I have set myself a challenging but achievable target of £500. 10 Pax Christi members raising a similar amount would be £5000. If 100 of us join in then we are beginning to make serious inroads into any deficit that a COVID Peace Sunday might have left us with. So, please join us. Have a think about what your Pilgrimage will be... AND LET US KNOW."

Pat Gaffney, vice-President of Pax Christi will be making a walking pilgrimage between Victoria and the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park, London, which will focus on peace and women. The route will be made available for others to use.

Rachel Sweetman from the Pax Christi office team plans a virtual cycling pilgrimage using the indoor cycling app Zwift.

Bruce Kent plans to visit Downing Street and the embassies of the other nuclear countries. Outside each he will read part of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and deliver a personal letter to the Ambassador (and to the Prime Minister) requesting that they sign the Treaty.

Bellerive FCJ Catholic College in Liverpool will have a 'Month of Peace' from 21 April – 21 May, culminating in a visit from Archbishop Malcolm McMahon. Among many initiatives, pupils will be making pledges for peace and some will investigate the peace-making activities of the founder, Marie Madeline, and the work of other women peacemakers. The main fundraising task is going to be 'Sunflowers for Peace'. Each form is going to plant a sunflower seed in a locker which would otherwise have been thrown away. <https://paxchristi.org.uk>

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND POETRY OF JOHN BRADBURNE

22 March 2021: Earlier this month the John Bradburne Memorial Society (JBMS) launched its 100-day Poetry Project, in honour of the life and work for his Centenary Year in 2021. For the following 100 days, leading up to John's 100th Birthday on 14 June 2021, prominent figures and supporters will read out one of John's poems on the Society's YouTube channel. (See link below) You can also visit the JBMS poetry website where Professor David Crystal has compiled all of John Bradburne's poetry to an online database.

John Bradburne was born in Skirwith, Cumbria, in 1921. A third-order Franciscan, he was killed in Rhodesia in 1979 for refusing to abandon the leprosy patients he had looked after for many years. John dedicated his life to look after the poorest, most needy leprosy patients and society's

outcasts, providing 10 years of selfless physical and spiritual care until he was murdered in 1979.

Since his death, Mutemwa, the leprosy settlement where he worked, has become a major pilgrimage centre. Each year, on the anniversary of his death, September 5, thousands gather to hear Mass and process up the mountain where he walked and prayed.

The John Bradburne Memorial Society was established in 1995 by Celia Brigstocke, John's niece, to do two things: to continue his legacy by providing perpetual financial support for the Mutemwa Leprosy Care Centre, desperately in need of help, and to promote his cause for beatification, given the widespread belief in his sanctity expressed by all who met him.

John Bradburne Youtube channel - www.youtube.com/channel/UCcGjYYMDHb4vQStf63_PKDg

JBMS poetry website - www.johnbradburnepoems.com/public/home.aspx

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/41819>

NEW DATE FOR THE DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS OF ABUSE – TUESDAY 4 MAY

16 March 2021: Listening to the voices of victims and survivors, the Bishops have moved the date on which the Day of Prayer for the Victims and Survivors of Abuse is marked in England and Wales.

The day itself is an important initiative that was proposed by the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors <https://www.tutelaminorum.org/>

The Holy Father welcomed the proposal and asked that each Bishops' Conference choose an appropriate day in their nation or territory to hold a 'Day of Prayer' for the victims and survivors of sexual abuse. Initially, in 2018, the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales chose the Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent.

However, listening to the voices of victims and survivors, the Bishops received a proposal that the day should be changed to a time in Easter Season. It was felt that the inclusion of this day in Lent was penitential. The original motivation for the day was not on the Church seeking forgiveness for its failings, but on the hope and renewal that is necessary for the victims, survivors and others affected by abuse (for example families, parish communities).

As such, the Bishops have moved this Day of Prayer for Victims and Survivors of Abuse to the Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter. In 2021, this will fall on Tuesday 4 May.

Making this change, after listening to the voices of victims and survivors, affirms the desire of the Church in our countries to put survivors at the heart of the response to abuse. Holding the day in Easter Season offers the hope that Pope Francis spoke of in his first General Audience:

"He healed, comforted, understood — gave hope. He led all to the presence of God." 27 March 2013

Listening with Love

The *Let's be Honest* group, a group set up to support survivor-centred initiatives such as this, was approached by the Bishops' Conference to provide some materials for Lent 2021.

After an initial discussion about looking at scripture and how it might be reflected upon as well as how to link the sessions, the members of *Let's be Honest* asked survivors to prepare a resource called '*Listening with Love*'.

The survivors identified the themes and decided that, in conversations, the voice of the survivor could be heard. Therefore, using scripture and recorded conversations each of the seven sessions reflects upon the impact of abuse on individuals and the Church. From the beginning, it was recognised that the opportunity to invite people to reflect on the impact of abuse on individuals, and the Church, should not be limited to a particular time. Although this material is being released for Lent 2021, it can be used at any time.

The material is designed for use in small groups, with a leader and participants.

At the end of the sessions there is an opportunity to reflect on what has been heard and what it means for the local Church.

At the time of writing, January 2021, we recognise that the familiar format of small groups meeting together in one place may not be possible. Many have discovered that video conferencing platforms, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, have made coming together possible. There are a number of ways of using the material, depending on a community's circumstances or resources – each model allowing for social distancing.

The material is available in two formats:

- A PDF document for participants with separate audio clips for the conversation
- A PowerPoint presentation (with embedded audio).

The two may be used separately or together.

From its beginnings within the Bishops' Conference Marriage and Family Life Office, the *Let's Be Honest* group has been inspired by the breadth of wisdom and expertise gleaned over many years by victims/survivors themselves, and those who have accompanied them, with a concern for integrating their Christian faith and spirituality with emotional and psychological recovery.

The principles governing the work of the group emerged through conversations in 2018 and early 2019. It resolved that the pastoral support of victims and survivors in a faith-based context, together with the safeguarding structures, must be rooted in a deeper understanding of the imperatives of the gospel and Church teaching, to put the victim first, and care for those who are hurting in any way.

Everything the group does is founded on who we are as 'Church' – the Body of Christ. When one suffers, the whole body suffers.

Let's Be Honest Report 2020: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2021/02/LBH-REPORT-2020.pdf>
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/new-date-for-the-day-of-prayer-for-the-victims-and-survivors-of-abuse/>

RECOMMENDED READING

Mary Magdalene and the 'Gardener' Brian Lennon SJ

Brian Lennon SJ's new book, *Mary Magdalene and the Gardener: Women Leaders in the Church* (Messenger Publications), is an examination of the spiritual significance of Mary Magdalene's relationship to Jesus, the trans-historical significance of the resurrection and the contemporary question of the role of women in the Church.

According to the Irish Jesuit, Mary Magdalene might be the most misunderstood person in the story of Jesus. Yet, she was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection and she first took the good news of his world-changing resurrection to the apostles.

The book is set in the context of the Amazon Synod in 2019 that raised the question of the role of women in the Church. This prompted the author to ask: "What can the story of Mary Magdalene and her relationship with Jesus, the 'Gardener', tell us about the future of women in the Church?"

Mary Magdalene and the Gardener is divided into four parts: Mary's story; understanding Mary's story; the significance of Mary's story; and Mary, the Gardener, and today. The foreword is written by Ruth Patterson, who was the first woman to be ordained to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and is the director of Restoration Ministries. She writes: "It is the 'overwhelming love revealed in the voice of the Gardener' that restores hope, makes all things new and everything possible. Brian

Mary Magdalene and the Gardener: Women Leaders in the Church is published in Ireland and the UK by Messenger Publications and is priced at €7.95/£7.50. ISBN: 9781788123143, Number of pages: 72

<https://www.jesuit.ie/news/mary-magdalene-and-the-gardener/>

<https://www.waterstones.com/book/mary-magdalene-and-the-gardener/brian-lennon/9781788123143>

Church, Interrupted: Havoc & Hope: The Tender Revolt of Pope Francis (Hardback) John Cornwell

Church, Interrupted: Havoc & Hope: The Tender Revolt of Pope Francis is a revealing portrait of Pope Francis's hopeful yet controversial efforts to recreate the Catholic Church to become, once again, a welcoming place of empathy, love, and inclusiveness.

Bestselling author and papal biographer John Cornwell tells the gripping insider story of Pope Francis's bid to bring renewal and hope to a crisis-plagued Church and the world at large. With unique insights and original reporting, Cornwell reveals how Francis has persistently provoked and disrupted his stubbornly unchanging Church, purging clerical corruption and reforming entrenched institutions, while calling for action against global poverty, climate change, and racism.

Cornwell argues that despite fierce opposition from traditionalist clergy and right-wing media, the pope has radically widened Catholic moral priorities, calling for mercy and compassion over rigid dogmatism. Francis, according to Cornwell, has transformed the Vatican from being a top-down centralized authority to being a spiritual service for a

Church, Interrupted: Havoc & Hope: The Tender Revolt of Pope Francis published by Chronicle Books. ISBN: 9781797202013, 304 pages Price £16.66 from Eden Christian Books

<https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/catholic/church-interrupted-havoc-hope-the-tender-revolt-of-pope-francis/>

presents us with this challenge when he writes, 'In the end the Voice confronts us with a choice: to listen to the whisper or to stay within the limits of our sight.'"

Referring to gender roles in the New Testament, Brian writes: "Apart from the gospels, Paul's writings confirm this prominence of women... The fact that women are singled out for mention in these letters suggests that they were leaders in the communities to which the letters were addressed."

Brian asks: "What kind of leaders were they, with what kind of responsibility?" He goes on to discuss gender roles in society and women leaders in today's Church, countering the argument from the Last Supper that only men can be ordained.

The book is a meditation on a world changed by one word; the word that made the resurrection real was 'Mary'.

Brian Lennon SJ has spent over 40 years working in Northern Ireland with a particular focus on the peace process. He is currently Chair of the Board of the Jesuit Refugee Service and Secretary of Dialogue for Diversity that works on issues of migrants, prisoners, conflict, community development and climate. He recently published with Revd Tim Kinahan *Does Christ Matter? An Anglican and a Jesuit in Dialogue* (Messenger Publications).

global Church. He has welcomed the rejected, abused, and disheartened; reached out to people of other faiths and those of none; and proved a providential spiritual leader for future generations.

More than a third of America's 74 million Catholics said they were contemplating departure in 2018. It is estimated that over the past twenty years, the Catholic Church has been losing \$2.5 billion dollars annually in revenues, legal fees, and damages due to clerical abuse cases. The decline in church attendance, marriages, and vocations to the priesthood and sisterhood tell a story of major decline and disillusion. Cornwell showcases Pope Francis's way forward, a hopeful message that gives reinvigorated reasons to stay with the church and help be the change the new generation would like to see.

For readers within and outside Catholicism fascinated by the future and restructuring of the church, this will be a book they want to read again and again as the church continues to change and grow.

DEAR ENGLAND: *Finding Hope, Taking Heart and Changing the World*

Ruth Peacock 16 March 2021

Human beings are made for community, the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, told a Religion Media Centre online briefing. And God is also community — and love, a place where there is reciprocity of giving and believing.

He found himself trying to explain this to a young woman who was queuing with him for a flat white at Caffè Nero at Paddington station, while he was on the way to a conference in Wales. While the initial question was straightforward enough: “What made you become a priest?”, the answer moved into a discussion about God, Jesus Christ and changing the world. He caught his train, but the idea was born as to how he could properly communicate his beliefs, convictions and experiences to someone outside the church but keen enough to ask a question.

In his book *Dear England: Finding Hope, Taking Heart and Changing the World* he says God is not a created thing, nor a set of ideas. God is the source and origin of everything that is. He told the briefing that this was a predictable and orthodox Christian way of describing God. Faced with a society where many have abandoned such ideas, his advice is to think of the experience of delight and wonder of love, observe a “stirring” in your self, suspend disbelief and join a journey with Christians to explore the idea.

For the archbishop, being a Christian is not about understanding ideas so much as living in community, experiencing a sense of belonging with other people and working towards justice. For this reason, he wants to change the world. In his book he speaks of the consensus following the Second World War, where leaders including Archbishop William Temple worked to achieve a welfare state, NHS healthcare for all and free education.

Dear England: Finding Hope, Taking Heart and Changing the World Publisher Hodder & Stoughton Hardback
ISBN: 9781529360950 149 pages Price £12.87 from Eden Christian Books
<https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/understanding-the-faith/dear-england/>

POEMS FOR EASTER

“You dreamed like all mothers do.
Until he began to speak aloud,
Your boy,
calling for justice in the market place,
Demanding integrity and fair play
in the courts and halls of business.
Declaring the Realm of God
Imminent,
Manifest . . .

Jesus leapt into the swelling crowds
like an axe into wood,
Uncompromising and unrelenting
in his passionate call
for peace and justice.

Movements towards justice could take place again, though he realised it would be much harder in the current climate because the Christian story does not have the same purchase on the imagination as it did 70 years ago. But he saw the campaign for housing justice and the faith in the city report as projects which had a significant impact.

He also made clear that the belief in a nuclear deterrent is morally flawed. He expressed serious concern at the news that the UK is to increase its stockpile of nuclear warheads, reversing previous policy. He would continue to argue that we should disarm and support movements for disarmament across the world.

He thought the church could take a lead on the overwhelming campaigns for the safety of women against male violence, following the horrific murder of Sarah Everard. And as a matter of principle, he continued to support the banning of conversion therapy.

Because he believes in community, he said the doomsday scenario where failing church finances would, mean only wealthy churches could afford a priest, would not happen on his watch. He had been heartened by the growth of online communities during the pandemic and predicted that the future would be hybrid — mixing face-to-face with online activities.

Moving back to the north of England, he had become aware of great discrepancies of wealth and opportunity in the nation. His vision for a church of the future is to be a church for the poor.

Jesus, your boy,
causing havoc in public,
critiquing and condemning
the status quo,
breaking rule after rule . . .

And with every speech,
with every act of defiance,
with every call to liberation,
with every amazing deed,
Your dreams of peace and liberation,
Your dreams of a secure old age,
Your dreams of grandchildren —
Evaporated.”

Edwina Gateley, from *Soul Sisters: Women in Scripture Speak to Women Today*

SILENCE OF GOD

In years past I have heard the roar,
Which strengthens and supports,
Judah's lion chased off the beast,
Which lurked behind the door.

Yet now it feels like heaven is empty,
Lights Switched off, Landlord absent?
Unanswered prayers lie unopened,
The Silence of God

Silence of God,
Jesus remember me.

Silence of God,
Jesus remember me.

In years past I felt the shepherds rod,
Leading me through deaths dark vale.
To quiet waters, peaceful streams,
In his presence I was awed.

Has the shepherd's staff been broken?
The beasts unchecked are at the door.
Has Judah's Lion been defanged?
The Silence of God.

Silence of God,
Jesus remember me.

Silence of God,
Jesus remember me.

In years past the King was butchered
The Lamb hangs quiet upon the tree.
The cursed one brings blessing
For sinners such as me.

Does the grave stand empty?
He stormed the gates of hell.
Will compassion have the last word?
The healing voice of God.

The healing voice of God,
Jesus remember me,

The healing voice of God,
Jesus remember me.

Jon Swales 2021

• **Jon Swales** is Mission Priest for The Lighthouse in West Yorkshire, 'a Christian community for those who are battered and bruised by the storms of life, including homelessness, addiction issues, criminal background, poverty and crisis in mental health,' based at St George's Church, Leeds. www.lighthousewestyorkshire.org.uk

Jon and our late daughter Annie, a scripture scholar, teacher and evangelist who worked for Church Army, were the only two students taking a Biblical Studies MA course in 2002-3 in Sheffield. Travelling different paths, they both dedicated their lives in loving service to the poor and the broken – Anne O'Connor.

RESOURCES

New Beginnings – A Journey from Lent to Easter – daily reflections

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/A-LENTEN-JOURNEY-2021-NEW-BEGINNINGS.pdf>

Stations of the Cross in a Time of fear and Uncertainty

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/lent/stations-of-the-cross-in-a-time-of-fear-and-uncertainty/>

• EDITOR'S NOTE

I sent the above resources which I composed earlier this year to St William of York parish, Sheffield where my late daughter Annie worshipped. They adapted the Stations of the Cross (pdf copy above) and added a joyful 15th station plus beautiful singing by the parish choir and made a video presentation using the painted Stations in the church. Some of the reflections are very personal to me and I was very touched by this moving presentation. Watch at the link below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dek4wu5HpTA>

DIARY DATES

APRIL

4 Easter Sunday

19 Online conversation on “The Politics of Division” 7pm - 8.30pm hosted by Church and Peace in Britain and Ireland.

“Is the UK government pursuing a “white nationalist” agenda to split our communities?” Join us on zoom to discuss this issue! After a short introduction to “unconscious bias” we will hear from Simon Barrow (Director of the ecumenical thinktank Ekklesia) and Bishop John Perumbalath (Chair of Churches’ Refugee Network). There will also be opportunities for small-group discussion.

Register here: <https://www.church-and-peace.org/en/2021/02/online-conversation-politics-of-division/>

21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination un.org/en/events

22 World Water Day worldwaterday.org

26 Chernobyl Day chernobyl-day.org

27 Earth Hour www.earthhour.org

MAY

15 International Conscientious Objectors Day. Every year on May 15 we remember those who have established and are maintaining the right to refuse to kill, both in the past and today. Hundreds of people across the world are imprisoned or forced to flee their home countries for refusing to join the armed forces. On May 15 we stand in solidarity with them, as well as celebrating the memory of all those throughout history who have resisted conscription.

<https://www.ppu.org.uk/international-conscientious-objectors-day>

NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe*, and some of these are uploaded onto our website at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

● Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com an invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles.

● Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN including **a new fortnightly e-bulletin with a comprehensive round-up of current events, campaigns, e-petitions and resources** (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues for NJPN North West) at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact ebulletin@justice-and-peace.org

or admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk 020 7901 4864

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN