

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin March 2024

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

NJPN: 'LIVE OR LET DIE' MEETING FOCUSES ON ENVIRONMENT AND PEACE

Ellen Teague 25 February 2024: A call for action on systemic change to tackle the Climate Crisis was made at the online quarterly meeting of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) on Saturday. Around 40 representatives of diocesan commissions in England and Wales heard four speakers address the theme: 'Live or Let Die - A call to care for the poor and for the Earth'.

Michael Chambers of Brentwood Diocese highlighted the results of a survey of young people's views on climate: "We want systemic change - not just individual action" was a key point; and: "we're doing other things less important - we need funds for protecting biodiversity and climate."

Young people warned against becoming desensitised to the full impacts of climate change and urged that Christians advocate for urgent action and stay hopeful, especially for the sake of future generations. It is important to maintain hope despite the waves of dire warnings about planetary systems being pushed into dangerous instability.

In a presentation on 'Environmental Justice', Ellen Teague of the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team showed images from the 10-day 24 hour 'No Faith in Fossil Fuels' Vigil at parliament which ended as the NJPN was meeting. She quoted from 'Laudate Deum' where Pope Francis said, "groups negatively portrayed as 'radicalised'... are filling a space left empty by society as a whole," (LD 58). The key advocacy points of the vigil were: the UK to move away from the use of oil and gas, reparation payments for damage caused by climate change in the Global South, and investment in green policies. Campaigners are not often the decision makers but they are very often the decision shapers, according to UN Head Antonio Guterres.

She called for the UK government to honour its climate commitments, promising to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. And for the COP process to speed up international action to stop rising too far beyond the 1.5 degrees threshold which has already been breached.

NJPN members were urged to lobby the nine Catholic dioceses still investing in fossil fuels to disinvest, which, according to Operation Noah, includes promising never to invest in them in the future. There was a reminder that FaithInvest offers courses for investment managers and that the NJPN Environment Group keeps the network up to date with campaigns, events and resources. Also, a reminder that in many countries environmental defenders, especially indigenous people, risk their lives when they try to protect vulnerable communities, water and biodiversity from destructive activities.

Andrew Jackson, Chief Executive of Pax Christi England and Wales, spoke on 'Environmental issues as a cause of conflict'. Climate change causes conflict because it intensifies competition over land and water, affects food production, and forces migration. Paragraph 57 of 'Laudato Si' says, "It is foreseeable that once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars."

And wars contribute to climate change. The example was given of the burning of oil fields by the retreating Iraqi army in Kuwait during the first Gulf War in 1991 where Kuwait's occupied oil fields were turned into a desert inferno. "Environment is the silent victim of conflicts," said Andrew. Wars can destroy landscapes as well as communities. He provided information about the scale of military greenhouse gas emissions. Military emissions are around 5.5% of total global emissions.

Colette Joyce of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission and Coordinator of the Southern Dioceses Environmental Network started her presentation with a photo of Westminster Cathedral taken through the branches of a London Plane tree in the piazza. How many have barely noticed the London Plane trees outside the cathedral? There is a need for greater appreciation of and engagement with the natural world around us and for personal carbon reduction. But she stressed her belief in collective action and systemic change.

Colette is working with Westminster Diocese for carbon neutrality by 2030. She supported the Christian Climate Action Vigil outside parliament and is preparing for the 'Laudato Si' anniversary on 24 May, the next Season of Creation in the Autumn and COP29 in Baku during November.

The Northern Area Environment Group is due to meet on 28 February; the Southern area on 11 March. Ideas to be developed at those meetings include a strategy for building up to the Season of Creation and pushing for all Catholic Dioceses to shun fossil fuels. The Scarborough parishes of Middlesbrough Diocese are considering putting environmental reflections in their weekly bulletins. Some dioceses are working with universities - Lancaster with Lancaster University and Leeds with Leeds Trinity - to monitor carbon emission from church buildings. Bishops will be asked to urge parishes and schools in their dioceses to sign up to the LiveSimply programme. At a macro level, all agreed to support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Anne Peacey, the Chair of the NJPN, said speakers and workshops for July's NJPN Conference will be announced soon. The theme of the 19-21 July conference in Derbyshire is 'Just Politics'. <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/49207>
NJPN 2024 Conference: www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/

FINDING HOPE

Anne O'Connor 26 January 2024: Despite major concern about the damaging effects of climate change on the environment, exacerbated by war and conflict around the globe, NJPN's Zoom meeting 'Live and Let Die' on Saturday 24 February also celebrated signs of hope. Hope in the voices of young people across the UK, and as far afield as New Zealand and Sierra Leone, expressed in a slide show put together by Michael Chambers, and also in the presentations from Ellen Teague of the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology team, and Andrew Jackson, CEO Pax Christi. In contrast to most of us present who have been involved in Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation issues for many years Michael is in his 20s - a sign of hope that young people regard these concerns as a priority too. Michael said many young people feel they are not listened to – it's vital that we address this: they are our future and the future we leave is theirs.

Here are some of the comments on climate change which I gathered from contacts around the world:

From Year 12 students (age 17) in Sierra Leone: *"It is inspiring to see young people coming together to demand climate action. We have the power to make a great change if we work together."* *"Growing up in a country where climate change is a constant threat, has made me more conscious of my impact on the planet."* *"Climate change looks like a ticking time bomb. Every day that we delay action, the situation gets worse. We need to act fast before it is too late."*

A Year 8 student (age 13) in New Zealand said: *"Extreme weather and storms seem to be happening more and more. I've seen it around the world and we've experienced it here in NZ too. We all need to do our bit to slow the impact of climate change."* And from Year 12 in the UK: *"It is frustrating that we know the inevitable consequences of climate change, and yet still do nothing."* *"It concerns me that the climate will be different for my children's generation than it was for me."*

Year 4 pupils (age 8-9) in my home town of Altrincham held a lively class discussion with a special concern for creation: *"We should stop cutting down trees for farmland because we need oxygen to survive."* *"If climate change carries on, animals might die and animals provide food for us so we would die. We need to stop using petrol or diesel cars and there should be no more private jets."* *"If we throw plastic in the sea, the sea creatures might either eat it or get stuck."*

Two recent news stories provide hope. The courage of activist Alexei Navalny who died in mysterious circumstances two weeks ago. An outspoken campaigner, who stood up to Putin's regime, he has been an inspiration worldwide. He never compromised or stayed silent whatever the cost to himself. After surviving an attempt to poison him with the deadly nerve agent novichok in August 2020 he spent five months recovering in Berlin. Against the advice of supporters concerned for his safety he returned to Russia. In February 2021 he was sentenced to two and a half years on politically motivated fraud charges. In March 2022 in what Amnesty called "a sham trial" he was sentenced to nine years in a maximum security penal colony and moved in December to Polar Wolf, one of Russia's harshest prisons. To the end he remained defiant. His sudden death on February 16 at the age of 47 has aroused widespread suspicion. When asked what his death would mean he said, "If they decide to kill me it means that we are incredibly strong. The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil, is for good people to do nothing. So, don't do nothing."

Esther Ghey's vulnerable transgender teenage daughter Brianna was brutally murdered by two of her peers who had cruelly tricked her into believing they were her friends. After the trial, where both teens were given sentences of 22 and 20 years, Ms Ghey offered to reach out to the killers' parents and said she would be willing to have a private meeting sometime in the future. She said, "please have some empathy and compassion for the families of the young people convicted of this horrific crime. They too have lost a child and must live the rest of their lives knowing what their child has done." As part of Brianna's legacy Ms Ghey hopes to address the growing problem of mental health issues among young people and work to curtail easy access to violent material on the internet such as videos of torture and suicide. Over £95,000 has already been raised to further this work through a campaign called Peace in Mind, which is working alongside the charity Mindfulness in Schools.

THE BIRDS OF GAZA

Dr Philip Crispin 21 February 2024

Image ICN/JS



Waiting to join the March for Gaza in London last Saturday, I encountered a beautiful woman in front of the Albert Memorial. She held a baby in swaddling clothes under one arm, and with the other she was launching a dove of blue and gold, with a piercing golden eye.

The beautiful woman was in fact a life-size picture. Alongside her was a line on which the children present had drawn birds. I was very taken with one of these in particular - a proud fowl of Palestinian colours, its wings the familiar black and white pattern of the keffiyeh. It was surrounded by love hearts. I had encountered the Birds of Gaza project. Each of the birds drawn was a pictorial memorial to one of the children and babies killed by the Israeli army.

The Birds of Gaza website says this: *'Birds of Gaza is a community art project for children to craft unique birds to remember every child killed in Israel's war on Gaza. Through the power of collective art we're highlighting the atrocities that have led to over 6,500 children (and counting) being mercilessly killed.'*

Their website identifies inspirations for the project. The girl from Gaza whose dream is to fly, so she *'can see all the people'*. (Taken from Mohannad Aburizk's Instagram collection: 'Dreams of Gaza's kids'.) The writer Ghassan Kanafani's wish is that children didn't die: *'I wish they would be temporarily elevated to the skies until the war ends. Then they would return home safe, and when their parents would ask them: "Where were you?", they would say: "We were playing in the clouds."*

The website has a gallery where each of the thousands of birds, created and sent in from around the world, is a loving memorial dedicated to one of the children. The final inspiration is by the poet and playwright Khaled Juma:

*'Oh rascal children of Gaza,
You who constantly disturbed me with your screams under my window,
You who filled every morning with rush and chaos,
You who broke my vase and stole the lonely flower on my balcony.*

*Come back,
And scream as you want,
And break all the vases,
Steal all the flowers,
Come back,
Just come back.'*

These heart-breaking words make clear that these birds of Gaza are, as the website states, 'Made with a ❤️ [broken heart emoji] for the martyred children of Gaza.' In the gallery, you will find Palestinian sunbirds, swallows and doves - some bearing a longed-for olive branch of peace. You will also find Japanese peace cranes. Most (but not all) of the birds have been painted and made by children, and children's handwriting completes many works. There are messages of condolence. A bird is painted on a stone. Another is knitted. There are avian mobiles. I spotted a partridge and a bird of paradise. Many of the birds are brightly coloured. Many sport the Palestinian flag's colours. Here is a robin. There an owl. Collages contained feathers, white peace poppies. Some birds are al fresco, perched in foliage. What a beautiful, heart-rending project of memorial and solidarity. Enda from Ireland had illustrated a nest which doubled as a crown of thorns.

We know how Christ loved children. On the eve of another vote on a ceasefire in Gaza in the UK Parliament, I pray all politicians will dwell on this appalling Massacre of the Innocents, and vote for its immediate implementation. Everyone is warmly invited to participate in the Birds of Gaza project.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/49177>

LINKS

Birds of Gaza: www.birdsofgaza.com

Philip's CandleMass Birdwatch: www.justgiving.com/page/philip-crispin-1706830936162?utm

REFLECTION: SO MUCH PAIN, SO MUCH NEED FOR HEALING

22 February 2024 **Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg writes:** I set my hope on two words in this week's Torah reading: *verapoh verapeh*, 'heal, surely heal.' In fact, they're just one word, doubled for emphasis: 'Heal.' I pray to the God of healing, and for the capacity in each of us to be healers. Waves of worry and sorrow wash over us with a remorselessness most of us have not experienced in our lifetimes. It's hard to hold still and strong in our hearts as we listen to the voices which cry out. Sharone Lifschitz told our synagogue about her parents from Kibbutz Nir Oz, her mother Yocheved freed after two weeks, her father, aged 83 and with complex medical needs, still held hostage by Hamas after over 125 days. She spoke of the village they created, their love of nature, their friendships with Palestinians in Gaza, their lifelong commitment to peace-making. Her voice was calm, collected and humane throughout, even when she described the studied brutality inflicted on her community. The trauma is immeasurable, she stressed: do what you can to bring healing.

If we have space in our hearts to include it, and I believe we must, the pain on the other side of the border is also immense. Trapped in the whirlpool of a merciless politics in which many parties across the Middle East are to blame, caught now between Hamas and Israel, what are the thousands of Palestinian civilians to do, where are they to go, what future awaits them with any light of hope on its horizon? None of this is helped by the tides of brash, one-sided, frequently ignorant and malicious accusations, which leave us Jews, and many Muslims also, feeling branded, lonely, and negated. I cannot forget, too, a different pain: the suffering of nature itself. It is the greatest and most wonderful resource for our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing. Yet it is relentlessly depleted by our refusal to take sufficient cognisance and a politics of disregard. I love this world of trees and birds, yet there are days when I am full of sorrow for it all.

For all these reasons 'Heal!' cries out. In context, it expresses our obligation to cure any injuries we've inflicted on others, including their pain and humiliation. The Shulchan Aruch takes it as the basis for the physician's obligation to practice. But in the widest sense, healing belongs to us all. We all long for the day when, in Malachi's beautiful words, 'the sun of righteousness will rise with healing on its wings.' So what healing can we bring? There are countless good ways to donate and volunteer, and we should. But I'm thinking of the inner challenges. Can we listen to pain and worry in quiet companionship? Can we keep our heart free, not from just indignation, but from the floods of fury? Can we hold in our consciousness that she or he, too, is human? If there's an opportunity to say something kind, can we make sure to take it? If there's something difficult to express, can we do so honestly, but without inflaming more hurt? Can we try not to wound the lives of non-human creatures?

To meet these challenges, we have to nourish our reverence for life. Respect, wonder, kindness, appreciation, companionship, love and joy: these are our great resources for facing the wrongs of the world. These are our ways to bring healing. Is what we can do together for our world ever enough? I don't know. What I do know is that we must hold fast to the value of small things, to the confidence that the little differences we make will add up to making a true difference. Beyond that, we must pray that God, 'the Creator of Healing' who abides in all life, will bring healing to us all. • **Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, Rabbi of New North London Synagogue and Senior Rabbi of Masorti Judaism.**

<https://jonathanwittenberg.org/> <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/49185>

BURKINA FASO: FIFTEEN KILLED IN ATTACK ON CATHOLIC CHURCH

Amy Balog 26 February 2024 **Source: Aid to the Church in Need**

Fifteen worshippers died and two were injured during Sunday Mass yesterday (25 February) when Islamist militants opened fire inside a Catholic church in Essakane, north-east Burkina Faso. Twelve of the victims were shot dead instantly, while three others died from their injuries in hospital, according to a statement sent to Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) by Dori Diocese.

Father Jean-Pierre Sawadogo, vicar general of Dori Diocese, asked for prayers for the deceased and their loved ones. Father Sawadogo wrote: "At this painful time, we invite you to pray for those who have died in the Faith, that they may rest in the Lord, for the healing of the wounded and for the consolation of those who are grieving. Let us also pray for the conversion of those who continue to sow death and desolation in our country." He added: "May our efforts of penance and prayer during this blessed season of Lent bring peace and security to our country, Burkina Faso."

Jihadist insurgent groups control around 40 percent of the country's territory, and more than two million people - about 10 percent of the population - have been displaced because of the ongoing armed conflict. ACN has supported Father Sawadogo and other priests, religious and seminarians in Burkina Faso with Mass stipends, training fees and vehicles. The charity has also provided emergency aid - including food - to hundreds of people driven out of their homes by extremists. The security situation in Burkina Faso has deteriorated drastically over the past few years, with Christians particularly targeted by extremist groups. With thanks to Filipe d'Avillez. **Aid to the Church in Need:** www.acnuk.org

DRAMA BASED ON THE STORY OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

27 February 2024 **Anne O'Connor writes:** I received the following email from Philomena Grimley SHCJ, Sisters of the Holy Child Blackpool today as a follow-up to a conversation we'd had about writing drama for young people. Sister Philomena writes: "This drama came in the middle of the slightly formal service which was based on what the Christians of Burkina Faso had produced. We held the service in St Kentigern's which has a raised sanctuary. The three young people from St Mary's were splendid and it did not take much rehearsing nor did they have to learn any script".

Sister Philomena has given permission for other groups to use or adapt this short drama.

After the Gospel has been read from the pulpit, the group take their places – the Leader into the pulpit and the others standing on the sanctuary between the 2 microphones.

LEADER: The Christians of Burkina Faso chose that gospel parable of the Good Samaritan to challenge us NOW. So we are going to ask you some key questions as we explore with you this powerful teaching of Jesus:

LEADER: FIRST, WE HAVE TO ASK: WHO ARE THE ROBBERS TODAY?

(Those saying these statements then go to ONE of the microphones and they make the statements in turn really strongly!)

- I am a loan shark on a housing estate near you.
- I am an on-line fraudster: I cheat pensioners out of their life savings.
- I am a drug dealer in this town.
- I am a people-trafficker, I sell women and children for sex abuse.
- I supply leaky boats to desperate asylum seekers for huge sums of money.
- I represent an international mining company that is polluting and destroying the ancestral lands of indigenous people in South America.

(When all have spoken they stand together, face the congregation and ALL call out: WHO DO YOU SAY ARE THE ROBBERS NOW?) – please leave a short silent pause at this stage

LEADER: NEXT WE HAVE TO ASK: WHO ARE THE VICTIMS TODAY?

(As before, the students saying the statements go to the second microphone and make the statements in turn really strongly!)

- I am a domestic slave from Asia; they have taken away my passport.
- I am an asylum seeker. I have walked hundreds of miles and paid all I have to get to the UK.
- I am a young homeless adult: I was brought up in care and now that has ended I have no support.
- I am an Afghan woman denied my right to education and freedom.
- I am a single parent with three young children and heavily in debt.
- I am repeatedly bullied in school and others laugh and look away.

(When all have spoken they stand together, face the congregation and ALL call out: WHO DO YOU SAY ARE THE VICTIMS NOW?) – please leave a short silent pause at this stage

LEADER: NOW WE HAVE TO ASK: WHO ARE THE PASSERS BY TODAY?

(As before, the students saying the statements go to the first microphone and make the statements in turn really strongly!)

- It is not my problem. I just don't want to know.
- The police ought to deal with this. What do we pay taxes for?
- I just can't stop right now.
- I never look at the news: it's too awful.
- Oh, look what's coming. I am going to cross over the road.
- They should send them back to where they came from.

(When all have spoken they stand together, face the congregation and ALL call out: WHO DO YOU SAY ARE THE PASSERS-BY NOW?) – please leave a short silent pause at this stage

LEADER: BUT WHO IS THE SAMARITAN TODAY?

All the speakers then stand together and face the congregation and say together the well-known prayer of St Teresa:

Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

(They hold up posters with the words GO AND DO LIKEWISE and stay until the CHOIR has finished singing that same Prayer)

LENTEN REFLECTION

22 February 2024: Saturday, 24 February marks the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. It's a conflict that has slipped from the headlines somewhat, but the fighting remains intense and the suffering is great.

Bishop Kenneth Nowakowski, Bishop of the Eparchy, or diocese, of the Holy Family of London offers us a Lenten reflection calling for prayer, support and a re-evaluation of how we are all called to be peacemakers in our society today. The Bishop, who looks after the UK's Ukrainian Catholic Community, raises the plight of Ukraine's people, but also calls for prayer for the suffering of the Holy Land caught up in the conflict in Gaza and for all who suffer.

Reflection

Approaching the second anniversary of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia gives us an opportunity to pause and reflect on the last two years of the killings, the destruction, and the devastation that has been waged against Ukraine by its neighbour Russia. We also want to reflect on and remember all of the people from Ukraine that have fled harm's way and have found their way here to Great Britain. Over 260,000 people have been welcomed by ordinary British people into their homes under the 'Homes for Ukraine' scheme.

Whilst the war in Ukraine has not been on the daily news, or at least the first headline of the news, it is still very much part of our mind, our understanding and our thoughts. And I think as we're approaching already in Lent, or as we call it in the Eastern Church, the Great Fast, it's a time for us to pray more for peace in Ukraine, but peace throughout the world.

We see the horrific news coming out of the Holy Land, the suffering that's happening there, both for the Israelis and Palestinians. We see the suffering of the Ukrainian people. So, during this time of Lent, this journey towards the Resurrection of Christ, we're asked three things. We're asked to intensify our prayer. We're asked to abstain or fast. We're also asked to give alms to remember those who are in need. Maybe we can't help everybody throughout the world with our limited means, but surely we can pray. Pray for peace, pray for justice, pray for those who are alone. Pray for those who are suffering - especially for those who are suffering separation. We think of the families that have been torn apart because of the war in Ukraine, the tens of thousands of young women who have fled to the United Kingdom with their children while their husbands have had to remain behind to defend Ukraine.

Abstain from quick judgments

We can pray for them. We can abstain or fast, not just from chocolate or certain types of foods, but we can abstain from quick judgments. We can abstain from harsh words to our family, to our friends. And alms. Yes, we can give. We can be charitable. We can give to the organisations, both that are helping our brothers and sisters here in the United Kingdom. But we also can give alms and donate things, money, to organisations that are working in Ukraine or in the Middle East, or wherever the need is the greatest.

While the news broadcasts may not be reflecting the pain and the suffering that is occurring today in Ukraine, we certainly can see the suffering that is happening in our own neighbourhoods, perhaps in our own families, that we need to be more reflective of. We can be going to our parishes - to church - to support one another through increase of prayer, to be more attentive. Maybe we can call that family member or friend that lives far away from us or is shut in and can't get out. There are so many ways that we can commemorate the poor and the needy in our own homes, in our own community, and remember that when we're doing this, we are also helping people in Ukraine and in the Holy Land. During this time of struggle, we can't expect that our world leaders will bring about peace unless they have come from peaceful communities, from peaceful families.

How are we peacemakers?

Lent gives us an opportunity to reflect and re-evaluate how we are as peacemakers in our society, in our homes, in our towns. How are we supporting the men and women in the Armed Forces? How are we supporting those who protect us - the police? How are we supporting and appreciating the NHS workers? How are we supporting those men and women who keep our neighbourhoods clean - that keep our streets clean? How are we supporting our educators? How can we let our educators, our teachers, know that they're important to us? I'd also not like us to forget about priests who are having to provide pastoral ministry, sometimes in very difficult circumstances, for all of those who are working in the church, in our chanceries, in our parish offices, helping each other.

So for me, the way that we can keep our focus on Ukraine and on the Middle East is by keeping aware of what's going on in our communities. For me, as the Bishop for Ukrainian Catholics here in Great Britain, I also think of how we can be supporting, in prayer, His Majesty the King, who has been so supportive of Ukrainian people both here and abroad.

We have an opportunity to make little differences that altogether make big differences. And my prayer, and my wish, for all of us during this time of Lent is that we can become that community of God that we are all called to.

Here in the United Kingdom, we have the image of cloudy skies and rainy weather. But when the sun comes out and shines on the British countryside, there's nothing more glorious than that. And certainly we, people of faith, our job, in many ways, our vocation, is to encourage each other along our journeys and to provide hope, hope that we are not alone, hope that we have not been abandoned.

People of hope

When I was visiting Ukraine shortly after the full-scale invasion, and I met with people who suffered so much and listened to them and asked them what they would like us in the West to do, their comments were, "Don't forget about us. Please pray for us. When we know that you remember us, we have hope." And so I think that we are meant, as Christians, to be those signs of hope for those who feel they have no hope. When we think of the place of candles in our liturgical celebration, when we light a candle, it brings light, it brings warmth, it brings joy where there was darkness before. When we are journeying towards the Resurrection, to Jesus who is the light Himself, we are also meant to be those candles, or at least reflect that eternal flame that gives us all hope.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/49191>

Watch Bishop Nowakowski's reflection here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlzbDpNwDDo

IF WE ARE HEADING TOWARDS A GLOBAL WAR, IT'S TIME FOR FAITH LEADERS TO TAKE A STAND FOR PEACE

Joseph Kelly 25 January 2024: A couple of years ago if you had the temerity to suggest that Donald Trump might once again become the US president, people would have said you'd lost your marbles. The very ex-president was a spent and darkly tainted political phenomenon confronting unprecedented litigation and the systematic dismemberment of both his political and personal reputation.

Sadly, those who opposed him failed to appreciate one of the oldest and most proven of political truths, that the surest way to remove a vexatious opponent is not to annihilate them but rather absorb them into the political system you are seeking to protect. If the American establishment had commiserated with Donald Trump and handed him some state governorship in 2021 he'd almost certainly have disappeared into the political wilderness. Instead, the determination to humiliate and obliterate him has created a dangerous and powerful martyr in the eyes of a very large number of Americans.

After last night's trouncing of his only remaining rival in the New Hampshire primary, Mr Trump now has an unassailable 12-point lead over former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley and – with 90% of the votes in – nothing is likely to stop him becoming the Republican party's presidential candidate. He has only then to defeat a bumbling and unpopular Joe Biden to once again have his hands on the White House, and the codes to a potential global apocalypse.

Should we be worried? I'd like to think not. Whatever your views on his personality and his political style, Trump has from the outset proven himself to be not only a lot smarter than most other US politicians (which isn't saying a lot!), but he's also very attuned to the underlying mood of the American public (as opposed to what the American public might be saying openly). He has also learned a great deal from the past six years, and will be returning to the world stage with a far more focussed and refined agenda.

Whether that delivers the world a more mature and cautious global leader, or a desperately dangerous despot is hard to tell, and unfortunately we'll only find out when it's much too late to do anything about it. To make matters worse, the world is increasingly edging towards the precipice of all-out war, a situation where we'll require an entirely different calibre of politician from the self-rewarding middle-management bureaucrats we've become used to.

For those old enough to remember, there's a chilling 1939 feel to the world just now and when you get Nato chiefs telling us all to prepare for conscription, you know just how bad things have become. Admiral Rob Bauer, the chairman of NATO's Military Committee, just this week told reporters after a meeting of NATO chiefs in Brussels that both civilians and governments need to prepare for cataclysmic conflicts and the chilling prospect of being drafted.

"We have to realise it's not a given that we are in peace. And that's why we [NATO forces] have the plans, that's why we are preparing for a conflict with Russia," said Bauer. And just this afternoon, the head of the British Army, General Sir Patrick Sanders, sounded a further alarm when he confirmed that Britain will need to "mobilise the nation" if war breaks out with Russia, not least because decades of government cutbacks to defence budgets have left us with precious few soldiers (102,000 in 2006, 74,000 today and falling fast), an embarrassingly depleted Navy and little in the way of meaningful armaments.

Despite the gathering storm clouds of war, UK Defence Secretary Grant Shapps today refused to say when a Tory pledge to raise defence spending (which is currently well below its target of 2.5% of GDP) will be met – perhaps we’ve just been too focussed on selling our weapons of destruction and have never really felt the need to arm ourselves with all the military paraphernalia we’re so fond of advertising?

In fairness, General Sanders doesn’t actually believe that war is inevitable, rather “This is our 1937 moment. We are not at war, but must act rapidly so that we aren’t drawn into one through a failure to contain territorial expansion.” So one has to hope and pray that the government isn’t actually coming tomorrow for our children, rather that this is our very sensible and knowledgeable military leaders telling us that if we don’t sort out our defences urgently and start presenting a creditable threat to invaders, we’re very likely going to find that some despot will fancy his chances.

The comparison to Britain in the late 1930s is well made, when the woeful state of the UK’s armed forces and the ongoing humiliation of trying to appease the unappeasable gave Hitler the impression we wouldn’t present much of an obstacle to his maniacal ambitions. Clearly, Vladimir Putin made much the same calculation when he invaded Ukraine, and other rogue states now seem to be testing British timidity in a fashion that can only escalate into uncontrollable warfare if the fires aren’t extinguished. These nations are re-arming rapidly whilst the West is still pushing down an increasing futile path of risk-aversion.

If such dreadfully uncertain times pose challenges for our legislators and defence experts, they present a similarly difficult proposition for our Church leaders and theologians. It has of course always been the Catholic Church’s position that war is a ‘failure’ and a ‘defeat’ of human beings to settle their differences and live together peacefully as God intended. So from this fundamental perspective we will always oppose warfare as a solution to human problems, and plead for peace to intervene when wars do break out.

However, it looks like the Catholic Church could be about to face its own “1939” moment, when it may be asked far more pointedly whether or not it endorses military solutions and – God forbid – the surrender of our children to the machinery of war. If this sounds far-fetched, it’s little more than British Prime Minister Tony Blair did on 22nd February 2003, when he ran off to Rome to try and persuade Pope John Paul II to support his intention to invade Iraq. That was a Saturday; we have no idea what each said to each other except that the pope’s adviser called the meeting “cordial”, but during his Sunday address the next day Pope John Paul II shouted “no to war” three times, and then thumped the lectern so hard the thunderclap would have been heard in Downing Street. Blair went ahead regardless.

As we know only too well, the UK has a long tradition of ‘calling in’ faith leaders when war is on the horizon – under the banner of ‘Just War’ theory we are asked to bless soldiers and battleships, aeroplanes and tanks and to give out tacit or even formal endorsement to the coming carnage. The relationship between conflict, killing and the ministry of Christ is an incredibly complex one – as any military chaplain will tell you, if men and women are dying, Christ needs to be there, but it’s not the role of the Catholic (or indeed any) Church to honour the institution, or to glorify warfare. Whilst we should thank God that some few brave individuals are prepared to stand on the wall at night so that we can sleep soundly in our beds, we should also lament deeply that they have to be there in the first place.

If over the coming few decades our legislators and world leaders really can’t settle their differences, then warfare it may be; if so, Catholic Church leaders will need to decide where they stand. But just as military leaders have this week sent out an early signal that they don’t have the resources to deal with such an eventuality, it might be useful if faith leaders signalled sooner rather than later that they won’t be supporting military madness and human annihilation.

Back in 1939 there were plenty of Catholic voices cautioning against war, but equally stating unambiguously that conflict would not be endorsed. One of the most influential was Irish-born John Timothy McNicholas. Born in Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo, McNicholas joined the Dominicans, travelled to America and went on to become Archbishop of Cincinnati. As early as 1938 he was raging against the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany which he said “deserves the condemnation of all right-thinking men” and in the same year he issued a controversial Pastoral Letter on the theme of peace in which he said: “Governments that have no fixed standards of morality, and consequently no moral sense, can scarcely settle the question of war on moral grounds for Christians ... who see and know the injustice of practically all wars in our modern pagan world. There is the very practical question for informed Christians who acknowledge the supreme dominion of God ... Will such Christians in our country form a mighty league of conscientious non-combatants?”

McNicholas’ Letter sent unwelcome shockwaves across the United States, seriously rattling congressmen, warmongers and the wider public, and his plea gave rise to a whole movement of American Christian contentious objection that continues to this day.

The essence of such objections trace their authority back to Aquinas, not so much on the objection to warfare per se but to the notion that conscription conflicts with an individual's freedom to follow the natural law as revealed by God. More direct objections to fighting are found in the lives of saint such as Francis of Assisi – and in St Martin of Tours who as a youth was forced in to the Roman army, but is said to have petitioned the Roman Emperor Sulpicius Severus to be released on the grounds that: "I am Christ's soldier: I am not allowed to fight." In response to accusations of cowardice he offered to stand in the front line armed only with the Sign of the Cross. Also often cited in Christian arguments against war is a less well-known saint – Telemachus – a 3rd century monk who stepped in between to gladiators fighting in a Roman amphitheatre, and was stoned to death by the crowd. The Christian Emperor Honorius was said to have been so impressed by Telemachus' martyrdom that he banned gladiatorial contests.

In more recent times our Christian leaders have walked a broad and largely uneventful path between militarism and pacifism, but the arguments are narrowing rapidly to a point where generalised calls for peace and dialogue will no longer suffice. If the tanks end up on our lawn and the government asks for our children a far more robust response will be needed. Active pacifism and contentious objection have long been denigrated as options of the soft Left, but letting our legislators know now in no uncertain terms that our Churches and their members will not support all-out military conflict and will not endorse any form of conscription is a position better stated sooner rather than later.

<https://www.thecatholicnetwork.co.uk/if-we-are-heading-towards-a-global-war-its-time-for-our-faith-leaders-to-take-a-stand-for-peace/>

- Joseph Kelly is a Catholic publisher and theologian.

SCHOOLS SOLAR PROJECT IN SALFORD LIGHTS THE WAY TO DIOCESAN NET ZERO TARGET

23 February 2024: Schools across the Diocese of Salford have saved an estimated 150 tonnes of carbon in less than a year as part of a strategy for the diocese to become net zero by 2038. Over the past year, the diocesan property team has been working closely with schools in the diocese to identify ways to realise Bishop John's Arnold's vision of sustainability in response to Pope Francis' environmental teachings.

In early 2023, the diocese received in excess of £3 million from a government allocation of an additional Devolved Formula Capital funding to address sustainability and carbon reduction in schools. This vital resource provided a key opportunity to help the diocese on its decarbonisation pathway, kickstarting a wave of sustainable projects in Catholic schools across Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

"Our diocese is home to almost 200 schools across Greater Manchester and Lancashire, all requiring considerable amounts of energy for long hours each day to provide top-quality learning environments for our children," said Dr Emma Gardner, Head of Environment for the Diocese of Salford. "As we strive towards our goal of being net zero by 2038, finding a way to decarbonise these buildings presents us with a real challenge. However, this additional allocation has provided a great opportunity, enabling us to begin that process and start making a real impact in this key area of our decarbonisation strategy." The diocesan property team quickly began to explore ways the funding could make the biggest impact on the diocese's carbon reduction pathway, whilst supporting the needs of its schools.

Research eventually pointed the team in the direction of solar energy and in April last year, Our Lady's RC Primary School in Aspull became the first beneficiary of this scheme. "As a Catholic school, we are called to follow Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* and to look after our common home," said Headteacher Chris Horridge. "As an Eco School already, we are always keen to support sustainability projects and this seemed like the next logical step for us as a school and Catholic community. Through the project, we are able to generate renewable energy, reduce our bills, and cut our carbon emissions. Additionally, our pupils, Eco and *Laudato Si'* team have developed a greater awareness of solar power and renewable energy."

Since then, almost 70 schools across the diocese have had solar panels installed, a further 20 projects are planned, 4 installations will take place as part of bigger projects such as roof replacements, and 15 schools have opted for alternative sustainability projects, such as LED lighting, window replacements, or insulation upgrades. So far, the initiative has generated an estimated 150MW (megawatts) of clean energy – with a high proportion of those projects being installed in the darker months of autumn and winter. This equates to approximately 150 tonnes of carbon saved – that's around 150 flights to New York – as well as around £60,000 of electricity.

John Corrigan, Director of Property and Facilities Management at the Diocese of Salford, has been delighted by the progress so far but is eager to explore options to really maximise the impact of the scheme. He said: "It's great to see this project making such a visual statement about our commitment to sustainability. "Every one of our 160 voluntary aided schools have benefited from this scheme and are now ready for discussions around the next stage of this evolving journey. This is just the first step and by no means the end of what we're hoping to achieve. The challenge now is to explore ways to ensure we're using every bit of the energy we generate to make our schools modern, sustainable centres of learning." <https://dioceseofsalford.org.uk/>

SAMANTHA MORTON DEDICATES BAFTA TO KIDS IN CARE

At this year's BAFTA ceremony actor and director Samantha Morton received a BAFTA Fellowship award. Growing up in foster care, she said she had been 'saved by acting', and dedicated her award to "every child in care, or who has been in care and who didn't survive." During her speech the actor recalled how watching Ken Loach's film Kes saved her. "Seeing poverty and people like me, my life and my family on the screen, I recognised myself. See: representation matters." An advocate for many causes including children in care homes, in 2008, Morton directed her first film The Unloved, a semi-autobiographical drama. She emphasised the importance of creating such films. "As much as anything, it was what I wanted to tell little Sam. Homeless and cold, hungry and alone, that you'll have a family one day and you'll have a life beyond what the government statistics have laid out for you because you matter, so don't give up," she explained. "You see the stories we tell, they actually have the power to change people's lives. Film changed my life. It transformed me and it led me here today."

Watch Samantha Morton's moving acceptance speech here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRWsuuZTRLM>

CELEBRATING ROMERO WEEK 2024

Clare Dixon 8 February 2024: This year the Archbishop Romero Trust is delighted to welcome Dr Raymond Perrier as our guest speaker at the annual Romero ecumenical service at St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London, commemorating the 44th anniversary of Saint Oscar Romero's martyrdom. Raymond Perrier is the Director of the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban, South Africa, named in honour of Archbishop Denis Hurley. The service will take place at 11am on Saturday 16 March and the title of this year's address is "Prayerful and Prophetic Resilience in the Face of Injustice - Archbishops Oscar Romero and Denis Hurley". Like Saint Oscar Romero, Archbishop Hurley was a fearless defender of human rights and social justice in his home country. He was undoubtedly the most significant Catholic leader in South Africa during the 20th century. He was a courageous and outspoken opponent of South Africa's apartheid regime for 50 years, dubbed an "ecclesiastical Che Guevara" by a South African politician and "guardian of the light" by Alan Paton. He was a participant in the Second Vatican Council which he regarded as the highlight of his life and throughout his ministry he was a champion of the reforms and spirit of the Council. Born in Cape Town in 1915 of Irish parents Denis Hurley became the youngest Catholic Bishop in the world in 1947 at just 31 years of age and Archbishop of Durban in 1951. He retired as Archbishop in 1992 becoming chancellor of the University of Natal until 1998. He continued to work as parish priest of Durban's Emmanuel Cathedral until well into his 80s and died 20 years ago in February 2004.

In the ten years of its existence the Denis Hurley Centre in Durban has established a reputation as a place of care, education and community responding to the issues of refugees, drug addiction and homelessness. Prior to becoming its director five years ago Raymond Perrier was head of the Jesuit Institute South Africa, working to bring a faith perspective to debates on social issues. For six years he was a trainee Jesuit priest and spent two years living and working in a refugee camp in Uganda with the Jesuit Refugee Service. After leaving the Jesuits Raymond became the head of communities for CAFOD working with Catholic parishes and schools across England and Wales. Of Indian parents Raymond was born and educated in the UK. He has extensive professional experience in the private sector, with degrees from Oxford, London and a doctorate from the University of KwaZulu Natal.

Romero events this year will be hosting two speakers. As well as Raymond Perrier, the other is Jan Graffius, Curator of Collections and Historic Libraries at Stonyhurst College and a Trustee of the Romero Trust. Since 2007 Jan has been involved in a major conservation project in El Salvador working on the Martyr Vestments of St Oscar Romero and items belonging to the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America.

DETAILS OF ROMERO WEEK 2024 EVENTS:

Friday, 8 March: EXETER 6.30pm Mass, followed by talk by Raymond Perrier at Blessed Sacrament Parish, 29 Fore Street, Heavitree, Exeter EX1 2QJ

Wednesday, 13 March: GLASGOW 7pm Gonzaga Lecture at St Aloysius College. Raymond Perrier.

Thursday, 14 March: LEEDS 7pm Leeds Trinity University. Raymond Perrier.

Saturday, 16 March: LONDON 11am at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, London. Annual ecumenical service to mark the anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Romero. Speaker: Raymond Perrier.

Wednesday, 20 March: LONDON 12.30pm Mass at St George's Cathedral, Southwark with Archbishop John Wilson, including presentation to schools who have achieved the Romero Award.

Wednesday, 20 March: GLASGOW 7pm Gonzaga Lecture at St Aloysius College, Glasgow. Jan Graffius - 'Resilience in the face of injustice: Romero and the Jesuit Martyrs'.

Thursday, 21 March: LIVERPOOL 7pm Annual anniversary Mass, followed by talk by Jan Graffius - 'Drawing us closer to Christ and the saints: Relics and their meaning for us'. St Oswald and St Edmund Arrowsmith, Ashton-in-Makerfield WN4 9NP.

Full details at: www.romerotrusted.org.uk/news/romero-week-2024

• Clare Dixon is a trustee of the Archbishop Romero Trust. <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/49091>

BOARBANK HALL PROGRAMME FOR 2024

Thinking Faith Lent Zoom weekend

8-10 March. Evening sessions only. Theme: Fasting and Feasting - Time out for working Catholics

Two Wings and Some Prayers Five nights

13th-18th May. Week of prayer, walks and birdwatching, with a focus on learning birdsong.

Living Laudato Si' Residential week

25th May-1st June. A week to explore how to live out *Laudato Si'* fully in our personal lives and within the Church. All welcome.

Catholic Social Teaching Residential weekend

28th June-1st July. Theme: Revisiting the Basics.

A long weekend to revisit the basic ideas and some key texts of Catholic Social Teaching. Would suit especially anyone involved in work in Justice & Peace, Care for Creation, or with young people. All welcome.

Thinking Faith Summer residential week

Date 27th July - 3rd August 2024. Theme: What Catholics *Really* Believe - Time out for working Catholics

Living Laudato Si' Residential week

5th-12th October. A week to explore how to live out *Laudato Si'* fully in our personal lives and within the Church. All welcome.

We welcome bookings from parish, school or student groups or any other groups who may benefit from our hospitality. We also work with schools to provide INSET days to suit each school, with the option of overnight stays. All our residential events combine talks and discussions with Mass, Prayer of the Church and opportunity for personal prayer, in a context of friendship and community in our beautiful Cumbrian setting beside Morecambe Bay. Any group who would like help in arranging a programme or speakers for any kind of retreat or residential event should contact Sr Margaret Atkins on margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk or 015395-32288

Boarbank Hall, Allithwaite, Grange Over Sands, Cumbria, LA11 7NH www.boarbankhall.org.uk

LENT ACTION AND RESOURCES

PAX CHRISTI LENT ONLINE BOOK CLUB: 'PEACEWORK' BY HENRI NOUWEN

4th, 11th and 18th March at 7.00pm

Published in 2006 but written in the early 1980s at the height of Cold War tensions, 'Peacework' by Henri Nouwen has long been a powerful reminder of the call on all Christians to be peacemakers. As those tensions rise again, we are going to study the book in an online book club over 3 Monday evenings in March. Reflecting on the book's themes of prayer, resistance to death and community, we'll see how it can help us develop our spirituality of peacemaking both as individuals and as a movement. You can register for the meetings here tinyurl.com/5b86xhk3

Copies of the book are available from the online shop on our website: paxchristi.org.uk/product/peacework-henri-nouwen/ or direct from Eden Christian Books eden.co.uk

WALK 200KM IN 40 DAYS TO HELP FIGHT GLOBAL POVERTY

CAFOD and **SCIAF** are teaming up to bring the **Big Lent Walk** to Great Britain! Read more about us and our decision to join forces. Thousands of walkers from England, Wales, Scotland and beyond, will be tying up their purple laces and walking an incredible 200km this Lent to fight global poverty. So, sign up to do the Big Lent Walk yourself, or join in with your school or parish. Then put your best foot forward with the biggest group of Big Lent Walkers yet. Challenge yourself and take on The Big Lent Walk! Walk when and where you choose over 40 days, alone or with friends. Raise money to help people as they overcome poverty.

CAFOD and SCIAF are the official relief and development agencies of the Catholic Church for England and Wales (CAFOD) and for Scotland (SCIAF), and we are both members of the global Caritas Internationalis family. We both believe that a green and just world, free from poverty, is possible. We are teaming up this year because we know that working together means that we can make an even bigger difference. Our goal: to get thousands of teams or individual walkers all going, getting fundraising in and raising awareness of inequality across the world. Together means big change can happen. The money you raise by taking part in the Big Lent Walk will enable us to continue fighting global poverty and working through expert local partners to bring real life change to communities overseas.

Your sponsorship can and will change lives. Every £1 raised through the Big Lent Walk will help fight poverty globally in countries like Afghanistan, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

This year these are our focus areas for Lent:

CAFOD's Lent Appeal is helping fishing communities feed their families in Liberia

SCIAF's WEE BOX Appeal is focused on women and girls in Rwanda facing gender-based violence.

Furthermore, CAFOD and SCIAF have a shared project in Ethiopia and we are working together to respond to the devastating food crisis there. Years of drought caused by the climate crisis means families are no longer able to cope, but your support means we are working with people right now, providing them with water, emergency food and healthcare. With your hard work and sponsorship this Lent, we can change families' lives for good and tell poverty to take a hike. <https://walk.cafod.org.uk/about>

See also prayer resources: <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/lent-prayer-2024>

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/lent-prayers>

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/stations-of-the-cross>

ACT ON POVERTY: LENT PROGRAMME

One in five people live in relative poverty. The gap between rich and poor is rising and political disengagement continues to be a problem. With the upcoming general elections, it's time to speak up to create a just and compassionate society, one where nobody is dragged down by poverty. Join us this Lent for the **Act on Poverty programme**, designed to help churches across the UK host meaningful conversations about how to act on poverty and how to shape the political agenda. A New Lent course for 2024 produced by Christian Aid working with the Baptist Union, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church, Church Action on Poverty, The Trussell Trust, and others. The series of six resource packs for small groups will help guide your church through Lent 2024.

The Act on Poverty Course explores six themes:

1. Prophetic

This pack looks at what it means for churches to speak prophetically. The Bible shows us that being a prophet is far from easy. Many prophets have felt powerless, despite being called by God to speak out. How, with God's help, can your church develop its prophetic voice when speaking about poverty?

2. Broken

We are increasingly aware of the divisiveness of politics in the UK today. But this is not the only place where there is division. Our churches, our world, our selves are all in need of redemption and repair. This pack helps you discuss division and brokenness in our different contexts. The resource opens up space to think together about where repentance is needed, and how we can be part of God's healing and redeeming work.

3. Generous

Many people in the UK are having to tighten their belts due to the cost-of-living crisis. In this pack we take a close look at the lived experience of poverty, both near to home and around the world. We explore poverty as a justice issue that demands action. Churches can explore what it might mean to be 'generous' or 'cheerful givers' (2 Corinthians 9.7) when we feel like we have nothing to spare. What gifts do we have that we can share?

4. Located

Beginning with reflections on where Jesus chose to place himself during his ministry, this pack equips your church to look afresh at where you are located. This includes your physical environment, community resources, local concerns and priorities. Groups can explore questions about how we discern what God is already doing in our community, about life on the margins, and who has power in your locality.

5. Hopeful

This pack helps churches outline their hopes for the future and turn these hopes into a manifesto for action. There are practical ideas about facilitating events and community discussion in the lead up to the General Election. And there's an exploration of how nurturing hope can be part of our calling to love our neighbour. What will your church do to grow hope in 2024?

6. Together

Our final pack looks at what we can do together to tackle poverty, local and global. This resource focuses on practical action in community, suggesting a range of ways to come together, perhaps hosting a shared meal or event to which you can invite your Prospective Parliamentary Candidates and MP's. Sharing time, ideas and food as we plan to Act on Poverty together. This can act as a standalone session or mark the culmination of your course over the last five weeks. **Sign up here:** <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/act-poverty-resource-packs>

Or here: <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/actonpoverty/>

Read: A new analysis in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) flagship UK Poverty report quantifies for the first time how many thousands of pounds are needed by families to escape poverty – and how that has got worse over time. It is now 20 years and 6 prime ministers since there was a sustained fall in poverty.

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2024-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>

DIARY

MARCH

4 Week One of Pax Christi's Online Lent Book Club (see p.11) Register for the meetings here tinyurl.com/5b86xhk3

7 Hope into Action's Annual Conference <https://www.hopeintoaction.org.uk/conference-2024>

8 Romero Week - 'Resilience in the face of Injustice' Events around the country - see Romero Trust website for details www.romerotrust.org.uk/news/romero-week-2024

8 CAFOD QUIZ NIGHT at Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre at 7.30 pm. Entrance is £3 for adults and £1 for children and the usual raffle will take place with good prizes. Refreshments will be available at the interval. All proceeds will go towards CAFOD's latest development project. Contact Tony Walsh on 0151 355 6419

9 LIVERPOOL J & P COMMISSION CARE FOR CREATION - ENVIRONMENT CONFERENCE 10:00am - 3:30pm St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Hardybutts Wigan Lancashire WN1 3RZ. This partnership event between Justice and Peace Commission and Liverpool Archdiocese will bring together parishioners and a space to reflect on climate issues and how our Catholic faith calls us to action. Practical hands on workshops, on issues such as: Care for Creation leaders' course; and What is Eco Conversion and Action. Speakers include: Bishop John Arnold and Sr Margaret Atkins. 9.15am - Mass at St Patrick's Church, to start the day. Rt. Rev. Bishop John Arnold will be Principal Celebrant with Archbishop Malcom, Fr O'Shea and other celebrating clergy. Everyone from the conference is welcome for those who can make this time. **Book a place:** www.liverpoolcatholic.org.uk/department/pastoral-development/environment

8-10 Thinking Faith Lent Retreat on Zoom: Evening sessions only. **Theme: *Fasting and Feasting*.** For more information, contact Sr Margaret on margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk, or visit our website: www.boarbankhall.org.uk

11 Pax Christi's Online Lent Book Club (see p.11) Register for the meetings here tinyurl.com/5b86xhk3

11-17 Big Plastic Count <https://thebigplasticcount.com/sign-up>

14 Merseyside Pax Christi Meeting 2pm St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

16 Annual Ecumenical Romero Service, St Martin-in-the-Fields, London (11.00am)

18 Pax Christi's Online Lent Book Club (see p.11) Register for the meetings here tinyurl.com/5b86xhk3

21 Liverpool 7pm Annual Romero anniversary Mass, followed by talk by Jan Graffius - 'Drawing us closer to Christ and the saints: Relics and their meaning for us'. St Oswald and St Edmund Arrowsmith, Ashton-in-Makerfield WN4 9NP

22 World Water Day theme: Water for Peace <https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>

APRIL

11 Merseyside Pax Christi Meeting 2pm St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

22 Earth Day Planet vs. Plastics <https://www.earthday.org/earth-day-2024/>

MAY

9 Merseyside Pax Christi Meeting 2pm St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

12-18 Christian Aid week <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week?>

13-18 Boarbank Hall Week of prayer, walks and birdwatching with a focus on learning birdsong. Contact Sr Margaret Atkins on margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk or 015395-32288

15 International Conscientious Objectors' Day <https://nationaltoday.com/international-conscientious-objectors-day/>

21 Feast of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter Pax Christi's updated pack with biographical information and ready to use service and reflections £6 available from <https://paxchristi.org.uk/product-category/bl-franz-jagerstatter/>

25 May-1 June Boarbank Hall Living Laudato Si' Residential week A week to explore how to live out Laudato Si' fully in our personal lives and within the Church. All welcome. Contact Sr Margaret Atkins margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk or 015395-32288

11 NJPN Annual General Meeting at Romero House, London. For more information contact admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

24 Catholic Association for Racial Justice - 40th Anniversary Year. The Event will be held at Amigo Hall – St Georges Cathedral, Southwark. It will include Speakers on Travellers, Caste discrimination, Migrants and Citizens of colour, Black Vocations (priesthood, female religious and the diaconate), 'Love the Stranger' (CBCEW) and a discussion of the Racial Justice Agenda for Change. The Event will end with Mass in Southwark Cathedral. <https://www.carj.org.uk/> More details to follow.

June and July events on the following page

JUNE

1 Pax Christi England and Wales Annual General Meeting, Friends Meeting House, 22, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT. For details see www.paxchristi.org.uk 020 8203 4884

13 Merseyside Pax Christi Meeting 2pm at St Michael's Parish Centre, Horne St Liverpool L6 5EH contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

29 Merseyside Pax Christi Retreat at The Irenaeus Project, Great Georges Rd, Liverpool L22 1RD contact Jan Harper 07591082195 email janharper20211@outlook.com

JULY

The NJPN 46th Annual conference on July 19th –21st at the Hayes Centre, Swanwick

JUST POLITICS building on the work of the past two years' conferences this conference will seek to explore the need for truth and integrity in the public place. More details and booking form to download: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

NB Bookings made after Wednesday May 15th incur a booking surcharge.

NJPN are STILL looking for a new Treasurer. Do you know of anyone with financial experience that would be willing to take on the role of Treasurer? Please share with your parishes/organisations, and if anyone is interested, please email Sharon at admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

COULD YOU JOIN THE LIVERPOOL J & P COMMISSION? Jennie Rowlands writes: We are still recruiting new members for the Justice and Peace Commission. This is an exciting time to join the Commission as we look to renew our way of working, centred around the see-judge-act model. We are looking for members to bring fresh perspectives and energy to our work. If you are interested, please contact j.rowlands@rcaol.org.uk

DON'T MISS THE LATEST NJPN E BULLETIN WITH A WEALTH OF ARTICLES AND INFO: Download here: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/campaigns/njpn-e-bulletin-21st-january-2024/>

● **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

● **Read the SPRING issue of MOUTHPEACE** the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses <https://jpshrewsbury.files.wordpress.com/2024/02/mouthpeace-spring-2024.pdf>

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

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