

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin April 2026

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 articles and diary dates to: anneoc980@hotmail.com

‘ENOUGH OF WAR!’: FULL TEXT OF POPE LEO’S PRAYER FOR PEACE

Source: America, The Jesuit Review April 11, 2026

Editors’ note: Pope Leo XIV delivered this homily during a prayer vigil for peace on the evening of April 11

Dear brothers and sisters,

Your prayer is an expression of that faith which, according to the words of Jesus, moves mountains (cf. Mt 17:20). Thank you for accepting this invitation to gather here at the tomb of Saint Peter and in so many other places around the world to pray for peace. War divides; hope unites. Arrogance tramples upon others; love lifts up. Idolatry blinds us; the living God enlightens.

My dearest friends, all it takes is a little faith, a mere “crumb” of faith, in order to face this dramatic hour in history together—as humanity and alongside humanity. Prayer is not a refuge in which to hide from our responsibilities, nor an anaesthetic to numb the pain provoked by so much injustice. Rather, it is the most selfless, universal and transformative response to death: we are a people who are already risen! Within each of us, within every human being, the interior Teacher teaches peace, urges us toward encounter and inspires us to make supplication.

Let us rise from the rubble! Nothing can confine us to a predetermined fate, not even in this world where there never seem to be enough graves, for people continue to crucify one another and eliminate life, with no regard to justice and mercy.

In the context of the 2003 Iraq war crisis, Saint John Paul II, a tireless advocate for peace, said with deep emotion: “I belong to that generation that lived through World War II and, thanks be to God, survived it. I have the duty to say to all young people, to those who are younger than I, who have not had this experience: “No more war” as [Saint] Paul VI said during his first visit to the United Nations. We must do everything possible. We know well that peace is not possible at any price. But we all know how great is this responsibility” (*Angelus*, 16 March 2003). I make his appeal my own this evening, relevant as it is today.

Prayer teaches us how to act. In prayer, our limited human possibilities are joined to the infinite possibilities of God. Thoughts, words and deeds then break the demonic cycle of evil and are placed at the service of the Kingdom of God. A Kingdom in which there is no sword, no drone, no vengeance, no trivialization of evil, no unjust profit, but only dignity, understanding and forgiveness. It is here that we find a bulwark against that delusion of omnipotence that surrounds us and is becoming increasingly unpredictable and aggressive.

The balance within the human family has been severely destabilized. Even the holy Name of God, the God of life, is being dragged into discourses of death. A world of brothers and sisters with one heavenly Father vanishes, as in a nightmare, giving way to a reality populated by enemies. We are met by threats, rather than the invitation to listen and to come together. Brothers and sisters, those who pray are aware of their own limitations; they do not kill or threaten with death. Instead, death enslaves those who have turned their backs on the living God, turning themselves and their own power into a mute, blind and deaf idol (cf. Ps 115:4–8), to which they sacrifice every value, demanding that the whole world bend its knee.

Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the display of power! Enough of war! True strength is shown in serving life. With evangelical simplicity, Saint John XXIII once wrote: “The benefits of peace will be felt everywhere, by individuals, by families, by nations, by the whole human race.” And echoing the incisive words of Pius XII, he added: “Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war” (Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 116).

Let us, therefore, unite the moral and spiritual strength of the millions and billions of men and women, young and old, who today choose to believe in peace, caring for the wounds and repairing the damage left behind by the madness of war. I receive countless letters from children in areas of conflict. In reading them, one perceives, through the lens of innocence, all the horror and inhumanity of actions that some adults boast of with pride. Let us listen to the voices of children!

Dear brothers and sisters, there are certainly binding responsibilities that fall to the leaders of nations. To them we cry out: Stop! It is time for peace! Sit at the table of dialogue and mediation, not at the table where rearmament is planned and deadly actions are decided!

Yet there is a no less significant responsibility that falls to all of us—men and women from all over the world. We are an immense multitude that rejects war not only in word, but also in deed. Prayer calls us to leave behind whatever violence remains in our hearts and minds. Let us turn to a Kingdom of peace that is built up day by day—in our homes, schools, neighbourhoods, and civil and religious communities. A Kingdom that counters polemics and resignation through friendship and a culture of encounter. Let us believe once again in love, moderation and good politics. We must form ourselves and get personally involved, each following our own calling. Everyone has a place in the mosaic of peace!

The Rosary, like other ancient forms of prayer, has united us this evening in its steady rhythm built on repetition. Peace gains ground in the same way: word by word, deed by deed, just as a rock is hollowed out drop by drop, or fabric woven stitch by stitch. These are the slow rhythms of life, a sign of God's patience. We must not allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the pace of a world that does not know what it is chasing. Rather, we must return to serving the rhythm of life, the harmony of creation and healing its wounds. As Pope Francis taught us, "There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter" (Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 225). There is, indeed, "an 'architecture' of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, but there is also an 'art' of peace that involves us all" (*ibid.*, 231).

Dear brothers and sisters, let us return home having made a commitment to pray without ceasing and without growing weary, a commitment to a profound conversion of heart. The Church is a great people at the service of reconciliation and peace. She advances without hesitation, even when rejecting the logic of war may lead to misunderstanding and scorn. She proclaims the Gospel of peace and instils obedience to God rather than any human authority, especially when the inherent dignity of other human beings is threatened by continuous violations of international law. "Throughout the world, it is to be hoped that every community become a 'house of peace,' where one learns how to defuse hostility through dialogue, where justice is practiced and forgiveness is cherished. Now more than ever, we must show that peace is not a utopia" (*Message for the LIX World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2026).

Brothers and sisters of every language, people and nation: we are one family that weeps, hopes and rises again. "No more war, a journey with no return; no more war, a vicious cycle of grief and violence;" (Saint John Paul II, *Prayer for Peace*, 2 February 1991).

Dear friends, peace be with you all! It is the peace of the Risen Christ, the fruit of his sacrifice of love on the cross. For this reason, we raise our prayer to him:

*Lord Jesus,
you conquered death without weapons or violence:
you shattered its power with the strength of peace.*

*Grant us your peace,
as you did to the women filled with doubt on Easter morning,
as you did to the disciples who were hiding in fear.*

*Send forth your Spirit,
the breath that gives life and reconciles,
that turns adversaries and enemies into brothers and sisters.
Inspire in us to trust in Mary, your mother,
who stood at the foot of your cross with a broken heart,
firm in the faith that you would rise again.*

*May the madness of war cease
and the Earth be cared for and cultivated by those who still
know how to bring forth, protect and love life.
Hear us, Lord of life!*

<https://www.americamagazine.org/vatican-dispatch/2026/04/11/enough-of-war-full-text-of-pope-leos-prayer-for-peace/>

Watch the Vigil for Peace on Vatican Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li2jQstPhbQ

POEMS IN TIMES OF WAR

FOR THOSE WHO LIVED UNDER THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR ANNIHILATION

*Know that some of us did not want this.
Know that some of us
held our children in the nights
and knew they were no different from your children,
their little sleeves all made of wool and cotton.
Know that men were death,
but some were not.*

*Indifference did this. A man
of ash. His madness.*

*We tried. We failed
our time
so vastly.*

*And when it came,
when the sky broke wholly open,
and the fire fell
and the children glanced into the radiance,*

*we hope, we hope
that you blamed us.*

*Because all this time
there was life, and time, and blood in us.
And words, and earth, and burning.
And the final light, the last good scrap
of the truth in us
that could have stood, and rushed
the men who did this,
and Jesus Christ like a flood among the temples
whipped them out with the beautiful rage of God.*

—Joseph Fasano April 8, 2026

• **Joseph Fasano** is a writer and educator
<http://josephfasano.net/>

RUMI SPEAKS OF WAR AND LOVE

The 13th-century Persian poet Rumi, Islamic preacher, and legal scholar, and Iran's most beloved poet addresses warmakers. Amassing riches, seeking power and status, these cowardly leaders harden their hearts to love and beauty. Horror inflicted by the state directs its violence against things that are vital – horticulture, organic growth, creativity, ideas for mutual flourishing. 800 years on, these words still resonate today (read down in columns).

*Man, man, man,
what kind of lightning are you, setting farms on fire?
What kind of cloud are you, raining down stones?*

*What kind of hunter?
Caught in your own trap—
a thief stealing from your own house.*

*You're sixty years old, you're seventy years old,
and you're still uncooked?
Still won't let Love's flames near,
won't let them burn you up?*

JON SWALES POEMS

Following critical acclaim for his poem **Operation Epic Fury// Revelation 4–5, Easter 2026** composed in response President Trump's threat to annihilate Iran, Jon Swales writes on his Facebook page: "Thanks all for the likes and shares. Probably means I can't visit the USA for a while! But seriously we live in dangerous times."

You can read Jon's challenging poem here:

<https://www.cruciformjustice.com/post/operation-epic-fury-revelation-4-5>

Jon wrote the poem below in 2021:

*I pledge my allegiance to the risen Jesus,
And to the kingdom for which he died.
One Church,
Under God.
Apostolic and Catholic,
With love and compassion for all.*

*Renouncing ideologies of hate,
I cling to the King.
Renouncing worldviews of woe,
I cling to the hope found in him.*

*In the presence of the King,
All flags must prostrate fall.
In the presence of the King,
The walls that divide are broken down.
I pledge my allegiance to the risen Jesus,
And to the kingdom for which he died.*

• **Rev'd Jon Swales** is a prophetic theologian and poet who ministers to marginalised and vulnerable adults at Lighthouse, Leeds

LINK:

Cruciform Justice: www.cruciformjustice.com/

*Enthralled by stuff and status,
the crown, the turban, the king's beard—
thorns pricking your hands,*

but where is your flower?

*Gazing in the mirror,
you tilt your hat like a crescent moon—
but where is your light?*

Haleh Liza Gafori: Water (translation of Rumi)

AID WORKER SAYS PEOPLE FEEL 'DEHUMANISED' AS LEBANON BUCKLES UNDER BOMBINGS

Source: Aid to the Church in Need

Nathalie Raffray April 10, 2026

People are feeling "scared, angry and sad" after more than 100 bombs fell across Beirut in a single night shattering any remaining sense of safety for those who remain living in their homes, an aid worker has said.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) launched a massive wave of strikes on Beirut on Wednesday, 8th April, killing at least 254 people and injuring more than 2,000.

Following US president Donald Trump's announcement of a ceasefire with Iran on 7th April, Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu said there is "no ceasefire in Lebanon" and his country would continue "to strike Hezbollah with full force".

Marielle Boutros, project coordinator for Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) who lives and works in eastern Beirut, said people believed they were safe in their own homes when bombs exploded. She said: "Two days ago more than 100 bombs fell over Beirut. It was here and there, not just the south of the capital, it was around the whole city - you could hear the bombs from our office. Some areas were not previously targeted so the people thought that they were safe but actually they were not.

"It was scary, it caused anger, it caused sadness especially when you hear a ceasefire is happening elsewhere. It was really tragic."

A fragile ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel set up in 2024 collapsed on 28th February after an US-Israeli attack on Iran killed its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Since then more than 1,800 people have been killed including around 120 children and a further 6,000 people injured, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Health.

Israeli troops have evacuated large swathes of southern villages as it attempts to seize control of the borders.

On 31st March the Lebanese Army withdrew from Rmeich and Ein Ebel, the two Christian villages in south Lebanon which will now be in Israel's buffer zone.

Ms Boutros said every day brings a mixture of relief and grief. She added: "You feel you are being dehumanised. You go to call your relatives and you are relieved that they are okay, then you have 200 dead and nearly 2,000 injured. You don't feel safe. Some of the victims were in their houses, in a secure and comforting place, and they were bombed. You have to cope with your anxiety, fears and guilt that have developed over the last few years. For me, this is the worst thing - when you are relieved that it's not your family but you have families on the ground dead.

"We have this pressure to continue our daily life because you cannot afford not to because of the economic crisis. We are not fine. We are surviving but in the heart of each one of us we want this nightmare to end in some way."

She said ACN has several projects in Lebanon including support in the south of the country with food parcels and medical support. The charity can get fuel to displaced families living in church centres and also psychological support and trauma healing for children.

She said the charity's school programmes and support for churches was critical: "Right now the schools in South Lebanon are not operating. Some of them are operating online and teachers need to be paid. This is a real emergency. We cannot afford to stop education again. Schools were closed in 2019 and during Covid and then an economic crisis. The school system in Lebanon is very important for the population as it's a strength for Lebanese people. After their graduation they go out of the country to pursue their studies. They cannot afford to close.

"For the Church too, it's very important as it's where catechism takes place. It's a place for missions, for preaching, for transferring Christian values and living those values. These are key elements for society here."

Ms Boutros appealed to people for their prayers. She said: "If people can pray for us - It's becoming impossible day after day but you can feel that prayers are possible. After all, our God is a God who was resurrected. He defeated death. We can rely on such a God."

LINK

Aid to the Church in Need: <https://acnuk.org>

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/54762>

LEBANON: THE REAL WAR & THE WAR OF WORDS

Ian Linden March 30, 2026

"The abuse and manipulation of God's name to justify this and any other war is the gravest sin we can commit at the present time". Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Patriarch of Jerusalem, 17 March 2026.

What do Peter Hegsmith, US Secretary of Defence, Naim Qassem, secretary-General of Hezbollah, and Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israeli Minister of National Security, have in common? They all believe that military force is there to fulfill their version of God's will. Deus Vult, God Wills it. That their use of force does not conform to the laws of war does not seem to bother them. Their own might is always right because it has a divine purpose whether inspired by Christian nationalism, extreme forms of Islamist thinking or Zionist Judaism.

Modern warfare has become an exercise in increasing the distance between those perpetrating the killing and the reality on the ground. 'Collateral damage' sounds like storm damage - to a building. But those words frequently indicate dead and maimed children, women and other non-combatants. Political leaders, military chiefs and nuclear scientists, called 'high value targets', are "taken out", not assassinated. With them often die their wives, children, and friends; it has been reported that Israel calibrates the number deemed acceptable against the estimated importance of each target. 'States have "capabilities": the vast array of technical resources capable of overwhelming an enemy not their capacity to resolve conflict diplomatically. Vague euphemisms, the 'cuttlefish ink' Orwell described in his 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language", are spurted out daily trying to obscure what television news reveals thanks to courageous war correspondents.

At the opposite pole from military euphemism is the word 'terrorist', covering a multitude of sins. The once functional definition of terrorism - violent actions by a sub-state actor to achieve political goals by instilling fear in communities is increasingly inadequate. States themselves can, and do, terrorise their citizens. Iran is an obvious example. Sub-state actors become a part of a government, or at some point take over the State itself. If terrorism simply means violence to achieve political aims there is no moral reason not to accuse brutal States of 'terrorism' Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State under President Bill Clinton 1997-2001 pointed out – at a later date - that the United States has often had "limited success when declaring war against nouns".

Slovenly use of language creates a pernicious loop with what Orwell called 'foolish thoughts' and with what we today call 'spin'. This loop characterises the arsenal of disinformation and propaganda used to quieten citizens' moral concerns about today's wars. Had he not been a "Christian atheist" confronted by totalitarianism, Orwell might have added how misuse of language and poor theology links to 'foolish thoughts' about war and God's will. Christian nationalists are a good example.

Just war theory, both Islamic and Christian, makes the distinction between combatants and non-combatants. But the nature of today's weapons, modern warfare, the relationships within civil society created by Islamist dispensations, or implanted in other religious communities by propagandists, makes distinguishing actual combatants more difficult. Today's war in the Lebanon makes it almost impossible. If a war is God's Will, it seems, the Divine Will overrides moral restraints.

Trump and his circle convince themselves with their own misleading language. Given the information available to his Intelligence agencies, the US Administration's misconception about likely reaction to their attack on Iran is startling. Iran obviously had been long preparing for war and would prove a resolute opponent, drawing in Hezbollah, yet the White House didn't anticipate blocking of the Straits of Hormuz.

Hezbollah's origins lie in the war between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel's 1978 and 1982 invasions of Lebanon targeting refugees and the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) militia. Lebanon had fallen apart into a civil war between ten different religious communities and their militias, segregated along sectarian lines.

Export of its 1979 Islamic revolution was the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran lead by Ayatollah Khomeini. Hezbollah initially saw itself as an integral part of this new dispensation. In 1983 it placed bombs by the US embassy and marine barracks killing 241 Americans. The Ta'if Agreement mediated by Saudi Arabia and brokered by the Arab League, designed to end Lebanon's civil war, was signed in 1989: Hezbollah was recognised as the sole militia responsible for future resistance.

Modelled on Iran, Hezbollah created a multi-layered pyramidal structure for governance: a Majlis Shura al-Qarar, a consultative council of seven primarily clerical members, Sheik Naim Qassem amongst them, elected every three years by a convention of some 250 Hezbollah top cadres. There are executive, political, judicial, jihad/security and the parliamentary work, councils. By 1992 Ayatollah Khomeini, successor to Khomeini, was recommending

Hezbollah adopt a policy of Infitah: participation in Lebanon's elections. They maintain on average ten deputies in Lebanon's parliament and are guaranteed two Government Ministers.

According to Joseph Daher's Hezbollah: The Political Economy of Lebanon's Party of God, Pluto Press 2016, Hezbollah developed organisations for health, education, seminary training, orphans, and emergency aid. Islam compliant loans, zakat tithing, donations and discount cards aided the poor. An extensive education system plus a TV network, radio station and publishing outlets inculcated the principal of Itizam, religious commitment and adherence to strict Islamist practice including the duty of supporting Hezbollah.

Houses were rebuilt after bombing raids honouring the slogan 'reconstruction, resistance and rebirth'. Disciplined lives became prosperous lives; a Shi'a middle class grew. The vision was a pure society uncorrupted by the West, an Islamic milieu, hala islamiyya, a 'resistance society' against the Zionist enemy. The provision of public services and charitable outreach, a 'combination of consent and coercion', in Daher's words, encouraged Lebanese Shi'a acceptance of Hezbollah's authority.

Southern Lebanon, predominantly Shi'a, dotted with small towns with some ancient Christian villages, now under Israeli attack, has an agricultural economy. Its people are farmers plus well-off entrepreneurs, landowners and Hezbollah local government officials. There are possibly 60,000 fighters including part-time reservists and a UN peacekeeping force reduced to 7,500 mandated to secure a buffer zone south of the Litani river. A significant Shi'a community lives in the more mixed northern Beqaa Valley.

It is easy, especially in war time, to interpret attempts to understand a party to a conflict as support for that party. Support is clearly not the intention of Daher's Hezbollah. Nor is it mine. But for several reasons, including future negotiations, ignorance is not bliss as the Middle East today demonstrates.

With its armed wing, trained by the Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah poses an intractable problem for Lebanon's army and government. Its rocket attacks provide Israel with their perennial justification for prolonged invasions of Lebanon and the bombing of "Hezbollah strongholds". Over one million people, 18% of Lebanon's population, have had to abandon their homes as the invading Israeli Defence Force (IDF) pushes further into the South again. In Dahieh, a densely populated southern suburb of Beirut, controlled by Hezbollah residents cannot easily be sorted into combatants and non-combatants. Bombs hit buildings which collapse burying people under rubble in Dahieh as in Gaza. The death toll is already above 1,000, 10% children.

An infinite gulf exists between the Will of a loving, merciful and compassionate God and the will to power that States, and non-state actors, exert in war. It cannot be bridged - least of all by euphemistic language, ignorance and disinformation. On his right biceps, Peter Hegseth has a Deus Vult tattoo. A chant from the First Crusade, it marks the clear and present danger of Christian Nationalism.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/lebanon-the-real-war-the-war-of-words>

• 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.

WORLD WEEK OF PRAYER FOR PEACE IN SUDAN 17 TO 24 APRIL

Following last year's World Day of Prayer for Peace in Sudan, Pax Christi International renews its commitment to peace and justice by inviting communities worldwide to take part in the World Week of Prayer for Peace in Sudan, from 17 to 24 April.

Sudan is currently facing one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world: millions of people are displaced, nearly 21 million are experiencing acute food insecurity, and healthcare and education systems have largely collapsed. Women and children are among the most affected, and access to aid remains extremely limited.



Our initiative aims to raise awareness through prayers and thematic projects, encouraging communities around the world to engage in creative and participatory processes. Now more than ever, we want to ensure that Sudan is not left behind! To accompany the week, we have prepared a booklet with activities, as well as moments for reflection and prayer. To read and download it, click here: <https://paxchristi.net/world-week-of-prayer-for-peace-in-sudan/>

LIFE BEFORE DEBT: IN CONVERSATION WITH ZAMBIAN DEBT AND CLIMATE ACTIVIST PRECIOUS KALOMBWANA - MANCHESTER, LONDON AND ONLINE 21 and 23 APRIL

The debt crisis is combining with the climate emergency to push Zambian communities into poverty.

Precious Kalombwana has been raising her voice for change, sometimes at her own risk. Come and hear her story, and her challenge. Together we'll dig into the root causes of debt, explore how it is trapping millions of people in poverty, and how we can be part of changing the status quo.

MANCHESTER 21 APRIL

Precious will be joined by **Wiz Baines**, Campaign Manager at Debt Justice and **Linda Walker** from the Greater Manchester Climate Justice Coalition.

Address: Upper Hall, Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS

Time: 19:00 BST (*Doors open from 18:45*)

RSVP to join in Manchester: <https://act.debtjustice.org.uk/life-debt-conversation-event-manchester>

You can submit questions in advance by emailing info@debtjustice.org.uk

This event is held in collaboration with Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA), CAFOD, Christian Aid and Greater Manchester Climate Justice Coalition.

23 APRIL 2026 In person (LONDON) and via live broadcast

Precious will be joined by **Jennifer Larbie**, **Christian Aid's UK Influencing Lead** and author of **Between Life and Debt** with **Director of Debt Justice, Heidi Chow** chairing the conversation.

Address: St. Johns Church Waterloo, LONDON, SE1 8TY

Time: 18:30 BST (*Doors open 18:15*)

RSVP to join online or in person in London: [https://act.debtjustice.org.uk/life-debt-conversation-precious-](https://act.debtjustice.org.uk/life-debt-conversation-precious-kalombwana)

[kalombwana](https://act.debtjustice.org.uk/life-debt-conversation-precious-kalombwana)

<https://debtjustice.org.uk/events/event-resisting-the-debt-and-climate-crisis>

HEALING FROM CONFLICT JOINT PEACE CONFERENCE 24-26 APRIL 2026 Kents Hill Park, Milton Keynes

This ecumenical conference with Pax Christi, FoR, CHIPS, APF and Church and Peace invites speakers and participants to explore the question of how individuals and communities truly heal after conflict to pave the way for peace, justice and hope. Over a weekend of learning, reflection, and connection, we will consider how genuine healing can pave the way for communities to flourish in peace, justice, and hope.

The programme will include keynote talks, panel discussions, practical workshops, and creative sessions, alongside dedicated space to meet others who share a passion for peacemaking. Together, we will draw on experience, wisdom, and imagination to explore pathways toward healing and renewed community life. It will include prayer and worship, yet we warmly welcome participants and speakers of all faiths and beliefs. Live interpretation will be provided between French, English and German for the main sessions. Speakers to be announced soon!

For more information and to book your place <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/jointpeaceconference/1973949>

Full weekend individual room: £230. Day tickets are available from between £25 and £90.

Please get in touch with Aisling at education@paxchristi.org.uk if you would like to know more about the possibility of a subsidised place.

CHESTER SUSTAINABILITY FORUM EVENT RELATING TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NATURE CRISIS

THE PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY BRIEFING - UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER SCREENING, WEDNESDAY 29 APRIL, 5.30-7pm

In November 2025, the National Emergency Briefing brought together leading experts to present the latest evidence on the climate and nature crisis to politicians and other influential people in Westminster. That evidence is now on the public record. A film of that event, **The People's Emergency Briefing** is being shown in community venues nationwide, to allow the public to hear the same evidence and galvanise political action.

You can find out more about both the National Emergency Briefing here: <https://www.nebriefing.org/>

A screening of The People's Emergency Briefing film will take place at the University of Chester School of Education [on the Exton Park Campus, Parkgate Road] on Wednesday 29th April. The 45-minute film will be followed by a panel discussion focused on how our local community might respond. Please share this with your networks, so we can ensure a good turnout and lively discussion.

The event is free to attend but will be ticketed. Please book your place here:

<https://buytickets.at/sustainabilityenvironmentrkei/2123472>

COLUMBAN SCHOOLS' MEDIA COMPETITION 2026 WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Winners have been announced in the media competition organised by Columban missionaries for young people in Britain and Ireland, on the subject, "Becoming a refugee is never a choice, but how we respond is." It is a quote from the United Nations Secretary General-Secretary, António Guterres, who is a Catholic.

The annual competition attracted a record 349 entries across Britain and Ireland, the highest number in the nine years the Columbans have run a schools' competition. Young people 13-18 years were asked to produce a piece of writing, prose or poetry, or image that explored perceptions of people seeking sanctuary, considering practical examples of welcome and solidarity.

Entries from 31 schools in England, Wales and Scotland were judged by media experts who praised the high quality of all the entries shortlisted: Ruth Gledhill of The Tablet was a judge. The panel also included a group of 14 people with lived experiences of migration, from Hope Garden in Birmingham. They "admired the talent of the young people and their understanding of the topic".

Every entry was positive about the Church's stance of "welcoming the stranger" despite recent threats and animosity against people seeking sanctuary in Britain and Ireland.

In Britain, winners' names have been anonymised amid the tensions.

James Trewby, coordinator of the Columban Justice, Peace and Ecology Team and a competition organiser in Britain, said, "It is a testament to the courage and commitment of the schools that they are willing to stand up and witness to living out Catholic Social Teaching." He was "very impressed" by the quality of the entries.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/refugees-admire-talent-and-understanding-of-the-topic-of-young-competition-winners/>

See also: <https://www.columbancompetition.com/>

WRITING – Winning Article

'Blessed are the Meek' by A. (18) St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School and Sixth Form, Birmingham

The winner says: "The theme of this competition was not only about refugees, but it was about us, and I hope we can soon create a world in which everyone is treated with the dignity they deserve. Great things will come from people doing what they truly enjoy, as I have done in writing this piece."

No one plans to become a refugee. No child dreams of crossing borders in the dark, carrying only a schoolbag filled with documents instead of books. No parent chooses to leave behind the house they built, the neighbours they loved, or the language that shaped their childhood. To become a refugee is not an ambition, a lifestyle, nor a preference. It is the consequence of danger so great that staying becomes impossible. And yet, whilst those forced to flee have no choice, we - those who receive them - do. Our response is the part of the story that is still in our hands.

Across Britain and Ireland, public debate often reduces refugees to statistics or headlines. However, behind every statistic, there is a person whose life has been disrupted. As of late 2022, over 43 million children were estimated to be forcibly displaced, including those displaced by conflict and violence (UNICEF).

It is too easy to throw around statistics; to actually envision one of these children, who has enjoyed the thrill of playing football in a courtyard or who has fought with their sibling over who would get the last biscuit is to truly stand in solidarity. Catholic Social Teaching asks that we do exactly this: to picture the child and not the statistic. This principle of human dignity taught to us by St. Catherine of Siena tells us to see the refugee as someone who has been made 'Imago Dei' and therefore deserves safety, respect, and hope.

My own understanding of this did not come from personal displacement, but from the environment I grew up in. As a white boy in a primary school where most of my classmates were from Middle Eastern or African backgrounds, I was, unusually, in the minority. Many of my friends had parents or grandparents who had fled conflict in Pakistan, Syria, or Afghanistan. One family I knew had left Iran after political unrest made it unsafe to stay.

At the time, I did not understand the profundity of their stories. To me, they were just the guys I played cricket with and exchanged snacks with, sat next to in lessons. Now I look back and realise that their presence shaped my sense of community long before words could describe it.

Growing up in that environment taught me something hugely important: refugees are not "others." They are classmates, neighbours, and friends. Their cultures, languages, and histories were part of the very fabric with which I grew up. So, when I think I hear those debates currently, and I think I hear refugees portrayed as enemies or strangers, I think of the people I grew up with, the people who lived the story of resilience, of hope, and of safety.

"Welcome the stranger," is a moral imperative grounded in Scripture itself: "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). This moral imperative needs to be taken up with solidarity, as reminded by Pope Leo XIV in 2025, who noted that "our unity will then value each person's history, as well as the social and religious culture of every people," combating, as it does, the fear of the stranger as outside threat and embracing diversity as blessing in itself.

Across Britain and Ireland, there are countless examples of ordinary people choosing compassion. Parish halls converted into warm spaces for asylum seekers. Schools organising uniform drives for newly arrived pupils. Community sponsorship groups preparing homes for families they have never met. These acts may seem small, but they form a culture of encounter - one in which strangers become neighbours.

Still, our response is not always generous. Public discourse can be shaped by suspicion, misinformation, or political rhetoric. Some argue that offering sanctuary is a burden. Yet Catholic Social Teaching reminds us of the common good: the idea that society flourishes when the most vulnerable are protected. Refugees are not drains on our communities; they are contributors. Many become nurses, engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs. Their resilience is not only personal: it strengthens the places where they settle.

Moreover, the Church teaches the principle of preferential option for the poor, urging us to prioritise those in greatest need. Refugees, who have lost homes, livelihoods, and often family members, are among the most vulnerable people in the world. To turn them away is not neutrality; it is a choice that contradicts the Gospel. Many tend to even preach religion in countries such as the US, however many of us forget that Jesus himself was a refugee from areas within modern-day Palestine, as well as most of the Israelites being refugees escaping slavery and persecution from Egypt in Exodus.

The question, then, is not whether refugees deserve help: they do. The question is what kind of people we choose to be. Do we construct walls of indifference or bridges of compassion? Do we allow our policies and our approach to be dictated by our fears, or our loves?

To be a refugee is not one's choice. To be empathetic is. Responding with justice is. Responding with welcome is. And these choices define not only the lives of those who seek sanctuary, but the moral character of the societies they enter.

In the end, the theme of this competition is not only about refugees. It is about us. It is about whether we believe that every person, regardless of birthplace or circumstance, carries an unchanging dignity, as Pope Leo XIV said, a dignity that remains whether we are "living in our native land or in a foreign country." It is about whether our communities of faith will choose to embody the love we profess.

Refugees do not choose their journeys. But we can choose to walk beside them. And in doing so, we may discover that welcoming the stranger does not diminish us, but it transforms us.

WRITING – 2nd Place Article

'Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is' by A. (18) St David's Catholic College, Cardiff

Student A. says: "I'm honoured to have taken part in a competition that emphasises such an important issue. Becoming a refugee is never a choice, and in my entry I hoped to share the importance of how empathy and solidarity guide the way we respond."

Becoming a refugee is never a choice. No one wakes up and decides to leave everything they know behind. No one dreams of becoming a refugee in an unknown country where all feels strange. But when any hope of a future is disappearing, leaving is the only choice to survive. I am aware of this, as my family and I experienced it first-hand.

I was twelve years old when I moved to the UK. I did not want to leave my country. I was forced to flee due to the violence from the gangs in El Salvador that made every day feel unsafe. You could feel violence in the air; it was not something you only see on the news. As a result, we learned to stay quiet, walk faster and avoid eye contact. Entire neighbourhoods were controlled by gangs, people disappeared, and children were influenced to join by being threatened if they refused.

I left everything that was once familiar to me. My family, my friends, the streets that watched me grow and a sense of belonging without even trying. I remember seeing my mother packing the little we could carry. At that age, I had to understand that the place I called 'home' was becoming unsafe. I did not speak English. Suddenly, I abandoned the language that once allowed me to express myself freely. I was surrounded by voices I could not understand and unfamiliar faces. There were times I felt invisible and like I didn't belong anywhere. My voice became smaller, and staying quiet was easier. In that silence, it became clear to me how much I had left in my country.

Although my story is personal, unfortunately, it is common for many people to experience it. In 2025, the UN Refugee Agency stated that 117 million people were forced to leave their home country because of persecution, war, violence or conflicts. Behind that number are stories like mine, where families leave because they have no other choice. Refugees are not people who happily plan their journey; they are people who fear returning to an unsafe country and are entitled to protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

While becoming a refugee is not a choice, how we respond is. Catholic Social Teaching teaches us different principles, such as dignity. All human beings have dignity, for each person is made in the image and likeness of God. Dignity does not depend on someone's nationality, language or qualifications, and it does not disappear when a person becomes a refugee.

Arriving in a new country made me feel lost. But every act of compassion from people made me feel seen. I realised that how we respond is a choice. Those who patiently helped me learn English, those who included me even when I struggled to understand, and those who welcomed me made a foreign place feel like home again. All their actions restored my confidence and reminded me of my worth.

There is also the principle of solidarity, recognising that we belong to each other. Solidarity requires us to see each other as brothers and sisters rather than strangers. The preferential option for the poor reminds us that God's love is universal, and the common good teaches that the gifts of creation belong to everyone and no one should be excluded from them.

Over time, I learned English, I made friends and adapted to a new country. Even though it was different, I still hold onto my own culture. Now I carry two worlds within me: the warmth and the roots of El Salvador and the opportunities and safety of the UK. My story is no longer about leaving; it is about starting a new life. Although El Salvador has undergone positive change, I have integrated into this country. Integration isn't instantaneous. It requires effort from the person arriving and the welcoming community receiving them. When this works, it strengthens society.

Looking back at this experience, I've learned that my story carries a meaningful message to others. Becoming a refugee was not my choice. I did not choose violence, nor fear, nor to struggle with a new language. But people around me chose how they responded. Some chose kindness. Some chose patience. Some chose to see my potential rather than my difference. As a society, we face that same choice every day. We can respond with empathy, respect and compassion. Each small act of understanding can restore a part of humanity.

I never chose to become a refugee. But I choose how to respond, by studying hard, helping others and using my voice to remind people that we are not problems to be solved but we are people with stories, dreams and dignity. The journey from El Salvador to the UK has taught me that hope is stronger than fear and that the response to suffering is always love.

WRITING – 3RD Place Article

A Light in the Dark by J. (15) Holy Trinity Academy, Telford, Shropshire

J. says: "My article is not a true story but inspired of what is happening around the world."

One crisp autumn morning, the people of St. George's Church faced a challenge unlike any they'd encountered before. A group of refugees had arrived in town. They'd fled war, violence, and persecution, crossing seas, deserts, and dangerous borders in search of a safe place to call home. Many were traumatised, their lives torn apart by conflict, and they arrived in Britain with only the clothes on their backs and stories of heartache that no one should have to bear.

At first, the locals were unsure how to respond. The world outside had become increasingly divided, and fear and uncertainty surrounded the influx of refugees. People in the town whispered among themselves, asking how they could help and wondering if they'd enough resources to provide for these strangers.

But one Sunday, Father Michael stood before his congregation, feeling compelled to speak about the call they had as a community of faith, to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable with love, generosity, and dignity.

"Brothers and sisters," he began, his voice steady but filled with emotion: "We are a people of faith. We follow Christ, who called us to love our neighbour as ourselves. And when we see someone in need, we are called to reach out, to offer not just charity, but our friendship, our solidarity, and our hearts."

He paused, as his words settled. The congregation looked back at him, unsure of how they could live up to such a call. But Father Michael knew that love wasn't just a feeling it was an action.

Father Michael read from Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus says, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." (Matthew 25:35). "We're called not just to welcome the stranger," he said, "but to see the face of Christ in each person we meet. These refugees are not 'them'-they are our brothers and sisters in need. And our response will show the world what it means to be a community of faith."

Inspired by these words, the people of St. George's Church knew they couldn't sit idly by. They had to act. They also knew that their faith was the foundation of their response, and it was through their shared values of love, solidarity, and hospitality that they could begin to make a difference.

The church became a beacon of hope in the town. The parishioners gathered after Mass to discuss what they could do to help. "We may be a small group," said Rachel, a schoolteacher who had been volunteering at the local food bank, "but we have hands, hearts, and a faith that calls us to act. Let's start by opening our doors."

The idea resonated with everyone. The church hall, usually used for community events and tea gatherings, would now become a place of refuge and sanctuary. They began collecting food, clothing, and donations for the refugees, but more than that, they committed to offering their time and companionship. The church became not just a place for material help, but a place where stories could be shared, where pain could be expressed, and where hope could be reborn.

Over the next few weeks, the town began to change. Refugees from across the town and nearby areas started to visit the church, finding more than just charity - they found a community that was willing to listen, to help them navigate their new lives in Britain, and to let them know they were not alone.

In the church, an unexpected bond began to form between the long-time residents and the newcomers. Though the refugees spoke different languages and came from distant places, they shared something fundamental with the people of the town-a desire for safety, dignity, and belonging.

Among the newcomers was Amina, a mother of three who had fled Syria with her children after her husband was killed in the war. She had arrived in Britain with little more than a small suitcase, but she found comfort in the warm embrace of the parishioners, who welcomed her into their midst. The first time Amina walked into the church, she was overwhelmed by the kindness of the people.

Amina wasn't the only one who found solace in the church. The community rallied around her and others like her. They helped Amina's children enrol in school, and the women of the village taught her how to cook traditional British dishes. As she learned the language and adjusted to her new life, Amina also began to share her own culture with the others, inviting the parishioners into her home for dinner, telling stories of her homeland, and offering a window into the world she had left behind.

Over time, the refugees who'd arrived as strangers became part of the fabric of the town. They found work, built friendships, and most importantly, began to heal. The town transformed, not just through the material help it offered, but through the powerful, transformative act of seeing each other as equals, as human beings worthy of dignity and respect.

One cold winter evening, Father Michael stood before his congregation once again. The church was filled with people, both locals and refugees, who'd come together to celebrate Mass. As the congregation knelt in prayer, Father Michael looked around at the faces before him-people of every background, every story, and every journey. And in that moment, he realised that the true gift they had given one another wasn't just safety or comfort. It was the gift of belonging.

"When we welcome the stranger," Father's homily started, "we're not just opening our doors. We're opening our hearts, our communities, and our very souls to God's love."

In that quiet town in Britain, the people had not only welcomed refugees - they had shown the world what it truly meant to love, to live out the Gospel, and to respond with compassion. And in doing so, they had created a light that shone in the dark, a beacon of hope that would continue to guide those who sought refuge for generations to come.

WINNING IMAGES – COLUMBAN SCHOOLS’ COMPETITION 2026

1st PLACE

Between Borders

By G. The Holy Cross School, New Malden

A young refugee gazes beyond a border, with flags reflected in raindrops on the window and distant memories of home in her eyes, symbolising how, after the storm, we can offer hope so refugees never forget where they come from.

G. says: “I used watercolour to represent a young refugee who is running away from War. Feelings of hope and melancholy flood her as she travels from place to place, never experiencing that true feeling of home again.

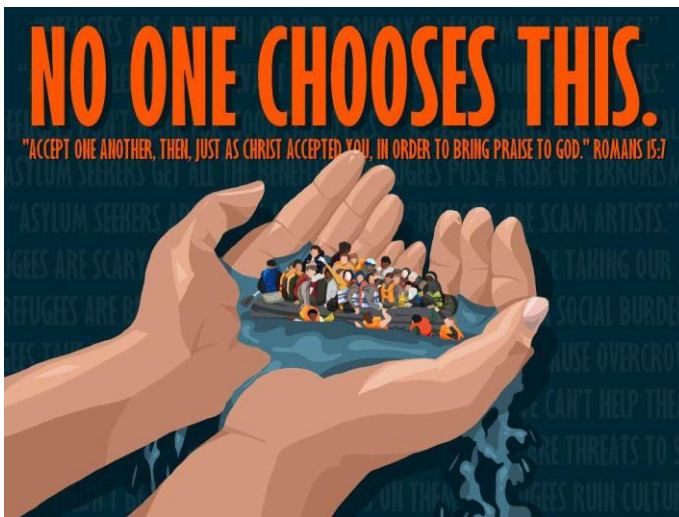
However, after the storm, we can offer hope so refugees never forget where they came from.”



2nd PLACE

In Your Hands

By K. Sacred Heart of Mary Girls' School, Upminster



The image shows a boat of refugees in rough waters representing the thousands of refugees who arrive on small boats in the UK cupped in a pair of hands. These hands represent us and how their new life and comfort depends on our actions. Faintly in the background appear quotes of stereotypes about refugees, but instead of believing these stereotypes we should be welcoming and hospitable towards them because, as stated in the image, no one chooses this. The bible verse Romans 15:7 perfectly encapsulates our moral duty as Christians to accept and support refugees.

K. says: “In my piece, I wanted to display the struggles and hardships refugees have to go through to achieve a better life. Knowing this, we have the responsibility to accept them and ignore the stigma that often surrounds them.”

3rd PLACE

Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is.

By J. Loreto Grammar School, Altrincham

Figure representing refugees filled with the word 'Refugee' in many languages including the languages of countries in conflict.

They are being held back by the outcomes of war and violence however, hands representing help and acceptance is freeing them allowing them to reach hope.

J. says: "I wrote the word refugee in different languages in my piece to highlight that refugees can come from anywhere and we shouldn't treat them as one single group."



REFUGEE WEEK 2026 15–21 JUNE

Refugee Week is the world's largest arts and culture festival celebrating the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. Refugee Week 2026 marks 75 years since the Refugee Convention – a landmark agreement affirming that those forced to flee deserve protection, dignity, and hope. Established in the UK in 1998, Refugee Week takes place every year around World Refugee Day (20th June) and has since grown into a global movement with over 2 million participants, across over 20 countries. Through an exciting programme of thousands of events, activities and media campaigns, Refugee Week brings together people from different backgrounds to connect beyond labels, and foster a deeper understanding of why people are displaced, and the challenges they face when seeking safety. By providing a platform for people who have sought sanctuary to share their experiences, perspectives and creative work on their own terms, our vision is for refugees and asylum seekers to be able to live safely within inclusive and resilient communities, where they can continue to make a valuable contribution.

At a time when some seek to divide and blame, Refugee Week 2026 calls us to come together and share the courage to welcome, to stand for what we believe in, and to celebrate culture and community – to be joyful, imagine new possibilities, dream, heal, and connect.

This year's theme is Courage. The word *courage* comes from the Latin *cor*, meaning "heart." For refugees around the world, courage is often a daily necessity. It is the courage to face unknown journeys, learn new languages, navigate unfamiliar systems, or simply to wake up each morning and step into an uncertain world. <https://refugeeweek.org/theme-refugee-week-2026-courage/>

Courage isn't always loud or bold. It can be found in simple acts: <https://refugeeweek.org/simple-acts/> opening your door to a neighbour, trying new food, reading a book, or watching a film that changes your view of the world. It can be speaking up, asking for help, sharing your story – or simply having the courage to be yourself. Through art, stories, and community, we celebrate the courage that lives within us all – and how connection helps it grow.

Refugee Week events and activities are all shapes and sizes and take place in all sorts of spaces. Nothing is too big or too small. Every year there's everything from city-wide festivals to group walks, exhibitions, film screenings, museum tours, football tournaments, public talks, activities in schools and so much more! Learn how to take part here: <https://refugeeweek.org/take-part/> LINK <https://refugeeweek.org/>

ONLINE STUDY SERIES FROM SABEL-KAIROS: SEEKING A JUST PEACE FOR PALESTINE

Kairos II: A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide Online study series with Sabeel-Kairos UK

We will be using the study guide recently released by Christian organisations in the US - The Palestine Justice Network (PJN) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), with United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR), and Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA) to unpack the message of the Kairos II document and how it can inform us in our advocacy work as we campaign for justice and peace for Palestinians.

On March 29 we heard from Rifat Kassis about the importance of the Kairos II document and its call to the international church to take action for Palestinians human rights. Our second online study on Sunday 12 April at 4pm looks at themes of Genocide, Colonization and Ethnic Cleansing.

We recorded Week One so if you wanted to watch it to catch up please email Claire advocacy@sabeel-kairos.org.uk and she can send you the link for the recording.

Dates for the series: Sundays at 4pm – April 12, 26, May 10, 31

To register go to:

https://us06web.zoom.us/join/register/7Ci8e38LR9Kq1mjVL5fS3A?fbclid=IwY2xjawRG9TlleHRuA2FlbQlXMAByZcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzIxNzgzMjAwODkyAAEeWt7HOKMEtnL14ODMH-prJFYV8A9v6YDLHShaQ6E-MPhuHOWZ744Ki7gWRDs_aem_lT6atM-zrmiOsNLjpcJRQ#/registration

WORLD CURLEW DAY ART AND POETRY COMPETITIONS

Open to all ages and abilities, we love to receive entries from anyone who finds Curlews an inspiration. Please send all entries in as a PDF, JPEG or PNG file.

Categories: Art and Poetry

Three age groups: Primary School, Senior School and 18+

Deadline for entries: 17 April

Submit entries to flo@curlewaction.org

18 World Curlew Day – a range of events from 17-25 April.

Find out more at: <https://nidderdale-nl.org.uk/world-curlew-day-2026/>



CARDINAL HOLLERICH: SYNOD REPORT ON WOMEN AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD

Source: Vatican Media April 10, 2026

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, Archbishop of Luxembourg and General Relator for the Synod on Synodality, has described the Synod report on women's participation as an important step forward, while stressing that any future development in ordained ministry requires broad ecclesial consensus. The report, produced by Study Group No 5 on 'Women's participation in the life and leadership of the Church,' was recently issued by the General Secretariat of the Synod as part of the post-synodal reflection process.

Speaking recently at the University of Bonn, Hollerich was quoted as saying: "I cannot imagine, in the long term, how a Church can survive, if half of the People of God suffer because they have no access to ordained ministry."

In an interview with Vatican News, the Cardinal clarified that this remark referred specifically to discussion on the possible ordination of women as deacons and to a long-term perspective. He expressed his belief that such questions require a broad consensus across the Church to avoid division. He pointed to tensions within the Anglican Communion as an example of how disputes over ministry can lead to fragmentation.

Communion in the Catholic Church, he noted, is profound, making unilateral decisions particularly difficult, repeating that the issue in question "is about deacons' ordination and the action is long-term."

Cardinal Hollerich described the report of Study Group No 5, established by Pope Francis, as a significant development: "It is a big step," he said. He added that "It is so important that women feel that they are welcome in the church, not just for filling up the benches in the church, but to fully participate in the life of the Church, to fully participate in the mission of the Church."

The Cardinal affirmed that the discussion remains open and that the identification of issues itself is an important part of the synodal process. He said Pope Francis and Pope Leo are "showing the way to do it" and pointed to recent appointments of women to senior positions in the Roman Curia by both pontiffs as evidence of gradual change. He also highlighted developments in his own archdiocese, where, he said, women serve as episcopal delegates responsible for key pastoral areas, including social ministry and formation, as well as in teams accompanying seminarians.

Cardinal Hollerich said that while different pastoral approaches may exist in local churches, particularly in non-ordained ministries, any developments must remain in communion with the universal Church. "It should always be done in dialogue with the Bishop of Rome, who is in charge of unity, and it should be well thought out. It should not be rushed just for doing it," he said. And he acknowledged the fact that there can be "different speeds in the local churches, because it's part of the culture and the place women have in that culture."

He distinguished this from ordained ministry, which he said requires universal consensus to avoid division.

Finally, he said, "I feel that, not just women who have studied theology, but when I am with young people, I can feel that many of the girls of our youth are sad because they feel that they are not completely recognised by the Church."

"And that," he concluded, "makes me sad as a pastor."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/54766>

HOLY THURSDAY PAPAL MASS, ROME

Tina Beattie April 3, 2026

This made me so sad. I started to watch the Holy Thursday Papal Mass from St John Lateran in Rome, but as the cameras panned over those unending ranks of men with not a woman in sight - men who seem neither to know nor care that their sisters are missing - I thought of that beautiful Installation service of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Without women, there would be no incarnation, no first miracle, no witness to the resurrection. Two pregnant women were the first to interpret the meaning of the incarnation. Christ trusted the Samaritan woman and Mary of Magdala to be the first preachers. The men laughed at the news the women brought them from the tomb.

It would breach no doctrine, no canon law, no church teaching, to make women fully and equally visible in those grand church processions, but I really don't think they care. And as long as men of power and war and violent masculinity see the optics of a church of men that claims divine authority over women's bodies while excluding women's bodies from visibility and sacramentality, their savage cults will persist. All the anti-war rhetoric, all the eloquent social teaching, mean nothing when the optics from Rome say this is a church of men, for men. The Gospels tell a different truth, hidden in plain sight, but they have no eyes to see nor ears to hear.

• **Tina Beattie** is Professor Emerita of Catholic Studies at the University of Roehampton in London, now working independently as a researcher and writer.

CATHOLIC LEADERS AND ORGANISATIONS CALL TO PROTECT PALESTINIAN LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION

On March 30 2026, the Israeli Knesset voted to expand the use of the death penalty, specifically in occupied Palestinian territories. In response, Catholic leaders and authorised representatives of Catholic organisations endorsed this call from Catholic leaders and organisations to express strong moral opposition to the legislation and call for immediate action to protect Palestinian life, uphold human dignity, ensure respect for international law and accountability. Follow the link below for the press release and full list of signatories:

<https://paxchristi.net/catholic-leaders-and-organisations-death-penalty-bill-palestine/>

DIARY

APRIL

9 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 2-4 pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 janharper20211@outlook.com

17-24 World Week of Prayer for Peace in Sudan <https://paxchristi.net/world-week-of-prayer-for-peace-in-sudan/>

17 Deadline for World Curlew Day Art and Poetry Competition – see page 14

18 World Curlew Day – events from 17-25 April <https://nidderdale-nl.org.uk/world-curlew-day-2026/>

21 Manchester Life Before Debt: in Conversation with Zambian Debt and Climate Activist Precious Kalombwana Upper Hall, Friends' Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS 19:00 BST (*Doors open from 18:45*) RSVP to join in Manchester: <https://act.debtjustice.org.uk/life-debt-conversation-event-manchester> – see page 8

23 London and Online Life Before Debt: in Conversation with Zambian Debt and Climate Activist Precious Kalombwana St. Johns Church Waterloo SE1 8TY 18:30 BST (*Doors open 18:15*) RSVP to join online or in person in London: <https://act.debtjustice.org.uk/life-debt-conversation-precious-kalombwana> – see page 8

24-26 Healing From Conflict Joint Peace Conference Kents Hill Park, Milton Keynes. For more information and to book your place <https://www.tickettailor.com/events/jointpeaceconference/1973949> – see page 8

25 NJPN Day in Sheffield 'Shining the light on Food and the Environment' admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

29 Chester Sustainability Forum Event relating to Climate Change and the Nature Crisis 'The People's Emergency Briefing' - University of Chester Screening, University of Chester School of Education [on the Exton Park Campus, Parkgate Road] 5.30-7pm The event is free to attend but will be ticketed. **Please book your place here:** <https://buytickets.at/sustainabilityenvironmentrkei/2123472> – see page 8

MAY

1-3/4 Craft Weekend Boarbank Hall, Grange-over-sands, Cumbria. For more information or booking, email margaret@boarbankhall.org.uk. Website: www.boarbankhall.org.uk

9-14/16 Two Wings and Some Prayers Boarbank Hall, Grange-over-sands, Cumbria (see above for info)

10-16 Christian Aid Week <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

11 Curlew Conversations Free online event 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm. Presentations from two conservationists followed by Q&A <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/curlew-conversations-conservation-tickets-1986157075278>

14 Merseyside Pax Christi meeting 2-4 pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 janharper20211@outlook.com

16 NJPN 'Shining the light in an All Night Vigil' online. Contact: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

JUNE

15 Nature-Friendly Farming Free online event with Martin Lines (Farmer and CEO of the Nature Friendly Farming Network) 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm. Talk + Q&A. Get tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/nature-friendly-farming-tickets-1986764341628>

15-21 Refugee Week 2026 <https://refugeeweek.org/theme-refugee-week-2026-courage/> – see page 14

20 World Refugee Day <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/get-involved/take-action/world-refugee-day>

JULY

24-26th 'Just Talk' NJPN Conference at Swanwick NB Bookings after May 15th incur booking surcharge <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/> – see page 17 below

- 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 SPRING issue of *MOUTHPEACE* the quarterly online newsletter for Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/njpn-north-west/spring-mouthpeace-2026/>

- See also 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 article

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

JULY 24 -26 JUST TALK 48TH ANNUAL NJPN CONFERENCE at The Hayes Conference Centre Swanwick Derbyshire DE55 1AU

Words do matter, the language we use reflects our attitude and our ignorance. With negative language around racism, refugees, asylum seekers and many 'others', reinforcing stereotypes, what do we hear and to whom do we listen? Who decides what makes the headlines as media platforms seek to influence opinion and behaviour?

Our 2024 conference considered what would a 'Just Politics' look like and how might this be achieved. We were challenged to work for change in our society, building relationships within and across communities, empowering groups and individuals to engage with the political process, highlighting our hopes, dreams and needs, in line with Catholic Social Teaching.

In 2025 we were reminded that a 'Just Peace' demands more than the absence of war; it insists on justice, dignity, and inclusion for all and, as people of faith, we were offered an alternative model, built through deep listening, courageous dialogue and collective action rooted in love, committing to a radical hope that serves the common good.

A constant thread running throughout these conferences was that we grow as individuals and communities only through the kinds of relationships that we build with each other and our world. We were asked to listen deeply, to respond, to disagree respectfully, to engage in difficult conversations and were challenged to create a culture of encounter.

Conference 2026 'Just Talk' will focus on dialogue and relationship building, initiating these difficult conversations and how they can be used to build up justice, peace and human dignity, rather than to dehumanise and divide, inflame tensions and stoke conflict. In a world of disinformation, sound bites and echo chambers, the conference will explore how we promote genuine communication and encounter through areas such as the media, arts, education, diplomacy and political engagement led always by the Spirit of Truth.

In celebrating 60 years of *Nostra Aetate* Pope Leo XIV said the document "opened our eyes to a simple yet profound principle: dialogue is not a tactic or a tool, but it's a way of life – a journey of the heart that transforms everyone involved, the one who listens and the one who speaks." (*Walking Together in Hope*: 28 October 2025)

Anne Peacey Chair NJPN (taken from NJPN Spring Newsletter)

Read the Spring Newsletter: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/newsletters/spring-2026-njpn-newsletter/>

Bookings for the Conference:

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference-2026/njpn-2026-conference-booking-details/>

NB Bookings made after Friday May 15th incur a £20 late booking charge

