

Vocation for Justice

Editorial

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Balancing Mercy and Justice

We have heard the word *Mercy* a lot recently. In fact the theme of this edition of *Vocation for Justice* is *Mercy*. On the centre pages you will find a very interesting modern interpretation of the traditional Christian teaching of the seven *Corporal Works of Mercy*. *Mercy* is so important for Pope Francis that it is the central theme of his Papacy, and he speaks of it often in homilies. His apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* ('*The Joy of the Gospel*'), uses the word 32 times.

This year - 2016 - he calls on the entire global Roman Catholic Church to a Jubilee Year, to be called the *Holy Year of Mercy*. The Pope also says he wants the Church to live the upcoming holy year "in the light" of Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke: "Be merciful, just as your father is merciful". *Mercy*, he tells us, is the Lord's most powerful message.

Mercy is a door, an opening, an invitation to touch a life, to make a difference. But it is not a destination. *Mercy* beckons us into unexplored territory. Often it ushers us into a world of pressing human need - the destitute needing food and clothes, the homeless needing shelter, the refugee needing a friend. *Mercy* and justice are two sides of the same coin. Twinned together they lead us to holistic involvement. Divorced they become deformed. *Mercy* without justice degenerates into dependency. *Mercy* that doesn't move intentionally in the direction of justice will end up doing more harm than good to both giver and recipient. Justice without mercy grows cold and impersonal, more concerned about rights than relationships.

Against dark and overpowering forces, acts of mercy can seem meagre. Food banks, although they are necessary, are an insufficient response when we live in a society that discriminates against the poor? What good are a sandwich and a cup of soup in the long term when a severe addiction has control of a person's life? We may ask, what good is simply campaigning for peace when our governments are so immersed in the arms trade. Perhaps that is why the Bible places equal emphasis on both mercy and justice.

Mercy is a force that compels us to acts of compassion. But over time mercy often will collide with an ominous, opposing force - injustice. *Mercy* is a door. It is a portal



British Museum boss Neil MacGregor's final acquisition before stepping down in December 2015 was a cross made from the wreck of a refugee boat. It had sunk in the Mediterranean with the loss of over 300 lives. He hoped that the Lampedusa Cross would, "shine a light on the needs and hopes that all human beings share".

through which we glimpse the heart of God. The tug on our heartstrings draws us in. But soon we encounter brokenness so overwhelming that neither a tender heart nor an inventive problem-solver feel up to the task. Our solutions fall short. Pathologies are too deep, poverty too entrenched. And we descend into our own poverty, a poverty of spirit, a crisis of confidence in our own ability to rescue. And, like the broken, we find ourselves calling out to God for answers. When our best efforts have failed us, we are left with nothing to cling to but frail faith.

In a strange twist of divine irony, those who would extend mercy discover that they themselves are in need of mercy. Out of our own need we are readied for service that is both humble and wise. "The call of Jesus pushes each of us never to stop at the surface of things, especially when we are dealing with a person", the pope says. "We are called to look beyond, to focus on the heart to see how much generosity everyone is capable of," he adds.

Francis said in announcing the Jubilee Year: "I am convinced that the whole Church — that has much need to receive mercy because we are sinners — will find in this jubilee the joy to rediscover and render fruitful the mercy of God, with which we are all called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time."

During this Holy Year let us respond to the call of Pope Francis to live lives where mercy and justice are central. ■

Peter Hughes

COLUMBAN MISSION

Collaborating with the National Justice and Peace Network of England and Wales & Justice and Peace Scotland

Facing Chaos in a Year of Mercy

John Gehring

John Gehring, based in the US, is author of 'The Francis Effect: A Radical Pope's Challenge to the American Catholic Church'. An earlier version of this essay appeared on the website of the National Catholic Reporter.

Confronted with the existential threat of terrorism, shameful political fear-mongering and the disorienting din of a 24-hour news cycle, the instinct to hunker down and hold tight to our ideologies, possessions and prejudices may be easy to understand. Lock the door. Turn out the lights. Buy a gun.

The Christian path is more hopeful, and a harder journey.

The Jesus in the Gospels is always pulling the motley crew of humanity he meets beyond themselves, out of fear, away from comfort zones. He upends societal norms and expectations.

At times, his lessons seem irrational. Love your enemies. Why? What does this even mean? In the war-torn Central African Republic last November, where Muslims and Christian militias were battling in a civil war, Pope Francis insisted that one of the "essential characteristics" of being a Christian is a love of enemies, "which protects us from the temptation to seek revenge and from the spiral of endless retaliation". During his visit he held up "practitioners of forgiveness, specialists in reconciliation, experts in mercy" in contrast to those who wield "instruments of death".

Jubilee Year of Mercy

As the Catholic Church celebrates a Jubilee Year of Mercy, it's worth thinking about what mercy means in an age of terror, and in the face of a creeping darkness in our political mood. Some might dismiss mercy as soft or saccharine. You might caricature it as a Hallmark card virtue, anodyne and easily overlooked. This is a mistake.

German Cardinal Walter Kasper describes it in the title of his book, *'Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian life'*. Mercy has a particular meaning and

application when it comes to sacramental questions. Boisterous debates over whether the Church should do more to welcome back divorced and remarried Catholics who are denied Communion divided cardinals at the last two Synods at the Vatican.

Mercy and Justice

Well beyond ecclesial life, there is a politics of mercy deeply connected to justice and the common good. Mercy is not blind to the ways social structures can diminish human dignity and perpetuate inequality. Mass incarceration, environmental devastation, racism and an "economy of exclusion" should compel us to grapple with mercy not as an abstract ideal or a high-brow theological concept, but as something tangible and gritty that requires individual and collective action.

The great moral leaders and prophets have always known this. Being a disciple of mercy is countercultural. Dorothy Day fed the hungry but also questioned why so many were poor, and she risked her reputation protesting war, the draft, and standing up for conscientious objection even when religious and political elites balked. Rev Martin Luther King Jr, and other less celebrated activists in the civil rights movement, knew they risked assassination because of their commitment to mercy and justice. The shadow of death did not stop them. King took his place among the centuries of Christian martyrs.

Pope Francis, as usual, has a knack for explaining the essence of mercy better than most. He even coined a new word in Spanish – *misericordiendo* (Mercy-ing in English). In this way, mercy is not just an object, a static noun, but an active verb signifying motion. Mercy requires leaving the safe place, confronting complexity, even facing evil.

The Christian doesn't travel this hard path alone. We believe that, "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it," as we read in the Gospel of John. None of this gives us easy answers for how to make sense of senseless gun violence, radical extremism or craven politicians who exploit fear.

Prayer and Action

But we take hope in a God who is so close to us that he took on the form of a slave and experienced joy, doubt, suffering, death. The Word is made Flesh, and in the Incarnation we experience the divine not as a distant abstraction but as an encounter with a person, and with each other. People of faith need not be naïve to the real dangers of the world, or blind to the hypocrisy and cowardice of many who act in the name of religion. We need to find strength in a God who is closest to the refugee, the woman widowed by a drone attack, the peaceful Muslim targeted for his faith.

After the San Bernardino shootings in California on 2 December that killed 14 people, the *New York Daily News* ran a provocative front-page story with the headline, "God Isn't Fixing This". The headline and the first line in the article - "Prayers aren't working" - correctly observed that more pious platitudes were not enough to prevent another act of gun violence. A predictable flare up in the culture wars ensued over social media, as people defending prayer traded barbs with those who cheered the newspaper's call for action.

The false choice of pitting prayer against action, of course, is nonsense. Prayer can deepen a commitment to social transformation, and has always been interwoven into historic struggles for justice. "To clasp the hands in prayer," the Protestant theologian Karl Barth observed, "is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world".

Christ is here in our world amid chaos, violence and fear. We often domesticate the Gospel by smoothing out its radical edges. However, prayer and mercy are not cheap dates. Both require hard work and struggles. ■

Columban Education

Learning Outside the Comfort Zone

James Trewby

James is Columban Justice and Peace education worker.

“When he had washed their feet and put on his clothes again he went back to the table. ‘Do you understand’ he said ‘what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly; so I am. If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.” (John 13: 1-15)

This story is one I often explore with groups of educators. It’s a beautiful story of service and of being really present to those you are with. But I believe it contains another message from Jesus to his followers – the challenge to learn by trying on someone else’s shoes. Putting oneself in a new position opens up the opportunity to see the world from a new perspective.

In his book *‘Empathy and the Art of Living’*, Krznaric explores the power of ‘empathetic adventures’. He cites various examples, including Gandhi, Francis of Assisi and George Orwell (some of whose “temporary experiments in living the life of others” are explored in *‘Down and out in London and Paris’*). Krznaric suggests that, “many of the most important shifts in history have taken place not when there has been a change in governments, laws or economic systems, but when there has been a change in the social fabric of empathy”.

In this Year of Mercy, we are called to practical action – service and acts of charity. But we mustn’t forget that learning is a vital part of doing! I feel this is especially true for those of us privileged to work with the young (teachers, parents, youth workers, catechists and so on). Embracing learning opportunities to take us out of our comfort zones and encounter something of J&P issues gives us firsthand experience and passion to share with young people.

A joy of being the Columban Justice and Peace Education Worker is offering these kinds of learning experiences. Over the last year this has included taking teachers, parents and youth workers to witness acts of non-violent direct action, visit prisons, ‘sleep out’, interview and write campaign letters with homeless and ex-homeless people, encounter Christians and Muslims involved in Inter-Religious Dialogue in the UK and (via the internet) Pakistan, a learning visit to the ‘borderlands’ between Mexico and the US, and meeting refugees and asylum seekers.

What kind of learning might this result in?

Jesuit youth worker, visited prison: *We all have the potential to do better and to be better, and we have someone who is fiercely and loyally campaigning for us – Jesus Christ. We need to be that person for others. This is what this experience meant for me.*

Youth worker, visited refugees with the Columban Lay Missionaries: *It was particularly eye opening as the women were completely honest about their experiences of detention centres which I hardly knew anything about beforehand. The stories the women shared were shocking. I don’t think I would have ever had the chance to hear their stories in any other situation.*

Parent, visited prison: *It gave us a chance to understand what it means to visit those in prison, and how the acts of mercy that Pope Francis is encouraging us to undertake in this Jubilee year are not that hard. We just need to get on with them, knowing that God loves all of us.*

Activist and educator, visited Columbans at US/Mexico border: *I learned about some of the complexities behind the news and political rhetoric and gained experience and examples to draw upon when challenging the attitudes of people with no experience of the situation and whose views are heavily influenced by the media.*

Volunteer youth worker, sleep out: *I can’t write about what it feels like to lay your head on a pavement every night, or how it feels to have nowhere private to go to the toilet. But I can say that I learned how much I don’t know. It was a brief but sobering education that gently shook my shoulders in a very practical and unassuming kind of way. It has left me with questions about justice, human dignity, charity and statutory responsibility. And it has challenged me to play my small part in campaigning for change.*

School Chaplain, visited prison: *It was a humbling and touching experience that taught me more about compassion, mercy and humanity. This visit to a prison was an honour. Any preconceptions and prejudices I had before I went quickly melted away. My faith in God’s goodness, grace and redeeming love has been strengthened and I am inspired to do more to share it, especially with those who are most in need of it. ■*

James can be contacted on (education@columbans.co.uk) and/or find ways to create your own ‘empathetic adventures’!



James Trewby on a sleepout outside a London church.

The Ocean and Theology

Liam O'Callaghan

The Columban JPIC Coordinator in Pakistan reports on a recent Columban conference that focused on the Ocean.

The Columbans of the Korean region hosted a symposium, 'The Ocean and Theology' on 1-3 December in Seoul as part of the 1,400th death anniversary of St. Columban (d. 615). The hopes of the organisers were: "That Columbans will, through participation in our symposium, cast a new and fresh light on this most important, but oft neglected, issue - The Ocean and our relationship with it. Reflecting on 'The Ocean and Theology' is not only a new understanding within the world of mission, but is also breaking new ground in the theological and broader academic world".

The symposium brought together eight Columbans working in varied and different contexts – Chile, New Zealand, China, Korea, Brazil, Pakistan – who researched and presented papers on an equally varied number of topics relating to the Ocean, trying to make theological and missiological connections. The topics ranged across a broad range of theological and academic areas such as spirituality, justice, peace, dialogue,

exploitation, migration, philosophy, mythology, and ecology.

Eamon Adams, based in Korea, believed that we need to acquire a sense of wonder at the Otherness of the Ocean; a much more holistic approach is needed which calls us to recalibrate our relationship with the Ocean. He arrived at this conclusion by creatively interacting the writings of Rachel Carson with Emmanuel Levinas.

Colin McClean, who has worked in Brazil with Afro Brazilians for over 30 years, traced the almost five centuries' history of the Atlantic slave trade. Brazil received about 40% of African slaves that came across the Atlantic up until 1888 when Brazil abolished slavery.

Former Superior General, Tommy Murphy, focused on the role and significance of the Ocean in early Celtic Monasticism, where the Ocean was seen as a place of punishment, a place of ascetical practice and a place of becoming.

JPIC coordinator in Chile, César Correa, presented a challenging thesis, namely, 'The Looting of a Common Good: ocean grabbing in Chile, a perspective from affected communities'. It is only since WWII that the privatisation of the Ocean has begun, a concept unheard of up to that. This new reality is a serious challenge for missiology to respond.

Pat McMullan works in Korea and highlighted the looming dangers of rising sea levels caused by climate change in a process of what he calls "de-creation". Our theological language is inadequate today in helping us make the dramatic changes in human behaviour which are needed to save this situation.

Korea JPIC coordinator, Pat Cunningham, focused on 'The environmental impact of militarism, military installations and naval base construction on the island communities of Jeju (Korea) and Okinawa (Japan)'.

New Zealander Michael Gormely shared on the contact between Church missionaries and peoples surrounded by the ocean in the South Pacific, which has not always been positive. He sees the need for a greater embracing of 'indignity' in order to create an *Oceanic Spiritual Theology*.

Liam O'Callaghan works in Pakistan as the Columban JPIC/IRD coordinator and researched the reasons why the Indus River Delta is dying, primarily due to a lack of freshwater due to the irrigation canals upstream on the Indus. He highlighted how an interfaith approach to this crisis could be part of the solution.

It was a fascinating and informative experience for those present and highlighted the reality that the Ocean has been largely ignored in theological reflection. The symposium was held during the days when 195 world leaders were gathered in Paris for COP21, and there was a real sense of us all working on a common project, namely, to care for our common home - Planet Earth. ■

The papers of the symposium will be published before Easter. E-mail vocforjus@aol.com if you would like to receive notification.



Liam O'Callaghan is centre at this interfaith march in Lahore for climate action in December. It was one of thousands of marches around the world calling for a strong deal at the Paris talks. Around 200 people from the Muslim, Sikh, Hindu and Christian communities took part. "People of faith from different communities living in Pakistan are very much concerned about the environment," said Fr Liam. The Muslim green activist, Haroon Akram Gill, added that, "in our country, we are facing environment degradation, water pollution and problems in sanitation as well as agriculture, which is affecting our livelihoods".

Implementing the Paris Agreement

Ellen Teague



The Columban delegation in Paris

Most of us breathed a sigh of relief at the conclusion of the December COP21 in Paris, that this latest effort to address climate change didn't end in stalemate. For the first time, the world has a global agreement on climate change that involves nearly all countries. Landmark goals for taking action include keeping temperature rise to well below 2 degrees C and to pursue efforts to limit global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees C.

This is not to be scoffed at. Thirty years ago, Columban eco-theologian Sean McDonagh was not taken seriously when he talked about the impacts of climate change on the Earth and on the poor in his first book 'To Care for the Earth'. There was no scientific consensus then.

Yet, disappointments about the agreement have been voiced by Columban friends. Climate activist Yeb Saño, who trekked 1,500km from Rome to Paris on a 'People's Pilgrimage' was one of them. A former chief climate negotiator for the Philippines, he said, "we should guard our sense of jubilation, for the word 'commitment' does not appear on the Paris Agreement". He felt the most powerful nations on Earth, developed and developing alike, refused to use this word in order to achieve a political compromise that would be expedient for governments. The deal leaves the door open for free trade deals like TTIP and TPP to trump climate legislation, allowing corporations to

sue governments that put in place progressive climate policies that infringe their current and future profits. There is no plan to leave fossil fuels in the ground, although as much as 80% of all known fossil fuel reserves must remain unexploited and unburned if we hope to avoid climate catastrophe. The deal also fails to detail how workers in polluting industries will make the transition to new climate-friendly work in a zero-carbon economy.

In Yeb Saño's view, the real impetus for solutions will come from the people, and it is heartening that the climate movement is growing. The Global Catholic Climate Movement, initiated just a year ago, has already stimulated an international Catholic Climate Petition of around 900,000 signatures. Its meeting in Paris was an inspiring gathering. Columban Missionaries and Westminster J&P sat alongside Caritas Internationalis, CIDSE, Trocaire, Jesuit European Social Centre, Ecojesuit, Franciscans International, Our Voices, People's Pilgrimage, Augustinian Recollects - Philippines, and Chrétiens Unis pour la Terre. There were many Franciscans from such far flung places as India, Australia, Brazil, Netherlands and Rome, and a bloc of Jesuits from Philippines, Belgium and Spain; also Capuchin JPIC from the US and Ecuador, and an Assumption priest. Ghanaian Archbishop Gabriel Justice Yaw Anokye of Kumasi, the President of Caritas Africa and the second vice-president of Caritas

Internationalis, thanked God for the opportunity to be at COP21 and sought God's help, "for us to develop our strategy to protect the Earth for future generations". Catholics supported December's Global Climate March, the largest climate mobilisation in history, with over 785,000 people participating in 2,300 events in 175 countries.

In 2016, the Catholic Climate Petition will continue, as advocacy on climate change must continue. Education work on climate change is on-going. I am delighted to be visiting Scotland next month to speak at a J&P Lenten Retreat on *Laudato Si'* on 12 March. The ecumenical Season of Creation - 1 September to 4 October - will be pushed through Catholic networks, and especially the annual day of prayer for safeguarding Creation on 1 September. Ideas being explored include urging for a Synod on Faith and Environment, as a follow up to *Laudato Si'*, and developing a programme to empower youth groups to mobilise their local Church for climate justice, with World Youth Day in Krakow as a key moment. Columban JPIC is part of the National Justice and Peace Network Environment Group which has been urging dioceses to develop an environmental policy.

How can we turn the rhetoric of the Paris deal into reality? There is much to do. Since COP21, our government has announced a 65% cut to solar panel subsidies for households, and amended legislation to allow fracking under national parks and protected areas.

The Paris Climate Agreement did not save Earth but instead saved the chance to save Earth. There is no single initiative that will solve climate change. Taking one policy at a time, one lifestyle change at a time, we will have to make the path to a stable climate by walking it. ■

Links:

Ellen Teague's Paris blogs are on twitter
#columbans4climatejustice
<http://catholicclimatemovement.global/first-year-in-review/>
<http://www.columban.org.au/archives/features/2015/people-s-power-helps-set-a-1.5-degree-global-warming-ambition>

The Corporal Works of Mercy

FEED THE HUNGRY

The term 'Food Sovereignty' refers to communities controlling the way their food is produced, traded and consumed. The food sovereignty movement is a global alliance of farmers, growers, consumers and activists, including La Via Campesina, one of the largest social movements in the world.

However, the movement is up against domination of the global food system by big business. A small handful of large corporations control much of the production, processing, distribution, marketing and retailing of food. This concentration of power enables big businesses to wipe out competition and dictate tough terms to their suppliers. It forces farmers and consumers into poverty and hunger. Under this system around one billion people are hungry.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest charitable foundation in the world, has come under fire for its promotion of industrial agriculture across Africa, pushing for the adoption of genetically modified food products, patented seed systems and chemical fertilisers, all of which undermine existing sustainable, small-scale farming that is providing the vast majority of food security across the continent.

Polly Jones, Global Justice Now
www.globaljusticenow.org.uk

GIVE DRINK TO THE THIRSTY

One in nine people globally does not have access to safe and clean drinking water. But is the solution to allow corporations to take control of supplies? Last year saw struggles throughout the world to protect public water systems. In Indonesia, two private water corporations lost a court battle over control of water in Jakarta. This followed an 18-year struggle by the Coalition of Jakarta Residents Opposing Water Privatisation, who felt something as important as water provision should be in public ownership. 180 cities and communities in 35 countries, including Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, Paris, Accra, Berlin, La Paz, Maputo and Kuala Lumpur, have all "re-municipalised" their water systems in the past decade.

The Columban Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Office in Chile has been involved in protests against the privatisation of water in Chile. Logging and mining companies are two of the largest consumers of Chile's water. Peaceful protests – of environmentalists, indigenous groups, Chile's biggest workers' union, students and church activists – demand greater environmental protection. According to César Correa, the JPIC Co-ordinator in Chile, water is "a common good and access to it is a human right".
César Correa



Alice Brown

'The Jungle' at Calais

CLOTHE THE NAKED

Seeking Sanctuary is a small Kent-based organisation promoting awareness of the plight of migrants and asylum seekers in the French port of Calais and beyond. This includes provision of humanitarian assistance for individuals currently stranded in Calais, especially clothing, footwear and bedding. There are currently some 6000 migrants, including a growing number of women and children in the largest camp at Calais and 2500 near Dunkirk. They live in extremely muddy, wind-swept and squalid conditions, currently in sub-zero night-time temperatures.

We work with individuals and local organisations such as *Caritas Secours Catholique* to ensure that people have some basic dignity. We have facilitated a number of deliveries of goods. Faith communities, Justice and Peace groups and other organisations from across the UK have assisted. Warm winter items such as gloves, socks, hats and coats are in high demand. Most people had shoes but few had ones appropriate to cope with the huge puddles and fields of mud. The items most requested have been underwear for men, and for women, warm trousers, tops, leggings and tights. Most children we saw had shoes/boots and a coat, but several parents approached us to ask if we had scarves or gloves for them.

Phil Kerton and Ben Bano of Seeking Sanctuary
www.seekingsanctuary.weebly.com

SHELTER THE HOMELESS

Housing Justice is the national voice of Christian action to prevent homelessness and housing need in Britain. We encourage and enable more churches and individual Christians to tackle homelessness and bad housing through projects like winter night shelters, mentoring and befriending newly housed people and using surplus Church land and property to create new, genuinely affordable housing. As the number of homeless people continues to rise and housing becomes ever more unaffordable the need for our work is increasing.

This winter more than 500 churches of all denominations have welcomed more than 2000 homeless guests into their premises as part of the winter night shelter movement. It is vital that, as churches, we stand in the gaps left by statutory services as well as campaigning for those services to be improved. The homeless guests are mainly single men over the age of 17 and under 60. This is because there is no duty on Local Authorities to provide accommodation for people who are not in priority need.

Alison Gelder is Chief Executive of Housing Justice
www.housingjustice.org.uk

BURY THE DEAD

A report last Autumn called for churches to tackle funeral poverty and to help prevent deaths plunging relatives into serious and long-term debt. People on low incomes and benefits are hardest hit because they have little or no savings and have to spend a much larger proportion of their income on funeral costs. Research for the insurance company Sun Life has revealed that the cost of funerals has risen by 80%, and the average cost of a funeral, including all extra costs, comes to a startling £8,427. Many people feel under pressure to organise funerals quickly with little knowledge of what the options are. Funerals are now big business, with increasing numbers of businesses being bought up by corporations. Whilst the Government does provide assistance with funeral costs to those on low incomes, the value of the Social Fund Funeral Payment has remained at the 1997 level.

So what of the role of the Churches? Almost half of all funerals in England are still performed by Christian clergy. By talking to bereaved families clergy could provide information about affordable funerals and alternative credit options. In 2014, Church Action on Poverty and others launched the Funeral Poverty Alliance. It has a 'Fair Funerals Pledge', which asks funeral directors to make their most affordable funeral package visible to the public, to communicate prices in initial conversations and display full price lists.

Niall Cooper is Director of Church Action on Poverty (CAP) www.church-poverty.org.uk

VISIT THE SICK

As part of Caritas, Diocese of Salford, our befriending service works within the communities of North Manchester. The aim is to visit the sick and relieve loneliness and isolation, offer friendship and support and to keep elderly and frail people independent in their own homes for as long as possible. This is done by providing a free service that gives generously of time.

This service is a life-line to many elderly and sick people who benefit from the wonderful relationships built up by really getting to know people over many years. For example, Deidre is an 82-year-old lady who lost her son over 50 years ago to a brain tumor. From this she had a nervous breakdown, resulting in her suffering from severe depression. Over time Deidre has gradually been able to accept the loss of her son, but still falls into depression. Eight years ago she was referred to our befriending service. Sr Angela, who runs the service and is a daily visitor to the elderly and sick, says her work is "to accompany people and make sure that they know they are loved". As Church, we need to take an honest look at ourselves and ask how well our Church caters for sick and elderly people and what more can we do.

Mark Wiggin is CEO of Caritas Salford and Chair of the CSAN Older People's Forum. www.csan.org.uk

VISIT THE IMPRISONED

It is a Thursday, the busiest day of the week at Jesuit Refugee Service UK (JRS-UK). Thursdays are when we open our day centre in Wapping and when we hold our pastoral care and welfare surgeries at Harmondsworth and Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centres. Compassion is an important value within our work. It goes beyond a sympathetic pity or concern for others and their suffering. The root of the word compassion is in the Latin, *pati*, to suffer, so compassion is to "suffer with". It implies a sense of solidarity. When a person who is homeless, with no leave to remain, no permission to work and no access to benefits is in front of you; or a person who has been detained indefinitely, wondering why he or she is being held in prison-like conditions, with no idea of when he or she might be released or if he or she will be returned to country of origin, it is impossible not to be moved. We share a sense of injustice, anger, exhaustion, sadness and hurt caused by the failure of the immigration and asylum processes in the UK. The people we accompany suffer a great deal. The suffering of refugees is caused by systemic injustice and inequality which also needs to be publicly spoken about to raise public awareness.

Louise Zanre works for the Jesuit Refugee Service UK
www.jrsuk.net

Floods, Climate and Neglect

Paul Rogers

The following reflection comes from the Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University and Global Security Consultant to the Oxford Research Group. With thanks to Open Democracy.

Across northern England, local communities have been under water from epic floods. Yet no one in government makes the link with climate change.

We have been lucky with the flooding where we live, at least so far. Kirkburton is in the east Pennines a few miles out of Huddersfield and the village was on the Environment Agency's "risk of flooding" warning for 24 hours on the weekend of 26-27 December. Fortunately, while the rain may have been very heavy it didn't persist here as long as it did up on the moors, but some of the Calder Valley towns like Hebden Bridge, Mytholmroyd and Sowerby Bridge were hit appallingly badly. Less than two weeks earlier we had been at the Winterlight Festival in Sowerby Bridge and saw a fireworks display from the bridge over the Calder river in the middle of town. It was a spectacular view, about 15 feet above the river, and it was a real shock to see TV shots in late December of the bridge with the torrent of water almost up to the bridge deck itself.

We have lived on what we call a "very-smallholding" in Kirkburton for over 40 years and though we are a very long way from being self-sufficient we do grow a lot of fruit and vegetables. We have seen with our own eyes the impact of climate change. Not long ago I came across a couple of gardening diaries I'd kept in the early 1970s which tracked things like the first crocus, first daffodil, first frogspawn in the pond and the like, as well as autumnal changes. Broadly speaking, Spring now comes about three weeks earlier and Autumn about two to three weeks later than it did then. Our apple trees, especially the Bramley, used to fruit well every second year and then have a light "rest year". Now they fruit in abundance every year. Heavy snowfalls and road closures were regular occurrences and the common practice was to put a

shovel in the boot of the car in October and take it out at the end of March. Now, we just don't bother and are hardly ever caught out.

That climate change is happening is not in doubt, but the lack of association with the current flooding episodes is still surprising. A quarter of a century ago there were clear warnings that the trend for Britain would be more high winds, higher temperatures and marked variations in rainfall, with much more rain in the north and west. There were other warnings – for example, of far more intense individual incidents where rain would cause immediate flooding. All are now being experienced, with the latter resembling the tropical downpours I can remember from working in Uganda at the end of the 1960s.

The climate silence

If these clear predictions are now coming true, a question arises. Why is there a total silence on the part of Prime Minister David Cameron and all his cabinet ministers about the certain link between the many experiences of intense weather in the UK in recent years and climate change?

One explanation for this hit me between the eyes just over four years ago. Doing research on international security, especially in the Middle East, means occasional invitations to speak at oil-and-gas industry conferences. On one particular occasion I stayed for the whole of an intense 24-hour "retreat", just out of the interest of learning more about how fossil-fuel insiders thought about their industry. Chatham House rules mean that I can't name the person, but let us just say that a senior figure with absolutely impeccable connections with the Conservative-led government spoke at a session on environmental issues. Addressing those insiders, he was absolutely blunt. They were not to

lose any sleep whatsoever about the government's attitude to green issues – it was simply a matter of going through the motions for the sake of public appearances. The government did not believe in this climate-change stuff and was fully on the industry's side.

This experience came home to me much more recently when reading a highly informative article by Michael Le Page in the *New Scientist*, titled 'Ungreen and not-so-pleasant land'. The author tracked the series of policy moves on green issues implemented in the three months after the May 2015 election by a Conservative government now safely secure with its overall majority, with no need to worry about its happily forgotten coalition partners. Some of the new policies have got into the national media, especially the cuts in support for solar power, with layoffs for thousands of industry staff. But others are rather more subtle. They include a further £1 billion of subsidies for North Sea oil while excluding onshore windfarms from a subsidy scheme from April 2016. The changes also entail reduced incentives for low-emission vehicles, the scrapping of the "green deal" in support of energy-efficient homes, privatisation of the Green Bank, and a year's delay for a new tidal-power scheme in Wales.

Perhaps the most marked change of all, hardly noticed outside the building industry, is the scrapping of the "zero carbon homes" plan. Under it, all new homes from 2016 were meant to be carbon-neutral. It was seen as a change that would have had a steady cumulative effect and would also have done much to change the psychology of home ownership, whereby homeowners are motivated to upgrade their houses and thus also increase their value, sustainability, and sales potential.

So in the winter's spate of floods across northern England and elsewhere, look no further to understand why no UK government representative makes any connection with climate change. In the view of the government there can be no such connection - and that situation may well endure, until the moment that Westminster itself floods. ■

No Faith in Trident

Pat Gaffney

With the parliamentary vote on whether or not to replace Trident coming up in 2016, this year is a historic opportunity for Britain to disarm its nuclear weapons. The General Secretary of Pax Christi writes:

A major focus for the months ahead will be on the replacement – or not – of Trident. This is becoming a hot topic and we have to use every opportunity available to us to bring politicians, church leaders, communities and churches into this debate before any parliamentary vote is taken later in the spring. The projected costs of replacement have increased, from £100 billion to £167 billion. Pax Christi feels this money could be better used to help overcome pressing security issues of our time – climate change, mass migration of people and cyber war. Trident would not be able to ‘protect’ us from any of these.

Lobbying

■ Arrange a meeting with your MP. Why not get a group together in your area to plan a meeting? If you cannot meet, then write to or email your MP. *Pax Christi will be writing to all Catholic MPs about Trident.*

■ Write to your Diocesan Bishops to urge them to speak publicly against Trident replacement. Invite them to sign the multi-faith statement and sign it yourself. <http://www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk/> *Pax Christi will be writing to all Catholic Bishops about this, urging them to up-date their 2006 statement on nuclear weapons by explicitly opposing Trident replacement.*

Public witness and action

On 10 February Ash Wednesday, acts of witness and resistance to nuclear war preparations will take

place in London, Liverpool and Faslane (near Glasgow). These will involve prayer and actions, using symbols of the day, to acknowledge our own need of repentance and call on the government to repent and turn away from nuclear war preparations. You can find details and liturgy resources on the Pax Christi website.

www.paxchristi.org.uk

27 February Stop Trident demonstration, London.

Pax Christi is supporting a major event to challenge the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapon system. There will be a gathering for interfaith prayer at 11.00 am at Hinde Street Methodist Church, London. Pax Christi will then join the march under the banner ‘No Faith in Trident’. Do bring your own peace/Church/community banner! www.cnduk.org

Note that Trident is Britain’s nuclear weapon system. It consists of four nuclear-armed submarines, one of which is on operational patrol, under the sea, at all times. Each Trident submarine carries up to 48 nuclear warheads, each of which can be sent to a different target. Each warhead has an explosive power of up to 100 kilotons, the equivalent of 100,000 tons of conventional high explosive. This is 8 times the power of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, killing around 140,000 people. ■

Statement:

An end to nuclear weapons

This statement is based on the statement made by 26 faith leaders in the UK in a letter to The Times on 13 March 2015. The statement was co-ordinated by Religions for Peace UK, Pax Christi UK and a range of Churches and other faith groups.

Nuclear weapons are by their nature indiscriminate in their effect. Any use of nuclear weapons would have devastating humanitarian consequences, be incompatible with International Humanitarian Law and violate the principle of dignity for every human being that is common to each of our faith traditions. Our world faces many challenges including oppressive poverty, climate change, violent extremism and emerging national rivalry. Addressing these challenges requires strong relationships across nations, founded on mutual co-operation, trust and shared prosperity. Security policies based on the threat of the use of nuclear weapons are immoral and ultimately self-defeating.

We must move beyond the division of our world into nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states and ensure that all states make good their commitment to negotiations on the universal, legally verifiable and enforceable elimination of nuclear weapons. We call on all nuclear weapon states to join in this endeavour. We urge these states and the international community to develop a robust plan of action that will lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons. You can sign up to the statement here: <http://www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk/index.htm>

MARCH AND RALLY
Saturday 27 February
12 noon, London



STOP
TRIDENT
DECISION TIME 2016

Global Day of Action on Military Spending Monday 18 April

World military expenditure is \$1.75 trillion. The day will call for military spending to be shifted towards social and environmental needs. Huge subsidies to the arms industry should be wound down. <http://demilitarize.org.uk/>

Green Christian conference opens 'new chapter' in Christian economic witness

Two hundred delegates attended the Green Christian conference, 'The Economics of Hope', in Bristol in November. The conference, part of Green Christian's 'Joy in Enough' initiative, launched an overhaul of the Church's witness on economic justice in light of the crises facing the environment and capitalism today. <http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/archives/9899>

A Sustainable Future? The annual conference this year of the John Ray Initiative will be held in Birmingham on Saturday 5 March.

It will take a serious look at the new Sustainable Development Goals that came into force at the beginning of this year. The conference is organised by JRI, A Rocha UK, ForMission College and Micah International. www.jri.org.uk

Spring Catholic Peoples Weeks Lord, make me a means of your peace

26-28 February 2016
Boar's Hill Carmelite Priory, Oxford

What can we do to hear the cry of the poor and of the Earth, as promoted by *Laudato Si'*? How can we be peacemakers, which includes nurturing peace in our own lives? Speakers: Fr Martin Poulson SDB (Head of Theology at Heythrop College); Pat Gaffney (General Secretary of Pax Christi UK); and Ellen Teague (Columban JPIC Team). Link: <http://www.catholicpeoplesweeks.org.uk/BoarsHill.php>

and www.catholicpeoplesweeks.org.uk/BoarsHill.php

Celebrating *Laudato Si'* 11-13 March 2016

Hynning Monastery in North Lancashire. The many riches of *Laudato Si'* will be explored with the help of Paul Bodenham, Chair of Green Christian, and Nicholas Postlethwaite, a priest from Toxteth. The chair and organiser are Mike and Mary Monaghan. Link: <http://www.catholicpeoplesweeks.org.uk/HynningSpring.php>

A Poor Church for the Poor 'I want a Church which is poor and for the poor'.

– **How can we respond to Pope Francis' challenge?**

LAUDATO SI' RESOURCES

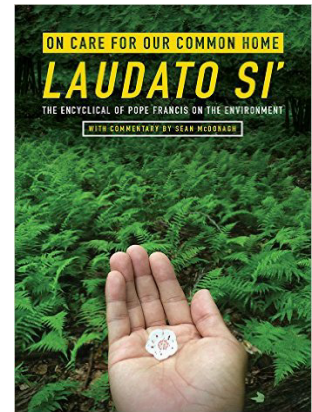
Columban Study and Action Guide

This programme provides notes for 6 meetings, based on the encyclical 'Laudato Si'. They were originally produced by the Columban Office for Advocacy and Outreach in Washington D.C. and have here been adapted for use in Britain. They follow the headings of the encyclical and should, ideally, be used in conjunction with it and with a Bible.

Copies for a donation from 020 8202 2555. Or downloadable from <http://www.columbans.co.uk/news/laudato-si-columban-study-and-action-guide/>

A full listing of *Laudato Si'* Resources and Links for PARISHES and SCHOOLS is available at:

<http://www.columbans.co.uk/news/laudato-si-resources-and-links-for-parishes-and-schools/>



On Care for Our Common Home *Laudato Si'*: The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment with Commentary

by Sean McDonagh is a new paperback, due out in April 2016. The eco-theologian and Columban offers a commentary on the Encyclical, the full text of which appears in this volume. Orbis books
ISBN-10: 1626981736

A one-day conference in Leeds on Saturday 5 March 2016 is an opportunity to explore the vision and challenge of Pope Francis in relation to the structural reality of poverty in the UK today. How can we deepen our awareness and action, individually and as communities, and change ourselves and our churches to become a poor Church, with and for the poor? www.LasCasasInstitute.org

Nominations invited for 'Celebrating Young People Awards' 2016

Following the success of the first 'Celebrating Young People Awards' in summer 2015, which Columban JPIC supported, Million Minutes has announced that the 2016 awards will be on 19 July 2016 in London. This year, Million Minutes is pleased to be partnering with St Mary's University, Twickenham. The awards celebrate young people - aged 11-25 - living out Catholic social teaching in their lives and communities. There are seven categories to nominate people for, including: for promoting solidarity and peace, for fostering community and participation, and caring for the environment. Nominations for the 2016 awards are now open and must be received by 20 May 2016.

Check out www.millionminutes.org/awards
Million Minutes is also calling for participants in 'siLENT' during Lent. It is an opportunity to raise money for the projects of Million Minutes. See: www.millionminutes.org/silent

David Cameron must do more for refugees, charities say

In joint letter, Christian Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam, Refugee Council, Amnesty and several dozen aid agencies have called on the Prime Minister to approach 2016 with a new resolve to address the refugee crisis, after a "clearly inadequate" response last year. They say the UK should establish safe and legal routes for refugees into and across Europe. The joint letter says: "Last year's announcement that the UK will resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees over five years was a welcome first step, but given the numbers of people searching for safety across the globe, this response is clearly inadequate". On 19 January Bishop Patrick Lynch met with Richard Harrington MP, the Minister responsible for Syrian refugees, to reaffirm the Church's support for efforts to accommodate people fleeing the conflict, and discuss the next stages of the Government's resettlement scheme.

Action Ideas

CLIMATE ACTION IN 2016

Disinvestment from fossil fuels

The pace of fossil fuel divestment continues to quicken, as commitments to divest have increased more than 50 fold over the last year. The breadth of institutions coming out of fossil fuels is widening, including, for example, pension funds in California and the UK Environment Agency. The **Bright Now** campaign of Operation Noah announced that, in September 2015, pledges to divest passed \$2.6 trillion. People and Planet announced that eight new higher education institutions divested last Autumn, adding a further £69million. See <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/fossil-fuel-divestment-at-catholic-institutions/> and <http://brightnow.org.uk/>

Investing in renewable energy

Investment in renewables is part of a transition to a low-carbon economy but policy uncertainty is the biggest obstacle to this happening. Governments are failing to take up the challenge and lead the way, and a lack of cohesive and stable policy has undermined a long-term view on investment in renewable energy. Among the problems are skewed tax relief, fossil fuel subsidies and retroactive changes to renewable incentives, which make them risky to investors. Last September a coalition of British investors wrote to Chancellor George Osborne, urging him to boost support for the UK's renewable industry, following a Summer which had seen successive subsidy cuts hit the sector. Note that the Paris Climate Agreement does not promote, endorse, or rely on nuclear power, despite intense, incessant lobbying by the nuclear industry.

See: <http://www.eiris.org/>

Leave fossil fuels in the ground

Avoiding runaway climate change means leaving over 80 percent of the world's remaining fossil fuel reserves in the ground, according to climate scientists. The root of the problem is the burning of fossil fuels, particularly oil, gas and coal. For most people, it is difficult to imagine that we could live in a different way, because we were born and raised in the fossil fuel age. Speaking in Paris, at the presentation of 850,000 signatures on the Global Catholic Climate Petition to the UN climate talks, Cardinal Claudio Hummes said: "We ask for drastic cuts in carbon emissions below the damage threshold of 1.5 degrees and we must put an end to the fossil fuel era by 2050". Complete decarbonisation has to be swiftly accomplished over the next two-three decades. See: <http://leave-it-in-the-ground.org/links-and-resources/>



Ellen Teague and Fr Charles Rue with Cardinal Hummes

No to fracking

Fracking under and near National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty has been given a go-ahead by the British government. Our national parks are at risk under new plans. The government is touting the potential temporary benefits of a new oil or gas discovery. But is the potential permanent loss of our natural beauty really worth it? David Cameron has boasted that his government is going 'all out for shale' – regardless of the fact that less than a quarter of the UK public thinks fracking is a good idea.

Fairtrade Fortnight 29 February - 13 March

Martin Luther King famously said, "before you finish eating breakfast in the morning, you've depended on more than half the world". This year, Fairtrade Fortnight is encouraging campaigners to inspire a multitude of Fairtrade breakfasts in their communities – and wake others up to the challenges facing farmers and workers. Church Action Guide and worship resources available at: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/current-campaigns/fairtrade-fortnight-2016>

Public Faith & Finance

A new research project on 'Public Faith & Finance' asks "What role do faith organisations play in building socially just financial services and addressing indebtedness?" It explores the role of faith-based organisations in developing alternatives to market-based financial services or models and building sustainable and socially just economic systems. <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/faith-and-finance/>

The Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility

is encouraging shareholders to join fund managers and asset owners in discussions with Anglo American, Glencore and Rio Tinto about their response to climate change. Shareholders in the three mining companies are invited to become part of the co-filing of shareholder resolutions. <https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/12/%E2%80%98aimingfor-a%E2%80%99-launches-new-round-of-shareholder-resolutions>

And opposition to fracking has exploded all around the world: Protest camps, mass demonstrations and multiple rejections of local fracking applications have sprung up everywhere. We cannot frack the British countryside *and* hit our climate change targets agreed upon in the climate talks in Paris. Considerable research on the issue from a faith perspective has been built up by Lancaster Faith and Justice Commission. See: <http://www.lancasterfaithandjustice.co.uk/download/environmental-issues-celebrating-creation/information-on-fracking/>

CAFOD's Lent Calendar

Click on each day for reflections and prayer.

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/Pray/Lent-Calendar>

Lent course: Climate change and the purposes of God - Study course by Operation Noah

For use with church and house groups. There are five sessions, with handouts for participants and notes for group leaders. PDFs can be downloaded from: <http://operationnoah.org/resources/lent-course-climate-change-purposes-god/>

The Grace of Peace - Lenten resource 2016

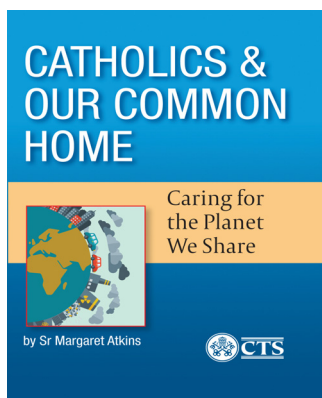
Columbans - Australia

A Catholic Lenten Resource suitable for students, teachers, parishes, religious congregations, and social justice groups. This online resource explores having a heightened sense of place in the natural world, enabling us to grow in our care for all God's creation. It connects the Gospel of each Lenten Sunday in 2016 with different aspects of place. <http://www.columban.org.au/assets/files/resources/grace-of-place/columban-the-grace-of-place-advance-notice-lenten-resource-2016.pdf>

Catholics and Our Common Home

Sr Margaret Atkins/CTS

What people today need is an "ecological conversion" says Pope



Francis in *Laudato Si'*. Pope Francis identifies two groups of Catholics: the critical and the indifferent. A third group might consist of those who are willing, even enthusiastic, but who feel discouraged about the possibility of making any real difference. By unpacking Church tradition and teaching, and bridging the gap between theory and practice, this booklet will challenge the first, stir up the second, and encourage the third.

£2.50 from CTS Books

Conflict & Climate Change Movement for Abolition of War

An 18-min DVD - which Columban JPIC helped produce - calls for an understanding of security which includes good stewardship of the natural world for the common good. Comes with a Resource book.

£8.99 (DVD and Resource Booklet) www.kevinmayhew.com/conflict-and-climate-change-book-and-dvd.html or 0845 388 1634.

Stations of the Forests Columban JPIC

Incorporates global issues related to rainforest destruction, such as poverty, the impact of extractive industries, loss of biodiversity and climate change. A Resource Booklet accompanies the DVD, providing the script, an agenda for meetings using the DVD, a reflection for each of the Stations and material for liturgies. £7.00 inclusive of p&p from 020 8202 2555

Or download from <http://www.columbans.co.uk/resources/dvd-video/stations-of-the-rainforests/>

The Upside-down Bible - what Jesus really said about money, sex and violence.

Symon Hill

An alternative reading of some of Jesus' best-known parables - focusing on topical themes of money, power, sex and violence - which will help us to consider the teaching of the Bible with a fresh perspective and gain a deeper spiritual and cultural understanding

of the Bible texts. Useful for group and individual Bible study.

£9.99 Darton, Longman, Todd

A Faithful Presence: working together for the common good Hilary Russell

An exploration of how churches are working together to strengthen civil society through social action, service provision, community building, prayer and advocacy. Part of the 'Together for the Common Good' project.

£10.99 S.C.M. Press

<http://togetherforthecommongood.co.uk/resources/a-faithful-presence.html>

Human Rights - Thoughts and Reflections for Churches Free download

The Government is looking at introducing a British Bill of Rights. This resource helps churches to reflect on what human rights mean to Christians and to our society. It is produced by the Joint Public Issues Team, combining the expertise of the Baptist Union, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland in the area of public issues.

<http://www.jointpublicissues.org.uk/download-our-human-rights-resource/>

The Name of God is Mercy Pope Francis

Pope Francis invites all humanity to dialogue on the subject of Mercy - which is a central teaching of his papacy. Francis explains - through memories from his youth and anecdotes from his experiences as a pastor - why "mercy is the first attribute of God". He emphasises moral sincerity over dogma, and an understanding of the complexities of the world and individual experience over rigid doctrine. He calls for a more merciful Catholic Church. He says: "Jesus goes and heals and integrates the marginalised, the ones who are outside the city, the ones outside the encampment. In so doing, he shows us the way."

ISBN-10: 0399588639

VOCATION FOR JUSTICE

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