

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin November 2025

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

COP30: THIRTY YEARS OF CLIMATE ADVOCACY

20 October 2025 by Guest Contributor

*COP30 in Brazil will unite faith groups, leaders, and civil society to demand climate justice, stronger commitments and global action for our common home and creation, explains **Amy Echeverria**, Columban International Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Ecology.*

The 30th UN climate conference will take place from 10-21 November 2025 in Belém, Brazil. It will bring together world leaders, scientists, non-governmental organizations, and civil society to discuss priority actions to tackle climate change. COP30 will focus on the efforts needed to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, the presentation of new national action plans (NDCs) and the progress on the finance pledges made at COP29. Faith groups will be there in force.

The context for this year's climate change summit is significant in a variety of ways. Geographically Brazil and the wider Pan Amazon region represent the global violence that comes with extractivism. This year marks the 10th anniversary of Laudato Si' and the 2nd anniversary of Laudate Deum. This year also marks 10 years since the COP20 Paris Agreement which, while never ambitious enough, was seen as a significant step towards addressing the climate crisis. People are demanding that COP30 delivers country commitments that meet the urgency and scope of the moment.

With this context, for the first time ever, a joint message by the Catholic Episcopal Conferences and Councils of Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa was released in anticipation of COP30, A Call for Climate Justice and the Common Home: Ecological Conversion, Transformation, and Resistance to False Solutions. Read the message here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2025-07/bishops-conferences-ecological-conversion-press-office-vatican.html> This document speaks not only of demands and calls to actions by governments but also the Church's responsibilities and commitments to justice, equity, and protection.

A global organizing moment will happen in the form of an interfaith virtual prayer at the opening of COP30. As a member of USG-UISG JPIC Commission, Columbans are collaborating with the Interfaith Liaison Committee of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change <https://interfaithliaisoncommittee.carrd.co/> to host the prayer event as a way of connecting globally, especially for people who will not be in person at COP30.

An action that individuals can take is to send a letter directly to their Country Representative attending COP30, Religious Life for Climate Justice: Turning Hope Into Action: Statement and National Contributions Campaign. This initiative is co-organized by USG-UISG JPIC Commission, Franciscans International, VIVAT and Jesuits for Climate Justice. <https://www.ecojesuit.com/cop30campaign/>

Some of the key advocacy points that many groups are promoting include:

- Loss and Damage Funding
- Climate Debt owed by Global North
- Just Energy Transition
- Increased ambition for national commitments and accountability
- Climate and Food systems

In addition to these points, many groups are advocating for greater integration between the various U.N. environmental treaties and processes including Climate, Biodiversity, Land Degradation and Desertification, Plastics, and Ocean Protection. This call for integration is part of a broader conversation about the efficacy of the UN and the need for systemic transformation of the institution.

Columbans have been involved in UN Climate Summits for decades and perhaps among the earliest Catholic groups engaged in the process. We have been on the inside of the negotiations, including Fr. Sean McDonagh, as a member of the official government delegation from Ireland. We have been outside on the streets, in parishes, at vigils, and on pilgrimages. We have worked with partners from other religions, indigenous communities, and a wide range of local and global civil society organizations. This year Columbans continue to be engaged in a variety of ways. Let us continue on this synodal path, walking with each other and all of creation, in a way that restores life rather than destroys.

<https://columbans.co.uk/justice-peace/17289/cop30-thirty-years-of-climate-advocacy/>

GREEN CHRISTIAN: PRAY WITH US FOR COP30

Ten years on from the Paris Agreement, we must continue to call on Christians, and others of good will, to amplify the voices of those suffering the impacts of climate breakdown. Join us for ten minutes of prayer and reflection, at 8am every morning during COP30, from 10 Nov to 22 Nov, except for the middle Sunday 16 November (a day of rest at COP). COPs often over-run so on Saturday 22 November we intend to carry on praying, either for the final negotiations, or for the outcomes of the decisions taken. Prayer sessions on Zoom, led by a team from Green Christian.

Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tGbv9jU2StAL-QZnpN1Elw#/registration>
<https://greenchristian.org.uk/pray-with-us-for-cop30/>

CUPIDITAS – a poem by Rev'd Jon Swales <https://www.cruciformjustice.com/post/cupidatas>

Unfettered capitalism
has cupiditas—
not holy longings,
not the ache
that births justice
or bends the soul in prayer—
but the kind
that consume.
Insatiable.
Like a she-wolf
that prowls the parched earth,
lean with famine,
fat with hunger.

She is mother to a thousand cravings.
Each one dressed in plastic,
sold in pixels,
delivered at speed.
She names herself desire—
but she does not love.
She devours.

I have heard her gospel:
You are not enough.
But we can sell you the illusion
that you are.
Buy this.
Earn that.
Click here.
Obey.

She takes my cupiditas—
the true ones—
and corrupts them.
Turns my longing for communion
into addiction.
My thirst for justice
into ambition.
My ache for beauty
into vanity.

She does not stop.
Her appetite births systems.

Empires.
Algorithms.
Debt.
Her hunger strips the forests bare,
burns the oceans dry,
chokes the air with ash.
Her hunger makes the poor poorer,
the earth emptier,
the future uncertain.

But I remember
another wilderness—
and another hunger.
A man with dust on his feet
and scripture on his lips.
He faced her too.
Refused her bread.
Refused her throne.
Walked out
starving
but free.

So now,
with all my fractured desires,
I come to the margins,
to the place where the tables turn,
where the wolf is named
and the Kingdom whispered.

Here,
I learn to hunger again—
not for gold,
but for God.
Not for more,
but for mercy.
Not for the endless scroll,
but for the still voice
calling me
home,
and a hunger for justice
that cannot be sated
until the earth is healed,
and all are made whole.

CREATION GROANS — CHRIST CALLS 7pm Tuesday, 18 November

In the face of climate breakdown, creation groans. Together as Christians from across traditions, we are invited to listen to this cry, to bring our lament before God, and to seek Christ's call to faithful action.

The evening will feature a talk from Rev'd Jon Swales MBE, Church of England priest and prophetic theologian, exploring cruciform adaptation — what it looks like to follow Jesus in a world of climate breakdown and societal fracture. Creative prayer stations will also offer space for lament, intercession, and hope.

Leeds Trinity University Chaplaincy, Brownberrie Lane, Horsforth, LS18 5HD <https://buff.ly/sHw0r7v>

JUST TRANSITION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT EFFECTS OF MINING ON COMMUNITIES AND ECOSYSTEMS, SAY CATHOLIC GROUPS AHEAD OF COP30

Aili Winstanley Channer *The Tablet* 31 October 2025

The impacts of mining on local people and the environment should be a “central concern” of the energy transition, said Cardinal Michael Czerny SJ, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

“There is much talk of the transition that will lead our societies towards models of production, consumption, and transportation that are less dependent on fossil fuels,” said Cardinal Czerny, at the launch of a new report on the relationship between the Catholic Church and mining, hosted by the Laudato Si Research Institute, Oxford. “However, these same conversations do not always take mining into account.”

The transition from fossil fuels to clean energy technologies – including solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicles – depends on critical energy transition minerals such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth metals. The consumption of these minerals could increase sixfold by 2050, according to the International Energy Agency, exceeding the market value of all the coal extracted in 2020. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) predicts that more than three billion tonnes of energy transition minerals and metals would be needed to meet the Paris Agreement goals.

“Many minerals are considered crucial for national security, critical for key industries, and even useful for warfare,” said Cardinal Czerny. “Those with political and economic power and the influence to acquire these mineral deposits are often willing to do so at any cost. Too little attention is given to how they are extracted and traded, what they are used for, and who profits. Even less concern is given to the long-term effects on the local population and on our common home.”

Global Witness has argued that mining has previously been a “blind spot” of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and called for COP30, which will be held in Belém, Brazil from 10-21 November, to address the unforeseen environmental and human rights consequences of the “critical mineral boom”.

Developing countries with significant Catholic populations such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Peru, Chile, Brazil and the Philippines are among the top global producers of copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt, and rare earth metals, leaving their communities at risk of labour exploitation, poor working conditions, pollution, health risks, environmental destruction, forced displacement, and violence and inequality caused by the “resource curse”.

The new report, entitled *Catholic Approaches to Mining: A Framework for Reflection, Planning, and Action*, provides recommendations for Church leadership, especially bishops and those in pastoral ministry, and Catholic organisations, to help them respond to problems associated with mining and support affected communities. These include advocacy, mediation, pastoral accompaniment, and nonviolent civil resistance, as well as the encouragement of more sustainable and humane forms of mining – such as the work of Caritas Madre de Dios to support artisanal miners in the Brazilian Amazon who mine gold without mercury and with responsible land management.

Cardinal Czerny emphasised the role of the Church in advocating for communities affected by mining. “The former Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace dialogued with mining executives more than ten years ago. In other ways as well, the Church has not hesitated to call for just practices. Cardinal Ribat opposed the launch of seabed mining projects in Papua New Guinea, and Cardinal Barreto repeatedly denounced the pollution caused by mines in Peru. Cardinal Ambongo frequently recalls the link between subsoil exploitation, violence, criminalisation of activists and the displacement of people in Africa. Numerous Indigenous people, religious men and women, lay experts and activists, and committed young people have raised their voices.”

Jing Ray Henderson, head of the national integral ecology programme at Caritas Philippines, said, “This report reminds us that the climate crisis and extractivism are not isolated issues, but moral and structural injustices that rob the poor of life and of their future. It calls on our churches to speak with one prophetic voice, to defend the dignity of communities exploited by unjust systems of trade, debt, and extraction. From the Philippines to Indonesia, India to Mongolia, the stories are the same. Mining projects destroy ancestral rivers, and forests in the name of false development. Mining scars our relationship with each other and wounds our cultural identities and traditions.

“In the Philippines, we know all too well that mining takes everything. It takes our mountains, our rivers, our forests, and often the dignity of our Indigenous and rural communities. It promises progress but also leaves behind pollution, displacement, destruction, and despair. The Church in the Philippines has adopted a non-acceptance policy refusing donations from mining, coal, fossil fuel companies and even all the other unethical companies. Many dioceses and religious congregations have joined also the global divestment movement with church investments from corporations that profit from extraction.

"These are not easy decisions. But they express one clear message. Our values must match our actions. Our accompaniment continues through advocacy, legal assistance, forest rehabilitation and livelihood programmes in mining-affected communities. We stand beside those who suffer and we challenge the systems, especially the governments, that create this suffering."

Henderson called for "a new moral vision that challenges educators, the clergy, and catechists to form a generation that sees the earth not as property but as a sacred partner in God's covenant of life. This moral coherence is also a call to global solidarity. The church of the Global South must not only denounce injustice but also propose new paradigms of development rooted in care, sobriety and ecological conversion, to build economies of life, not economies of extraction."

Asked how the Church can contribute to ethical reflection on mining without hindering efforts to combat climate change, Caesar A. Montevecchio, assistant director of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network and co-author of the report, said, "The Catholic Church is one of the few voices that's really been strongly advocating for the need to reduce demand. There needs to be a reduction in energy use and energy consumption or else clean energy solutions aren't going to have enough of an impact."

Henderson also said, "The real driver for extraction is overconsumption. *Laudato si'* reminds us that less is more, that happiness does not come from constant purchasing or upgrading, but from relationships, from simplicity, from gratitude. The Church can lead by forming consciences. Through catechesis, education and pastoral action, we have to promote the spirituality of choosing sufficiency over excess, repair over replacement and sharing over owning; the awareness that every product we buy, every gadget we crave, carries an ecological cost somewhere in the world."

"In doing so, the Church doesn't just lessen mineral demand. It inspires a cultural conversion, where simplicity becomes an act of justice, and mindful living becomes our most powerful form of advocacy for creation."

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/mining-ecosystems-catholic-groups-cop30/>

See also: Pope Leo calls for unity in climate action on 10-year anniversary of *Laudato si'*

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/pope-leo-calls-for-unity-in-climate-action-on-10-year-anniversary-of-laudato-si/>

JESUIT MISSIONS AND OTHER JESUIT GROUPS GEAR UP FOR COP30 TALKS

Adam Shaw Source: Jesuit Missions 4 November 2025

Jesuit Missions, alongside its partners such as the Centre Arrupe, has consistently raised awareness of the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on the planet, particularly in countries in the Global South. Representatives from the Centre Arrupe were also present at last year's COP in Baku, Azerbaijan, where they welcomed the opportunity to highlight climate issues in their country on a world stage.

Richard Solly, Campaigns and Advocacy Adviser at Jesuit Missions, said: "The devastation caused by Hurricane Melissa has shown how urgent it is to take serious action to limit global heating. The cost of inaction will dwarf the huge cost of action. That is why it is important that faith organisations and other civil society groups at COP30 pile on the pressure. Every fraction of a degree will make a difference, so if governments can be persuaded to take some action, it is better than taking no action. We have to keep hope alive step by step - and that's what the Jesuit presence at COP30 aims to do."

Jesuit Missions is the international mission and development organisation of the Jesuits in Britain. For more than 60 years, it has supported vulnerable communities in the Global South. It engages in projects in multiple countries and regularly works with schools and parishes in the UK. Jesuits in Britain CIO. Registered Charity Numbers: 1207742 (England and Wales) and SC053495 (Scotland). The Centre Arrupe Madagascar focuses on training and awareness raising in four areas: environment and sustainable development, citizen participation and economic efficiency, health and family ministry, and research and documentation. It holds regular 'Green Weekend' events built around workshops and conversations on environmental issues.

Jesuits for Climate Justice has four key asks for COP30: cancel the debt of poorer countries; strengthen the loss and damage fund; set clear targets for a fair energy transition; set clear goals to develop a global food-based system.

Read the article in full here: <https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/53625>

LINKS

<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/>

<https://www.ecojesuit.com/centre-arrupe-madagascar-commitment-and-action-for-the-environment-and-for-climate-justice/>

<https://www.centre-arrupe-madagascar.com/>

LEADING CATHOLICS CALL FOR COP30 TO PRIORITISE DEBT CANCELLATION FOR CLIMATE-VULNERABLE COUNTRIES

Aili Winstanley Channer *The Tablet* 3 November 2025

CAFOD is urging COP30, which will be held in Belém, Brazil from 10-21 November, to ensure justice for the world's poorest and most climate-vulnerable countries by cancelling "unjust" debt. Christine Allen, director of CAFOD, said, "It is a matter of fairness that high-income countries such as the UK, who became rich from polluting coal-, oil-, and gas-fuelled economic development, support poor countries financially both to decarbonise and to adapt to a vastly more volatile climate. Over 93 per cent of climate-vulnerable countries are trapped in a debt crisis, undermining their ability to respond to climate related disasters and protect their communities. The UK must lead bold global reforms to cancel unjust debt and unlock funds to fight a crisis these countries did least to cause."

The Conference of Parties (COP) is the UN's annual climate change summit, hosting all the countries who are party to the UN's 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change. At COP30, the focus will be on countries submitting their targets and proposed actions, known as national determined contributions (NDCs), for meeting Paris Agreement's limit of 1.5°C global heating, which many experts believe to have already been passed. Measures to reduce deforestation and raise climate finance, regarded as a crucial issue for climate justice, will also be on the negotiating table.

According to the International Institute for Environment and Development, the international financial system automatically disadvantages the countries worst affected by poverty and climate change. Only 10 per cent of climate finance reaches the local level, and climate-vulnerable countries are pushed further into debt by a credit rating system that downgrades countries most at risk and undermines their ability to invest in disaster preparation and climate adaptation.

CAFOD said that although the COP29 talks in Azerbaijan last year ended with a "weak" deal to provide low-income countries, which have contributed least to global greenhouse gas emissions, with compensation for climate damage, "The agreement will not provide enough money for affected countries to prepare for climate disasters and rebuild after emergencies." CAFOD noted that the decision to hold COP30 in Belém, in the Amazon River delta, "is a symbolically important choice, and an important reminder to attendees what is at stake for nature and the environment if progress isn't made", with dire consequences "for communities, particularly Indigenous peoples, on the frontlines of the climate crisis".

At the launch of a new report on Catholic approaches to mining hosted by the Laudato Si Research Institute, Oxford, on 21 October, Jing Ray Henderson, from Caritas Philippines, reiterated the importance of debt cancellation for climate-vulnerable countries. She said, "Unjust debts push resource-rich yet impoverished nations to exploit their lands simply to repair repay foreign creditors. These debts are not only financial; they are moral and ecological. Turning debt into hope means freeing nations like ours in the Philippines to invest in reforestation, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and climate resilience: in life, not in destruction."

Henderson continued, "The climate crisis and extractivism are not isolated issues, but moral and structural injustices that rob the poor of life and of their future. This calls on our churches to speak with one prophetic voice, to defend the dignity of communities exploited by unjust systems of trade, debt, and extraction." She spoke alongside Cardinal Michael Czerny SJ, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, who stressed the importance of a just energy transition that puts "the long-term effects on the local population and on our common home" at the forefront.

On the anniversary of Laudato si' in early October, Pope Leo appealed to COP30 and other upcoming international summits to "listen to the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor, families, Indigenous peoples, involuntary migrants and believers throughout the world". <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/leading-catholics-call-for-cop30-to-prioritise-debt-cancellation-for-climate-vulnerable-countries>

PRAYER FOR THE COP30 CLIMATE SUMMIT

God of blessings,
the universe sings of your glory.
Deepen our gratitude for all you have made
and awaken in us a renewed commitment
to care for the earth and each other.
Inspire world leaders at COP30,
with openness to listen to those most affected by climate change
and with courage to act urgently and wisely,
so that our common home may be healed and restored
and all people, and generations to come, may delight in it. Amen.
<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/cop30-prayer>

"WE MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER OR DIE" AUDEN, ROMERO, AND THE VIOLENCE OF LOVE

Cameron Bellm 15 September 2025 – *a reflection written after the assassination of Charlie Kirk 10 September 2025*

In between moments of feverishly checking the news last week, I came across a quote that stunned me in a book I was reading. It's from the poet W. H. Auden: **"We must love another or we die."**

In what poem did these words find their home? **"September 1, 1939."** Written just after the Nazi invasion of Poland that started World War II, it's a long and magnificent poem about the horrors of war and the forces that lead us into it. The final stanza offers a breathlessly hopeful gasp of air:

"Defenceless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironical points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:

May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame."

I can't help but think that we find ourselves in a new context of violence that calls for its brutal honesty, its flickering glimmer of bright hope. But it turns out that that's not at all what Auden would have wanted. In the years after he wrote the poem, he began to disavow it, to cut away at its hopeful parts. He declined to include it in collections, and he wrote to the critic Laurence Lerner, "Between you and me, I loathe that poem."

What drove Auden's antipathy? He found the poem dishonest. That line I loved so much and found so fitting for this moment, "We must love another or die," Auden called "a damned lie." He thought his poem was too prescriptive, and too flattering to those who considered themselves among "the Just." A poem wasn't going to stop a war. Mr. Auden, dear Wystan Hugh, I confess that I understand your feelings. Who could have foreseen, in 1939, the scope of the horrors the war would set into motion?

As I've read the news this week (this year, this decade), watching violence endlessly spiral in word and in deed, I have wondered too: **what good is hope?** But there is another quote I keep returning to in the wake of last week's news.

"We have never preached violence, except the violence of love, which left Christ nailed to a cross, the violence that we must each do to ourselves to overcome our selfishness and such cruel inequalities among us. The violence we preach is not the violence of the sword, the violence of hatred. It is the violence of love, of brotherhood, the violence that wills to beat weapons into sickles for work."

St. Óscar Romero spoke these words nearly fifty years ago into a country marred by brutal and senselessly cruel violence. Threatened, smeared in the press, and criticized by his own Church, Romero still dared to insist that another way was possible. A way of hope, and above all, a way of love.

I've thought a lot in these intervening days about what love is, and what it is not.

Love is not assassinations.
But love is also not racism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia.
Love never builds its nest amidst dehumanization.
Love is not war, not genocide, not bombs.
Love does not accept children being killed in schools as an unfortunate necessity.
Love does not drag Christianity into a blacksmith's fire and forge it into a weapon.
Love never, ever, ever issues from the end of a gun.

Violence snarls, draws blood.
But violence is also poverty, misogyny, injustice of every kind.
Violence insists on "debate" that is, in fact, a calculated act of belittling others.
Violence makes mortal enemies of everyone who disagrees with it.
Violence spreads lies and misinformation, preying on the softest and most vulnerable flesh of every human: fear.
Violence speaks a shorthand language, and the shorthand is hate.
Violence justifies its every act of destruction.

Love gives birth to love, but violence can only breed more violence.

These lists are not at all exhaustive. But they are a start. Still, like Auden, I've wondered many times: **what the point is in saying things like this, things that seem so blatantly obvious?** But Romero kept on saying them. He knew that his people needed to hear them. We need to hear them still.

Romero understood that it is vitally important to tell the truth about what love is and what it is not. If we're ever to build a world on the foundation of love, we must first understand what love is and what it requires of us.

We need a love that draws us to empty ourselves out at night and examine closely what we find. A love that scans and searches for the slightest inclination toward violence and hatred within us, and excises it. Gently, but with a firm hand and decisive strokes.

This is a love, this is a hope, that I believe in.

Reprinted with permission – from Cameron Bellm's Substack newsletter *Attention and Astonishment*

<https://cameronbellm.substack.com/p/we-must-love-one-another-or-die>

<https://www.cameronbellm.com/newsletter>

- **Cameron Bellm** is a Seattle-based writer and contemplative in action. She combines her love of language with a deeply-rooted spirituality to compose prayers, poems, essays, and devotionals linking our modern lives with our ancient faith. She is especially devoted to writing at the intersections of creativity, spirituality, mysticism and activism. Her first book, *The Sacrament of Paying Attention: How Writers, Artists, and Mystics Can Lead Us into Sacred Human Communion*, will be published by Eerdmans in 2026. <https://www.cameronbellm.com/>

- **Subscribe** to *Attention and Astonishment* which goes out roughly once a month and features original essays, updates on Cameron's writing and speaking, and places where she's finding hope. <https://cameronbellm.substack.com/subscribe>

TWO BISHOPS OF PORTSMOUTH ISSUE STATEMENT ABOUT ASYLUM

8 September 2025: The Rt Rev Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth, and the Rt Rev Jonathan Frost, Church of England Bishop of Portsmouth, made their joint statement after discovering that children were among those left intimidated within the Royal Beach Hotel. One asylum seeker, who is a Christian and attends church in Southsea, has detailed what life is like for his young family inside the hotel. The statement from the two bishops reads as follows:

"As the Roman Catholic and Church of England Bishops of Portsmouth, we are honoured to serve a city which has as its emblem 'Heaven's Light Our Guide'. Each day we seek the light and guidance of God for daily living. We listen closely to our scriptures and seek wisdom from our Christian heritage. We listen to the cry of the most vulnerable in our city. We find the teaching of Jesus difficult but always life-giving.

"We cherish our city's long history of hospitality to strangers, refugees and asylum seekers. But we are concerned that our city's well-deserved reputation for compassion is under threat from those promoting fear and misinformation about our most vulnerable neighbours. We have been truly ashamed by recent events in our city that involve the intimidation, blaming and scapegoating of asylum seekers and refugees. We are horrified when protestors use Christian language to justify divisive chants. We are aware that more than 20 children currently live in the Royal Beach Hotel in Southsea. Here families live in fear as protesters chant crude slogans outside the hotel.

"We understand the real concerns and fears about immigration, including the perception that it adds to pressures on already stretched welfare and NHS systems. It is a complex problem that needs to be sorted out, but it requires a long-term solution, not a short-term quick fix or scapegoating. Every refugee or asylum seeker is a person with a name and a story to tell and we must remember they have often fled from truly desperate situations.

"Jesus Christ modelled care for the outcast and marginalised. His gospel calls us to love our neighbour, including care for the stranger. We are called to build bridges, not walls. Indeed, Jesus identified himself with the stranger such that to care for a stranger is to care for him (Matthew chapter 25, verse 35).

"The light of faith prompts Christians to support asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the homeless, the poorest and the oldest in our communities. That compassionate approach is rooted in a regard for the sanctity of all human life, which is the bedrock of our shared faith. A humane way forward demands informed engagement, meeting asylum seekers, and pressing politicians for real reform, backed by cross-agency, cross-party and international collaboration to deliver a fair, long-term solution. We call on our own Christian communities, people of all faiths and none, to seek a just and kind solution, and to take practical steps towards understanding and supporting those in need. Let us commit ourselves to doing that which truly makes a difference."

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/two-bishops-of-portsmouth-issue-statement-about-asylum/>

NAMING OUR FEARS AND SURVIVING TOGETHER

Johnny Zokovitch 31 October 2025

I spent last weekend with members of Pax Christi Michigan at their annual fall retreat. The theme of this retreat doesn't change from year to year; it's always focused on reflection and renewal for the long haul, how to find the sustenance one needs to keep going on, especially when hopes are dashed and momentum is stalled.

Everyone gathered agreed that this retreat was happening against the backdrop of a particularly dark and fearful time. The opening prayer service sought to stir into flame a faith that casts out fear. We sang together "Be Not Afraid" and looked over a sheet chock full of quotes from the likes of Thich Nhat Hanh, Dorothy Day and Howard Thurman, all aimed at assuaging our fear and stoking courage.

I started my first presentation by sharing that my own daily meditation practice begins with St. Teresa of Avila's prayer, "Let nothing disturb thee, let nothing dismay thee..." a prayer that assumes there's a lot out there that IS disturbing, that IS daunting.

Indeed, the underlying assumption of Jesus' exhortations to "fear not" is that there is a lot happening in our world about which it is natural to be afraid.

It is scary out there. And better that we name this and look at it squarely, lest we find ourselves anxiously endeavoring to pretend otherwise – ignoring it or hiding from it or acting as if we can just wish it away.

The theologian Walter Wink gives us helpful language. In his series on "powers and principalities," Wink addresses how naming the power – in this case our fears – is the first step in unmasking it and then engaging it. Naming is, indeed, a biblical action. Knowing the true name, for instance in scriptural encounters with the demonic, resets the balance of power. Fear aims to immobilize us, steal our agency, and ultimately enslave us. But naming those fears – intentionally and rigorously – is a first step to reclaiming our freedom.

Individually, we wrote on post-it notes – as succinctly and exactly as we were able – what it is that scares us right now about this moment in history. One by one, people posted those fears on a nearly bare block wall, adorned only with a Franciscan cross. Then by journaling, in one-on-one conversations, or in small groups, people unpacked those fears, saying them aloud, turning them over by getting up close and examining them.

In the large group, I shared a story about a particular time in my own life when fear and the pain associated with it had nearly incapacitated me. Friends, meaning well, had sought to encourage me that things were surely going to get better, that there was a silver lining to all of this heartbreak, that I would grow and become stronger because of this. But one person came to my house, sat next to me quietly on the couch, held my hands as I cried and shook, simply looking at me then said, "I'm so sorry. It just sucks." There was no effort to allay my fear, counter it, or reconceptualize it, or promise a future time when it would no longer scare and debilitate me. All they did was sit with me in the midst of it, name and validate my reality for what it was, and, in that moment, offer the only solace that was really possible – solidarity.

Back to this weekend's retreat, I offered an invitation for folks to step back up to that wall, read and honor the weight and depth of the fear expressed there, then to remove at least one (that wasn't theirs), to fold it up and to carry it with them, so that no one would be left alone with their fear.

Some of us have been conditioned to expect that every moment presents the chance to thrive – especially for those of us who have never had to experience unrelentingly the fragility or vulnerability of what it is like to have oneself assaulted or threatened at every turn by the way that things are in the world. But sometimes, all that we can manage is to endure, to survive.

That survival starts by being honest about what we are up against, and how scary it is.

And also that we survive together, naming and validating that fear, but not leaving anyone to face it alone.

<https://paxchristiusa.org/2025/10/31/naming-our-fears-and-surviving-together/>

• Johnny Zokovitch is the former executive director of Pax Christi USA. He currently serves on the board of the Pax Christi International Fund for Peace and is in pastoral leadership at St. Cronan Catholic Church in St. Louis.

HOPE & CHALLENGE

*Where there is no vision, the people perish.
~ Proverbs 29:18*

*Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets
so that one can read it readily.
For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment and will not disappoint.
If it delays, wait for it –
it will surely come, it will not be late.
~ Habakkuk 2:2-3*

SUDAN SIEGE – BRITISH YOUTH CALL ON POPE LEO TO SPEAK OUT

Rebecca Tinsley 3 November 2025

Young British Sudanese are urging Pope Leo to press the international community to take robust action to stop the killing in Sudan.

At a meeting in London, Sudanese Diaspora expressed horror that the United Arab Emirates was sending UK-made weapons to Sudan. This follows reports to the UN Security Council detailing how British military equipment has reached the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) besieging El Fasher in Darfur.

At a weekend meeting organised by the human rights group, Waging Peace, dozens of young people, many born in the UK to refugee parents, urged Pope Leo to continue his appeals to diplomats to respond to the humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan.

In the week since the Rapid Support Forces (the former Janjaweed militia) captured El Fasher, its soldiers have posted atrocity videos, confirming satellite evidence showing mass graves. For more than 500 days, the RSF militia had besieged the city of 260,000 people, preventing food entering, as they shell civilian infrastructure.

On Sunday October 26th, the last Sudanese Armed Forces garrison fell and the army abandoned the citizens to their fate. The RSF has built a mud wall encircling the city, and there are multiple credible reports of the systematic elimination of Black African ethnic groups living there. Militiamen have posted videos of killing 460 people in a maternity hospital, and it is thought that at least 3,000 people have died since the city fell.

David Miliband of the International Rescue Committee said in a briefing to donors that his charity, based in Tawila, 70 kilometres from El Fasher, stood ready to receive people escaping from the siege. It is estimated that 60,000 have fled the city in recent days. However, few people have arrived in Tawila, leading Miliband to fear they have been killed while trying to escape.

Over the weekend, the RSF has also bombed Bara in North Kordofan and conducted a drone strike on an internally displaced persons' camp in South Kordofan. Both regions are home to Sudan's Black African ethnic groups.

The British government now faces calls to stop selling weapons to the United Arab Emirates (the UAE) which allegedly backs the RSF. In 2024, the UN Security Council tasked its panel of experts to investigate the flow of weapons into Sudan in breach of the long-standing arms embargo on Darfur. The panel found there have been multiple flights from the UAE to Sudan, and equipment supplied to the UAE by countries such as the UK has been found in Darfur.

When asked by MPs on October 29th why British equipment (including small arms target systems and armoured personnel carrier engines) has been found in Darfur, the Foreign Secretary, Yvette Cooper, said that the UK's export regulations were "extremely strong." The FCDO minister Stephen Doughty, also resisted Liberal Democrats' calls for an arms embargo on the UAE. UK Government export data reveals that the UK sold £750m worth of arms to the UAE between 2019 and 2023.

Proposing the embargo, the Lib Dem MP Monica Harding said, "The possibility that British military equipment is contributing to the horrors occurring there, and aiding the carnage caused by the RSF, is horrific. The UK must cease all arms sales to the UAE immediately - until we can confirm without a doubt that no British weapons are going via the UAE to the RSF."

The UK has long had a lucrative relationship with the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, with the City of London managing UAE investments. The emirate is reputed to own more London property than the Duke of Westminster, in addition to Manchester City football team.

International efforts to stop the fighting have so far yielded little. The diplomatic "Quad" (the UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the USA) have been meeting in Washington DC to discuss the violence in Sudan. The UAE is reported to have vetoed Quad proposals for a ceasefire between the RSF and the Sudanese Armed Forces. Since 2016, the UAE has spent \$154m on lobbyists in Washington. Egypt and Saudi Arabia are known to support the Sudanese Armed Forces.

On several occasions recently, Pope Leo has appealed to the international community to respond to what he called the "humanitarian catastrophe" in Sudan. It is believed that 150,000 Sudanese have been killed so far since the war began in April 2023.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/53615>

LINK

Waging Peace: <https://wagingpeace.info/>

STATEMENT: STOP ARMING THE UAE! STOP THE SUDANESE GENOCIDE!

Source: Campaign Against Arms Trade October 30, 2025

British-made military equipment, sold to the UAE, is being used by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for massacres, mass displacement, and starvation in Sudan. The RSF is committing genocide in Sudan. This includes killing more than 150,000 people, forcing 12 million people to flee their homes, and using starvation as a weapon of war. There are almost 25 million people facing acute hunger and 8 million facing famine.

Military equipment sold to the UAE has been discovered in combat zones in Sudan.¹ This includes British engines, made by Cummins Inc found in armoured vehicles and British-made small weapons target devices made by Militec. Militec was granted an export licence to UAE for the same equipment that was found in Sudan in each of 2013, 2014, and 2015.

Despite the UK government knowing that the UAE has diverted arms exports from other countries to the RSF,² the UAE remains one of the UK's biggest arms customers. In the past three years, the UK has exported £417 million worth of arms exports to the UAE³. This includes £113m worth of aircraft and their components, £111m of target acquisition, weapons control systems, and related countermeasures and components, £110m of military electronic equipment, and £32m of bombs, missiles, grenades etc. and related countermeasures and components. However, instead of taking action and suspending arms sales, this government has courted yet more arms sales, even issuing an official government invitation to the UAE to attend the DSEI arms fair in September.⁴ The UK government has also tried to repress criticism of the UAE's role in Sudan, prioritising arms sales over condemning and challenging the UAE's supply of military equipment to the RSF⁵.

The UK arms trade is out of control. Successive governments have repeatedly lied, claiming the UK has the most robust arms export control system in the world. This couldn't be further from the truth. We have an arms export system that exists to maximise arms dealers profits no matter what atrocities are committed using British military equipment. UK arms companies do not care that their equipment is used to commit genocide. They do not care about Sudanese lives. They only care about their shareholders profits. This has to end. We cannot stand by while British companies profit from multiple genocides. They have blood on their hands and it is down to all of us to hold both the companies, and this government, accountable for their actions.

<https://caat.org.uk/news/stop-arming-the-uae-stop-the-sudanese-genocide/>

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/oct/28/uk-military-equipment-rapid-support-forces-rsf-militia-accused-genocide-found-sudan-united-nations>

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/sudan-french-manufactured-weapons-system-identified-in-new-investigation/>

³ <https://caat.org.uk/data/countries/united-arab-emirates>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dsei-uk-2025-countries-territories-and-organisations-invited-by-uk-defence-exports-to-attend/dsei-uk-2025-invitees>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/jun/24/uk-allegedly-suppressing-criticism-uae-arming-sudan-rsf-militia-genocide-darfur>

For more, see our blog post "Genocide in Sudan, the role of the UAE, and the complicity of the West":

<https://caat.org.uk/news/genocide-in-sudan-the-role-of-the-uae-and-the-complicity-of-the-west/>

A PRAYER FOR SUDAN

Listen to us, Lord,
hear our prayers as we cry out to you.
Comfort and sustain your people.
Open the paths of peace.

At this time of conflict in Sudan,
we pray for those
who have been forced to flee their homes
and search for safety.

Open the paths of peace, Lord.

We pray for those
who face hunger and disease,
who have lost friends and family,
who endure in this time of crisis.

Open the paths of peace, Lord

We pray for those
who are working tirelessly
to support our sisters and brothers
as famine looms and violence persists.

Open the paths of peace, Lord.

Guide us to stand alongside one another
and through our prayers and actions,
keep the people of Sudan
always in our hearts.
Amen.

<https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/prayer-for-sudan>

HOW SOCIAL JUSTICE CAME IN FROM THE COLD

Ian Linden 14 October 2025

One of the anomalies of English Catholicism is that Catholics working for social justice have in the past been made to feel they are oddities, peripheral to the main life of the Church, worship, sacraments, and prayer, a troublesome add-on, sometimes vaguely threatening. Yet the St Vincent de Paul Society active in every parish and the red boxes of the Pontifical Mission Societies (MISSIO today) in Catholic households were a constant reminder of belonging to a Church rooted amongst the poor throughout the world.

Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI were clearly concerned about global poverty. But the subject was not directly addressed in a discrete document by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). This was, to some degree, remedied by Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* in 1967, his Apostolic Letter to the laity and the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission in 1971, *Octogesima Adveniens*, alongside "Justice in the World", a document dealing with the issue of justice and liberation of the poor and oppressed, produced by a Synod of Bishops (established by Paul VI as a follow-up to the Council) meeting in Rome that year.

It was Liberation Theology with its theme of "the preferential option for the poor" emerging from Latin America in the late 1960s and 1970s which brought a distinctive development in what was an unbroken tradition whose origins lie in the New Testament and the early Church, and carried forward by bishops and theologians through to the 5th century, and by Religious Orders after that. It might be summed up as a demand on Christians to make "a decisive and radical choice in favour of the weakest".

Yet, so little is done to make 'ordinary' adult Catholics aware of what any Pope has to say, mass-going Catholics may yet be unaware of how central to faith is Church teaching about poverty and the poor. And this is a Church which has, at least since the 1950s, taught Catholic social teaching in its schools based on papal encyclicals dating back to the Pope Leo's XXIII's *Rerum Novarum* on capital and labour, and workers' rights.

Priests and Sisters working in barrios, or supporting peasants under semi-feudal conditions, alarmed a powerful minority of Latin American bishops who saw proximity to power, dinner with the oligarchs and generals, as a sign of the Church's influence. And some, such as Francis before he became Pope, believed they could garner some protection for their radical clergy. Others steered clear but did not speak or act decisively. Martyrdom awaited those who did.

Because of its work in Latin America, the London-based CIIR (the Catholic Institute for International Relations) challenged British Foreign policy and promoted the theology of liberation from the mid-1970s. As the 1980s progressed, more development agencies and charitable bodies alleviating poverty also began advocating anti-poverty measures. By 1985 it was the Foreign Office's opinion that CIIR's staff were communists. None were.

Alleviating poverty remained an official mission of the church. But trace the development of charities such as The Passage set up in 1980 for homeless people. Or CAFOD, the official aid agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, part of the international Caritas family in the same period. They too moved on to advocacy of pro-poor policies. Such official flag-ship Catholic charities — could be distinguished from "free range" NGOs in more adversarial relationships with government which expected a degree of suspicion.

Neither Pope John Paul II with his grudging acceptance of liberation theology's key themes, nor Pope Benedict XVI, set out resolutely to dissipate this sense that work for justice outside episcopal or Vatican control was seen as a potential problem. Then along came Francis, a Pope who himself seemed to many conservatives — dangerously — out of control and who himself tried to demonstrate what the Church's relationship with the poor should be.

Pope Leo XIV set out immediately to act in such a way as to heal divisions and to calm Vatican and conservative anxieties. He had been heralded by commentators as a missionary Pope sharing, alongside Pope Francis, a Latin American vision of a Church of the Poor born of many years in Peru. The publication of an Apostolic Exhortation on the Love of the Poor, *Dilexi Te* (I have loved You) addressed to all Christians just six months after the Conclave that elected Leo, revealed that the commentators had been right.

Dilexi Te develops a document Francis had been preparing before he died. Even the title had been chosen by Pope Francis, to follow his — longer — encyclical published in October 2024, *Dilexi Nos* (He loved Us). Leo indicates his intentions quoting from *Dilexi Nos* in the second paragraph, writing that in contemplation of the love of Christ "we too are inspired to be more attentive to the sufferings and needs of others, and confirmed in our efforts to share in his work of liberation [my italics] as instruments for the spread of his love". His intention is continuity as much as dispelling any idea of incompatibility between popular piety, traditional Christian practice and work for justice.

At 20,000 words *Dilexi Te* is more user-friendly, the language clearer than papal writings before Francis. Popular movements are affirmed. Solidarity "also means fighting against structural causes of poverty and injustice: of lack of

work, land and housing” and denial of rights. This demands working “with the poor not for the poor” - re-iterating the theme of the poor as subjects of their own history which is so distinctive in liberation theology.

Pope Leo charts in detail how the Church’s option for the poor runs throughout history. He discusses the role of education in the eradication of poverty, the extraordinary contribution of women serving the poor, work with immigrants and in prisons, their spiritual needs, the importance of listening to the poor not neglecting or devaluing popular piety, and continuing almsgiving. Sharp phrases such as “the absolute autonomy of the market-place”, the dictatorship of an economy that kills”, “the empire of money”, cultures “that discard others” make the message politically clear.

Leo repeats the Church’s call for all Christians to take “a decisive and radical choice in favour of the weakest”. But who is going to hear this call, reflect on its political implications, and act on it? How many parishes will find it even mentioned in their weekly newsletter or bulletin? How many sermons will share the message of Dilexi Te with congregations. And how many bishops will write a special letter to all parishes about it? How many mass-goers will even know the Bishops’ Conference has a website and provides a summary? It’s an odd approach by bishops to the teaching authority of the Petrine Office. Meanwhile the little and large platoons working for social justice will be getting on with it, feeling a lot less peripheral to the mainstream than in the past.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/how-social-justice-came-in-from-the-cold>

- Professor Ian Linden is Visiting Professor at St Mary’s University, Strawberry Hill, London. A past director of the Catholic Institute for International Relations, he was awarded a CMG for his work for human rights in 2000. He has also been an adviser on Europe and Justice and Peace issues to the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. Ian chairs a new charity for After-school schooling in Beirut for Syrian refugees and Lebanese kids in danger of dropping out partnering with CARITAS Lebanon and work on board of Las Casas Institute in Oxford with Richard Finn OP. His latest book was Global Catholicism published by Hurst in 2009.

DILEXI TE WEBINAR: 17 NOVEMBER 4 pm CENTRE FOR CATHOLIC THOUGHT AND SOCIAL PRACTICE
Join us to discuss and reflect on Dilexi Te, Pope Leo XIV’s first Apostolic Exhortation.

At this webinar on 17 November, we’ll be joined by:

Christopher White, Senior Fellow at Georgetown University Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and author of the first book in English on Pope Leo.

Dr Maria Exall, former TUC President 2022-3, an honorary lecturer at St Mary’s University Twickenham and associate of the Las Casas Institute.

Professor Anna Rowlands, holder of the St Hilda Chair in Catholic Social Thought and Practice at Durham University and Chair of CCSTP.

We hope to share more speaker details soon. We’d love you to join us, to listen, ask questions and share your perspectives as we explore this important document together.

Please pass this invitation on to colleagues and friends.
The webinar is free and open to all, but registration is required.

<https://ccstp.org.uk/articles/2025/11/3/upcoming-catholic-social-teaching-events>

CSAN WELCOMES ‘DILEXI TE’ (ON LOVE FOR THE POOR)

Raymond Friel OBE, CEO Caritas Social Action Network 20 October 2025

On 4 October 2025, the Memorial of St Francis of Assisi, Pope Leo XIV issued the first Apostolic Exhortation of his Pontificate, Dilexi Te (On Love for the Poor).

The document acknowledges that Pope Francis had been working on an Apostolic Exhortation at the time of his death, to which he gave the title, Dilexi Te (the first words of the text in Latin, meaning, “I have loved you”). Pope Leo has made the document his own, adding some reflections, in a clear sign of continuity with the Pontificate of Pope Francis.

The underpinning theology of the document is that “Love for the Lord is one with love for the poor” (#5). Those who are made poor are not just a societal problem, but a revelation of the presence of Christ in history and a path to holiness: “Just as you did it to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40).

Eight centuries ago, St Francis of Assisi was converted from a life of luxury and privilege by his direct contact with Christ in the the poor. Pope Leo is “convinced that the preferential choice for the poor is a source of extraordinary renewal for the Church and for society, if only we can set ourselves free of our self-centredness and open our hearts to their cry” (#7).

The document describes many forms of poverty in today’s world. In addition to material poverty, there is “moral and spiritual poverty, cultural poverty, the poverty of those who find themselves in a condition of personal and social weakness or fragility, the poverty of those who have no rights, no space, no freedom” (#9).

Pope Leo continues the teaching of his predecessor on the damaging effects of consumerism, the vision of life “centred on the accumulation of wealth and social successes” (#11) at the expense of others, taking advantage of “unjust social ideals and political-economic systems that favour the strongest” (#11).

He responds strongly to those who ridicule or dismiss charitable works, as if they were the obsession of a few, “not the beating heart of the Church’s mission” (#15). Pope Leo, like Pope Francis, sends us back to the Gospel, “less we risk replacing it with the wisdom of this world” (#15).

The document has a number of challenges for the Church, not just for the charities and agencies dedicated to social action for justice. Building on the recent Magisterium, the document insists on a “privileged place” (#21) in the Church for the poor, an end to the paternalism that regarded the poor as objects of our charity, not “subjects capable of creating their own culture” (#100). This approach calls for developing social projects with and of those who are poor, not just for the poor. What this “privileged place” in the Church looks like for those who are poor is a challenge requiring sustained attention.

While the document acknowledges the need for almsgiving to meet the immediate needs of those who are suffering, we are called “to be increasingly committed to resolving the structural causes of poverty” (#94). To look upstream, so to speak, to find out the reasons for suffering and work to change them.

To do this, the Church needs the help of people of goodwill working in the field of justice, who have developed the tools and training to form people as agents of change who can build relational power in communities, understand the mechanisms of change and how to campaign to bring about a more just social order, called for by Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum* in 1891.

Pope Leo XIV, taking his cue from Pope Francis, calls these grass roots organisations, the popular movements. In England and Wales, Citizens UK is perhaps the best known of the popular movements working with the Church in many dioceses and schools. These movements show us how to fight against the structural causes of poverty and inequality, how to do justice. They bring a “moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny” (#81).

We are being called to prophetic boldness, ‘we’ as in “all the members of the People of God [who] have a duty to make their voices heard” (#97), even at the risk of appearing foolish or naïve. The document has a warning for those in the Church whose strategy is to work with the elite, “to cultivate relationships that bring us security and a position of privilege” (#114). This is a worldly approach, “lacking any light from above” (#114).

We are called to “denounce the dictatorship of an economy that kills” (#92), to challenge the exponential rise of inequality resulting from ideologies which promote the absolute autonomy of the marketplace, undermining the common good, and work towards an economy of solidarity.

Archbishop Emeritus Malcolm McMahon, the Chair of CSAN, commented, “We welcome the encouragement in *Dilexi Te* to make a radical and decisive choice in favour of the weakest. This is the Gospel imperative which inspires the work of the member organisations of CSAN. In addition to the work of charity, we will continue to work for justice, challenging the structures of sin which prevent people from living a dignified life.”
<https://www.csan.org.uk/news/csan-welcomes-dilexi-te-on-love-for-the-poor/>

For CSAN’s latest Calls to Action visit: <https://www.csan.org.uk/news/calls-to-action-october-2025/>
For more information on *Dilexi Te*, including a synthesis and infographics, visit:
<https://www.humandevelopment.va>

See also: <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/dilexi-te-pope-leo-xivs-first-papal-document/>
and <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/bishop-richard-moth-welcomes-dilexi-te/>

OPTION FOR THE POOR: FOUNDATIONS & SPIRITUALITY

19 May 2025

Prof Ian Linden, a member of the Las Casas Advisory Board and a Visiting Professor at St Mary's University, Twickenham, has written the following blog post reflecting on Liberation Theology and the continuing challenge of systemic poverty.

Talking about spirituality can be individualist and airy-fairy. In contrast, the late Peruvian theologian, Gustavo Gutierrez, gave a down-to-earth definition for Christians in his *Theology of Liberation*. "A spirituality is a concrete manner, inspired by the Spirit, of living the Gospel....in solidarity with all human beings...before the Lord". We saw it at work in the papacy of Pope Francis and in the missionary work of his successor Cardinal Robert Prevost. This spirituality that arises from God's compassionate option, predilection, preference for the poor, is revealed and called for by the Prophets of the Old Testament, in the New Testament and the teaching of the Church over the ages.

Three Gospel writers carry the story of the rich young man seeking salvation. Mark recounts how Jesus "looked at him and loved him", giving him the counsel of perfection to unburden him from his wealth. He goes away disappointed seemingly rejecting an "inner detachment" to retain his wealth and continue his search. Gutierrez insists Christians need to pursue a search for "integral liberation".

From the Acts of the Apostles we know that the first Christian community sought to have all things in common. By the 4th century AD, after Constantine's conversion, this commonality of the goods of creation, in today's churchy language, the "universal/common destination of goods", entailed a duty of the rich towards the poor. The Church Fathers, in Pope Paul VI's words, proclaimed it "in no uncertain terms".

These early saints don't make easy reading. "The bread in your larder belongs to the hungry. The clothes in your wardrobe belong to the naked.... The money in your vaults belong to the destitute". This is St. Basil the Great of Caesaria (died 379). No less uncomfortable, the social teaching of the time makes short-shrift of our perception of charity. "You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his". This is the Archbishop of Milan, St. Ambrose (died 397). No rhetoric this: priests could be rejected for the office of bishop if they were not seen as "lovers of the poor".

St. Augustine of Hippo, Algeria (died 430) – converted by Ambrose – softened the teaching a little by focusing his strictures on superfluity as in "when you possess superfluity you possess what belongs to others". St. John Chrysostom (died 403), Archbishop of Constantinople, had written a number of sermons on wealth and poverty in this vein; hoarding riches was "robbery of the poor". And there were no get-outs: however bad a character, "the man who has encountered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge him, do not seek an account of his life, but free him from his misfortune". You can almost hear a contemporary discussion about street begging.

Dwelling a moment on the theological principles and admonitions of the 4th century does not seek to induce a sense of guilt. It is meant to underline how utterly foundational right relationships with the poor have been – of course with varying emphasis – for Christianity across the ages. The vow of poverty in most Religious Orders remains a testimony to this teaching.

So much has to be left out in a potted history not least the Franciscans and St. Francis who was so formative for Pope Francis. "Was the earth made to preserve a few covetous, proud men to live at ease; or was it made to preserve all her children?" Could be Francis. In fact, it's Gerrard Winstanley in 1649 post-Reformation England, founder of the True Levelers. The option for the poor wasn't suddenly 'dreamed up' in the 1960s.

Church teaching about the poor shows the development that St. John Henry Newman outlined in his famous essay on doctrine. It was no accident that poverty returned mid-20th century to greater prominence in Church thinking. The Church globally was in intense competition with Communism for the soul of the working class. The worker-priest movement in France was one of several initiatives. They lost a protective ally when the then Nuncio, the future Pope John XXIII, was made Patriarch of Venice in 1953.

Movements for peace and international development were not siloed like today. In the midst of the Korean War (1950-1953), calls for peace were growing. Amongst the public response in 1952, Harold Wilson – Labour had just lost the General Election – put forward a Plan for World Development which generated the NGO, War on Want. This was when, referring to nations non-aligned in the Cold War, the term Third World was first used.

At the same time, the Brazilian Bishops Conference (CNBB) was coming into existence. Dom Helder Camara was its first general-secretary and began CARITAS Brazil, feeding the impoverished peasants of the North-East and working with government on a development plan for the region where he became Archbishop of Olinda-Recife. In 1955, the Latin American bishops joined together to form an episcopal Council, CELAM, through which ideas could quickly spread. Meanwhile 29 developing nations met in Bandung, Indonesia, to discuss economic development, decolonization and peace.

On 11 September 1962 in a radio broadcast, by way of a papal prologue to the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII described how the Church presented itself to the world, “how it is and how it wants to be as the Church of all, particularly, as the Church of the poor”. With a passion that characterized the Church Fathers, he spoke of “the miseries of social life that cry out to God for vengeance in the sight of God”. But nothing substantial on poverty came out of the Council.

Why did the Pope’s words and the Council’s opening Message to the World that spoke of poverty, not result in a distinct Conciliar document? It wasn’t for lack of trying, not least by Dom Helder and an informal ‘Church of the Poor’ group who wanted the Council to take the scourge of poverty to its heart. The problem was the variety of perspectives that the delegates and periti brought to the table. Alongside Helder Camara’s big economic theme of ‘underdevelopment’ in the Third World were emphases of the European worker priest movement, the influence of Charles de Foucauld’s Little Brothers of Jesus, his asceticism and love of Nazareth, and the Vatican’s growing discomfort with its manifest wealth. There were just too many different clerical chefs in the kitchen.

Gaudium et Spes, the last and hurried, document to be voted on, was influenced by the Latin Americans, and by Dominican Father Louis Joseph Lebreton who played a major role in writing Paul VI’s subsequent 1967 *Populorum Progressio*. It did touch on the injustices of the global economic order. It also referred back to the Church Fathers’ requirement to come to the relief of the poor, adding “and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods”, the uncertain meaning of ‘superfluity’ having long since blurred the obligation. The document, of course, underlined the essential link between justice and the preservation of peace. But it all felt a bit last-minute. The Latin Americans went home with a determination to take action. The strength of *Gaudium et Spes* was to be a green light for the local Church to take forward the thinking and practice of a “Church of the Poor”.

Meanwhile the theological implications of the Church’s option for the poor were being worked out in conferences around Latin America. In 1968, the second big conference of the Latin American Bishops took place in Medellin, Colombia. During it Gustavo Gutierrez presented his outline “Towards a Theology of Liberation”. Elaborating themes of structural injustice, conscientization and the search for liberation, the seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* with its central theme of conscientization was published in Portuguese the same year. Its author, Paulo Freire, had been Director of Extension Studies in the University of Recife in the early 1960s and briefly imprisoned after the 1964 military coup. Medellin and its option for the poor profoundly influenced what came out of Rome in subsequent years.

Alongside individual sins, the Latin American bishops spoke of social, economic and political structures that did violence to people. Passivity in the face of injustice required an awakening leading to action to counter such violence: a popular mobilization and movement for change. The goal: to enable the poor to become more conscious of the causes of their predicament and to support them in seeking their own integral liberation. In the face of military dictatorships, death squads and rule by ruthless oligarchies, committed to solidarity with oppressed communities, the bishops weighed up advocating violent revolution. They came down against it in a hard-nosed estimation of its consequences.

Gustavo’s *Theology of Liberation: Perspectives* was published – in Spanish, in 1971, in English 1973. It chimed in many ways with Paul VI’s contemporary apostolic letter to the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Octogesima Adveniens* that underlines the diversity of political contexts in which work for social justice takes place and the importance of reading the signs of the times from different perspectives, an elaboration of Cardinal’s “See, Judge and Act” approach in short.

This was followed by *Justice in the World* from the 1971 Synod of Bishops of Rome. Like Medellin, it deploys the concept of structural injustice and conscientization but, unlike Medellin, speaks of liberation through development, a concept it critically appraises. It is at this Synod, in the words of bishops from around the world, that “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world” are described as “a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel”. Not a barely tolerated add-on to the ‘real’ work of the Church.

So what of today? Let’s be honest. We are not all cut out for more radical forms of solidarity with the poor. We don’t see a Dorothy Day when we look in the mirror. What can and cannot be done effectively differs in democracies and dictatorships. In democracies, the option for the poor can mean in practice advocating pro-poor policies to governments by dialogue, argument, organizing and modelling good, effective examples, and when necessary creative forms of protest. The distinction between religion and politics never has been and never can be real. Both are, and ought to be, about how we should live, what kind of society and world we wish to live in.

So the spirituality of the option for the poor requires practicing the politics of a compassion for the poor that is God’s option. Action on behalf of justice, solidarity shown by confronting systemic injustice, including, because of climate change, towards future generations, trying to rebuild, these all form part of “the concrete manner...of living the Gospel inspired by the Spirit” – Gustavo’s definition of spirituality. They offer special opportunities for Grace to enter.

And let's be realistic. In the long march through the institutions Justice and Peace remain distant horizons. Action for justice meets so often with defeat. The opposition seems intractable. Fleeing Franco's Nationalists, the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, an exile across the border in Collioure, wrote: "For the strategists, for the politicians, for the historians, all this will be clear: we lost the war. But at a human level I am not so sure: perhaps we won".

Machado wrote his famous poem *Caminante no hay camino* during the first World War. "Traveler there is no path – we make the path by walking". We see our path only by looking back. But following the life of our beloved Pope Francis, who modelled an option for the poor for all of us, we will surely emerge from our own troubled times one day on the Emmaus road.

Professor Ian Linden,
Middlesbrough J & P Commission Storey Lecture 8 May 2025
<https://www.bfriars.ox.ac.uk/news/option-for-the-poor-foundations-spirituality/>

COLUMBANS LAUNCH SCHOOLS COMPETITION 2026

Ellen Teague 22 September 2025

The Columban Missionaries in Britain are inviting students aged 13–18 to enter the 2026 Schools Media Competition.

The competition was launched on 21 September, World Peace Day with the theme: **"Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is."** This is a quote from the United Nations Secretary General-Secretary, António Guterres, who is a Catholic.



Columban missionaries internationally have a mission priority of supporting Migrants and Refugees. This echoes Catholic Social Teaching which calls us to 'welcome the stranger'. Pope Leo told diplomats in May 2025: "My own story is that of a citizen, the descendant of immigrants, who in turn chose to emigrate..... All of us, in the course of our lives, can find ourselves healthy or sick, employed or unemployed, living in our native land or in a foreign country, yet our dignity always remains unchanged."

The Columbans are looking for students in Britain (aged 13-18 inclusive, parental permission required) to submit an original piece of writing or an original image on the theme. They invite young people to explore perceptions of people seeking sanctuary in Britain, considering practical examples of welcome and solidarity.

The competition aims to increase young people's compassion and understanding of journeys of displaced people seeking safety in another country. How can we respect diversity and respond with love to those seeking refuge and safety? Can we be inspired by real-life stories of resilience and hope, Scripture, or Catholic Social Teaching? How can we empathise with the experience of individuals and families being separated from the place they call home.

The competition closes on the 14th February 2026 and competition winners will be announced on the 9th March. Cash prizes will be awarded to the winners and the first prize is an impressive £300!

High-profile judges from the world of journalism have been secured and winning entries will be published in the Columbans' Far East magazine, Vocation for Justice newsletter, as well as on the Columban's in Britain website, on social media and in other Catholic media. The Columbans are delighted that Ruth Gledhill of The Tablet and Jo Siedlecka of Independent Catholic News, are judges in Britain. Former Society Superior General Columban Fr. Tim Mulroy and James Trewby, Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Co-ordinator in Britain, are also on the judging panel.

Students will find the Columban Competition website a useful resource: <https://www.columbancompetition.com/> It includes information on the theme of "Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is." There are examples of refugee projects and inspirational communities. There are also details on the submission of entries and a helpful FAQ page. The website provides material suitable for students, teachers and parents.

This is the ninth annual Columban Schools Media Competition. Past themes have focused on Migrants, Climate Change, Throwaway Culture, Racism, 21st Century Changemakers, Peacemaking, Biodiversity and 'Jubilee: Pilgrims of Hope.' Be inspired by some of the powerful articles written by young people in previous competitions – follow the link here: <https://columbans.co.uk/filter/schools-media-competition/>
<https://columbans.co.uk/education/17074/columbans-launch-schools-competition-2026/>

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/53229>

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY NEWS

19 November Church Action on Poverty's Annual General Meeting 7:00pm via Zoom Join us to hear about our plans to work with Pantries and churches and enable more people to be agents for change. **Register here:** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-catalyst-for-change-church-action-on-poverty-agm-2025-tickets-1707603079779?aff=oddtcreator>

We are actively seeking new members to be elected to our Council of Management (Church Action on Poverty's board of trustees) at the AGM. We particularly welcome nominations of people with personal experience of poverty and people from black, Asian or other ethnic minority backgrounds. We are also looking for members who have experience of fundraising. If you are interested in becoming a member of Church Action on Poverty and joining the Council, or nominating someone else, please download the form below and send it in – or call us on 0161 872 9294 to ask for more information. <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Church-Action-on-Poverty-2025-AGM-papers.pdf>

PAX CHRISTI ENGLAND AND WALES NEWS

5 November 2025: Bishop John Arnold has been appointed as new President of Pax Christi England and Wales. Bishop John has been Bishop of Salford since 2014. He is the Bishops' Conference Spokesperson for the Environment and a former Chair of CAFOD's Board of Trustees.

Kathryn Lydon, chair Pax Christi England and Wales said: "I am so pleased that Bishop John has been appointed as our President and was delighted to meet him recently with Aisling Griffin our Schools and Youth Education Worker. We are really looking forward to working with Bishop John on the critical peace and nonviolence issues that concern us all in the Church."

The World Gathering to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Pax Christi International starts in Florence today and our three delegates Kathryn Lydon, Fr Joe Ryan and Matthew Maslen are on their way to join others from Pax Christi sections around the world. They are hoping to report back daily so keep an eye on all our channels for an update. We'll also post any links to events that are livestreamed from the Gathering. <http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/http://www.paxchristi.org.uk/>

CAFOD EVENTS

CAFOD SHREWSBURY DIOCESE AND BIRMINGHAM ARCHDIOCESE (NORTH)

Saturday 9 November - Adoremus Liverpool a day of Eucharistic Adoration, Mass, opportunities for confession, and shared times of prayer, alongside a range of engaging workshops. will be celebrated at the Metropolitan Cathedral. Click here for further details: <https://archdioceseofliverpool.churchsuite.com/events/vqaovtcw>

Tuesday, 11 November CAFOD Volunteer Anne has asked me to share this event with you that she is involved in, and which I'm sure will be a wonderful evening:

Join Us for a Special Interfaith Week Gathering – World Café: An Evening of Food, Faith & Climate Reflection
Theme: Our Faith, Our Community, Our World – Caring for creation through our thoughts, actions, and advocacy.

Date: Tuesday, 11 November 2025

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm

Venue: Wirral Multicultural Centre 111 Conway Street Birkenhead Wirral Merseyside CH41 4AF.

Food Provided | Free Entry

Whether you're part of a faith group, a climate advocate, or simply curious, this is a space for everyone.

Reserve your spot now: <https://bit.ly/Interfaithweek2025> We look forward to welcoming you!

Saturday 15 November - Join Bishop John & CAFOD

We are inviting CAFOD supporters to join us in Manchester along with Bishop John Arnold (former CAFOD trustee) to pray for the success of the UN COP30 climate talks in Brazil.

Date: Saturday 15th November

Time: 12pm

Venue: St Augustine's Church, Grosvenor Square (Off Oxford Rd), Manchester M15 6BW.

We will hear from Bishop John Arnold and CAFOD's partners live from Brazil, pray for the climate and enjoy some hot chocolate. There is the option of joining a family-friendly climate march into the city centre afterwards, ending with a COP30 rally.

For more details see: cafod.org.uk/dayofaction

I will be attending this event and would love to see you there! Please let me know if you plan to join us.

With best wishes, **Kathryn Keegan Community Participation Coordinator Mobile/WhatsApp: 07920 232 936**

DIARY

NOVEMBER

9 Adoremus Liverpool a day of Eucharistic Adoration, Mass, opportunities for confession, and shared times of prayer, alongside a range of engaging workshops. will be celebrated at the Metropolitan Cathedral. Click here for further details: <https://archdioceseofliverpool.churchsuite.com/events/vqaovtcw>

11 Interfaith Week Gathering — World Café: An Evening of Food, Faith & Climate Reflection. 6- 8.30 pm at Wirral Multicultural Centre 111 Conway Street Birkenhead Wirral Merseyside CH41 4AF. Food Provided | Free Entry Reserve your spot now: <https://bit.ly/Interfaithweek2025> All welcome.

13 Pax Christi Merseyside meeting (second Thursday of each month) from 2pm to 4pm at Quaker Meeting House School Lane Liverpool L1 3BT. All welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 janharper20211@outlook.com

14 CAFOD Quiz Night at Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port 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

15 Join Bishop John Arnold & CAFOD in Manchester to pray for the success of the UN COP30 climate talks in Brazil. 12pm St Augustine's Church, Grosvenor Square (Off Oxford Rd), Manchester M15 6BW. More info: cafod.org.uk/dayofaction

17 Dilexi Te Webinar 4 pm. Organised by the Centre for Catholic Thought and Social Practice. Join us to discuss and reflect on Dilexi Te, Pope Leo XIV's first Apostolic Exhortation. The webinar is free and open to all, but registration is required. Details <https://ccstp.org.uk/articles/2025/11/3/upcoming-catholic-social-teaching-events>

18 Creation Groans — Christ Calls Leeds Trinity University Chaplaincy Brownberrie Lane, Horsforth, LS18 5HD 7pm. A talk from Rev'd Jon Swales MBE, Church of England priest and prophetic theologian, exploring cruciform adaptation — what it looks like to follow Jesus in a world of climate breakdown and societal fracture. Creative prayer stations will also offer space for lament, intercession, and hope. Find out more: <https://buff.ly/sHwOr7v>

18 Lecture by Dr. Peter Atkins on "The Bible, Ecology, and Rewilding: Engaging Biblical Texts amidst the Ecological Crisis". Organised by Chester Theological Society. Dr Atkins is Postdoctoral Fellow in Old Testament and Hebrew Bible at the University of Edinburgh and co-founder and co-chair of the 'Animals and the Bible' research group for the European Association of Biblical Studies. 7.30pm at Hollybank Court, at 39 Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4AL - directly opposite the main entrance to the Exxon Campus of the University of Chester. Note that Hollybank Court can also be reached from the Liverpool Road via side road Hollybank. All are welcome, the entry fee is £5.

19 Church Action on Poverty's Annual General Meeting 7:00pm via Zoom Join us to hear about our plans to work with Pantries and churches and enable more people to be agents for change. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/a-catalyst-for-change-church-action-on-poverty-agm-2025-tickets-1707603079779?aff=oddtcreator>

29 Christmas Coffee Morning Raffle, Gifts, Refreshments 10.30am to 12.30pm Hoole URC Hall Hoole Road CH2 3NT (Visitor Parking Available) Organised by Chifundo UK, a charity dedicated to Empowering Women and Girls in Malawi. Our stalls will offer a range of vibrant textiles including bags, clothing and household items. Chester Fair Trading Stall Offering a range of goods that support farmers, workers and artisans providing fair prices and ensuring fair production standards. and Cake Sale. Find out more: www.chanasachifundomalawi.org

Join us for a morning of festive fun, whether you catch-up with coffee and cake, shop for ethical, sustainable and handmade gifts, or enjoy our free children's activities, there's something for everyone.

DECEMBER

11 Pax Christi Merseyside meeting (second Thursday of each month) from 2pm to 4pm at Quaker Meeting House School Lane Liverpool L1 3BT. All welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 janharper20211@outlook.com

- See current NJPN news here: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/news/>

- Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN (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 020 7901 4864

- Read the AUTUMN issue of **MOUTHPEACE** the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses: <https://jpshrewsbury.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/mouthpeace-autumn-2025.pdf>

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

NOTICE – forthcoming changes

NJPN would like to thank the Columbans for handling the mailing of our newsletter with Vocation for Justice for many years. With the increasing cost of postage and the advances of electronic media the Columbans will move to an online newsletter after the Winter edition of Vocation for Justice. In future our newsletter will be handled just by NJPN, and due to data protection rules we are unable to receive subscribers names from the Columbans database.

We are also planning on sending out an online version of our newsletter, so to ensure that you receive your copy, please email us at admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk – just put 'NEWSLETTER' as the title and we will add your email address to our list of subscribers.

For those of you who do not have access to an email version of the newsletter, please telephone us on 020 7901 4864 and leave your name, address and postcode, and we will post you out a copy or you can write to us at 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX. A donation to cover postage/printing costs would be appreciated if you are able to do so.

Grateful thanks to everyone who has supported us over the years, and we look forward to continuing to inform you of our work and current issues in a more environmentally-friendly fashion in the future.

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE

This notice relates to the seasonal newsletter produced by NJPN and **NOT** this monthly North West NJPN E Bulletin which is already sent electronically and is also available to read or download from the NJPN website at

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/category/njpn-north-west/>