

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin June 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

REFLECTION ON THE KILLING OF HENRY NOWAK

Colette Joyce June 3, 2026

Watching the footage of the final moments of dying student Henry Nowak has impacted me in a way that I probably last experienced following the murder of George Floyd. I have the same overwhelming feeling of sadness and horror. The same feeling of betrayal because of the involvement of police officers who are meant to be the people who keep us safe. Once again, I'm drawn to deeper reflection on the interplay between institutional and personal sin.

On this occasion the police are not responsible for the death. Henry's wounds were internal and the judgement of medical professionals is that there was nothing the police could have done to save his life at that point.

The betrayal instead focuses on why they chose to believe his murderer, who stayed around to watch, rather than the young man telling them multiple times that he had been stabbed and couldn't breathe. The answer appears to be that the assailant made an accusation of racial assault - a lie that was quickly exposed - but led to Henry's arrest and handcuffing, making his final moments a humiliation in a way that is as distressing to witness as a white police officer with his knee on a black man's neck.

The whole case reminds me, in some respects, of Carl Beech, the man who fabricated allegations about a VIP child abuse ring in 2019. For years campaigners had argued - correctly - that what abuse victims most need is to be believed. This led to nationwide training in every professional field that reversed years of accepting the word of the powerful over the powerless. Then along comes someone who exploits this for his own messed up reasons. Religion would call it sin. The temptation to use others' striving after righteousness as a means to bring them down. Not every accuser can be presumed to be truthful.

That racism is an ugly reality in our society that still needs to be confronted on a daily basis is still a sad truth. One need only look at the social media feeds of black footballers, or better still read the social history of ethnic minorities in Britain by historians such as David Olusoga. That an individual can use the empathy that engenders to worsen the suffering he has already inflicted on his victim makes you despair for humanity.

What disturbs me most deeply today is the resentment politics currently being brought to bear on this case. When Nigel Farage said on social media that people should respond with "pure cold rage", he was not referring to the murder, but to the police treatment of Nowak because, he claims, Britain has a "two tier culture where the rights and privileges of white people matter less than those of ethnic minorities". Such a viewpoint immediately sets out to trigger resentment, rather than invite understanding between communities. Does our recent history of correcting 'white privileges', such as those that enabled the white killers of black student Stephen Lawrence to escape justice, now mean that the situation is reversed?

Do white people matter less in today's Britain? That has not been my experience. But in a part of the country (Essex) where my MP is a black woman (Kemi Badenoch), the local Anglican Bishop is an Iranian child refugee (Guli Francis-Deqhani) and evidence of many 'ethnic minorities' doing better for themselves than many white locals is all around, it is easy to see how the politics of resentment can be fostered, not overtly aimed at these high profile targets, of course, but punching down on the 'illegal', the asylum seeker or the religious community with which a killer is identified.

Instead, perhaps our politicians would serve us better if they called for personal, social and political maturity. As the societal correction of historical discrimination starts to take effect, our training will increasingly need to take into account the nature and occurrence of individual sin (crime) within the experiences of structural inequalities or abuse that we are seeking to address.

Rest in peace, Henry Nowak. You should never have been treated the way you were. May what happened to you be another moral learning point for our country and our world.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55137>

LINK

Murdered student Henry Nowak told police 'I can't breathe' while handcuffed – BBC News

www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/crlpyw05175o?

British Sikhs facing 'collective punishment' for Digwa's 'heinous and cowardly crime' – *The Spectator*

https://spectator.com/article/vickrum-digwa-is-no-sikh/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

TWO VOICES, ONE DOOR

Eleanor Hamilton May 4, 2026

When we say we are a Christian what does that mean? What does that look like in practice? Today, and not for the first time, I've seen people laughing and mocking those who've died. And why? Because they died in our waters, trying to reach the UK from France.

Let that sit for a moment. The same voices often say "this is a Christian country." But I'm honestly not sure which part of Christianity that reflects. Because it's not the one I follow. The one I know speaks of mercy. Of compassion. Of recognising the image of God in every single person. Of loving our neighbour, even when it's uncomfortable, even when it costs us something. People aren't headlines. They aren't problems to debate. They are human beings. They are loved. They matter.

I wrote this poem a few months ago, but today it feels like it needs to be shared. Maybe today we choose compassion over cruelty. Maybe today we remember who we're called to be.

TWO VOICES, ONE DOOR

*I knocked because I had nowhere else to go.
You heard the knock and felt your chest tighten.*

*I didn't plan to leave.
You didn't plan to share.*

*I left when the streets I loved
learned the sound of sirens and shouting.
You stayed while your streets
learned the sound of new languages.*

*I crossed borders because I was running from danger.
You draw borders because you're afraid of losing control.*

*I am tired of being called a problem.
You are tired of being told you're heartless.*

*I carry grief in my suitcase.
You carry history in your bones.*

*My child asks if this place is safe.
Your child asks why everything feels different.*

*I've been told to go back where I came from.
You've been told your country isn't yours anymore.*

*I stand in your queue.
You watch the numbers rising on a screen.*

*I am not here to erase you.
You are not meant to erase me.*

*The God I pray to
once told a people who thought the land was theirs,
When a foreigner resides among you, do not mistreat them.*

*You say that was long ago.
I say the command still breathes.*

*You worry there isn't enough.
I wonder how there can be so much land
and so little welcome.*

*You feel anger rising at the headlines.
I feel fear rising at the stares.*

We both feel something slipping.

*But what if it isn't safety.
What if it's certainty.*

*You say, this is my home.
I say, I am trying to find one.*

*You say, things are changing too quickly.
I say, everything changed overnight for me.*

*You say, I don't know how to fix this.
I say, neither do I.*

*And somewhere between your fear
and my longing
stands a God
who loves the foreigner
and reminds the settled
that they too were once strangers.*

*Perhaps we're both closer to exile than we admit.
Guests on soil that ultimately belongs to God.*

*So I knock.
And you open, just a little.*

*Not because it's comfortable.
Not because it's popular.*

But because love is braver than fear.

*And maybe belonging
isn't about who arrived first,*

*but about who is willing
to make room.*

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• Eleanor Hamilton is Minister at Dumbarton Parish Church (Church of Scotland)

MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS IS “A GIFT TO THE WORLD,” SAYS PROFESSOR ANNA ROWLANDS

Source Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales May 26, 2026

On Monday 25 May, Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical letter, *Magnifica humanitas*, was presented in the Vatican's Synod Hall.

Professor Anna Rowlands, a theologian and Professor at Durham University, was one of the speakers at the presentation, alongside Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith; Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; Christopher Olah, Co-Founder of Anthropic and Head of Research on AI interpretability; and Professor Leocadie Lushombo, Professor of Political Theology and Catholic Social Thought at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University in California.

Following the launch event, Professor Rowlands reflected on this significant day and what it means for the Church and for the world. “The day has been pretty exciting, intense and momentous, as you would expect. This is the first time that a Pope has attended in the modern era, at least, the launch of a papal encyclical. Today there was a sense of a really important issue and set of topics being addressed, but also of a real gathering together with a spirit of appropriate celebration of a text that I think is a gift to the world.”

Turning to the encyclical, Professor Rowlands noted that Pope Leo has been focused on AI as a central issue since the beginning of his papacy. She explained: “I think he genuinely feels that we're living on the cusp of a new phase of the industrial revolution, and that we've entered a new moment where those same issues, in an intensified way, are now present to us again.”

Describing the urgency with which Pope Leo is approaching the topic, she said: “[The Pope] thinks that this is an issue we should have been thinking about yesterday, and I think he worries, genuinely, that people don't feel confident to tackle the AI conversation. He wants people to feel confident; their expertise doesn't need to be in science or tech to engage with this issue. We do need the people with those bodies of expertise, but we are experts in humanity. We know what it is to inhabit a human body, to desire real human relationships rather than mere artificial connection with each other.”

The central focus of *Magnifica humanitas* is the dignity of the human person, and the need to ensure “the genuine flourishing of human beings.”

Professor Rowlands explained that an important aspect of this is nurturing a culture of encounter and engaging in meaningful dialogue within and across faith-based and secular groups, such as in the environmental sector. “Certainly, this is a significant voice in terms of the papacy, but there are others who already are and want to be part of that conversation. This is a moment where the Catholic Church is saying, ‘Us too.’ Today was a beginning of that process of a dialogue, but it also means a dialogue with those whose lives are most affected by the reality of a time of AI.

“During the morning's event, Professor Rowlands stated that “*Magnifica humanitas* empowers us all to play our own part.” Reflecting further on how *Magnifica humanitas* can be applied in our daily lives, Professor Rowlands explained how the vision which Pope Leo expresses in the first part of the document is complemented by a focus on concrete issues in later sections.

“*Magnifica humanitas* reminds us that we've got a landscape of principles and a narrative of what it means to be human as a created being and a redeemed being. We don't need false idols and false accounts of other things that will save us, including AI; technologies are a part of created human life, but we keep them in place as technologies and tools; we don't anthropomorphise them. What role do we want them to have in our families, in our churches, in our, in our schools, in our workplaces? That is a conversation where we should feel empowered to say if we will support this tech or not. If we lose that freedom to choose whether we allow this into our lives, then we've done something fundamental to the nature of human freedom.”

“The emphasis of the document is on asking what it means to live in a time where AI, digitalisation and robotics are already changing the landscape that we live in, how we live, how we love, how we work, how we share, and how we care.”

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/magnifica-humanitas-is-a-gift-to-the-world-says-professor-anna-rowlands/>

Interview (6 mins 45) with Professor Anna Rowlands here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otEjNFhyifs>

Read: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>

HOPE IN POPE LEO'S ENCYCLICAL

Ian Linden June 4, 2026

Perhaps we have underestimated the importance of the Pope being an American speaking a language which well over a billion globally understand. Many young people around the world learn English as a second language. And there is something immediate and arresting when Pope Leo writes or makes speeches in our own language about matters of great importance.

There is also the sense that, with Trump and his courtiers in the White House, having the best of America in the Vatican is providential, essential rather than incidental. Trump manages to personify much that is worst in the USA. Leo's authoritative counter to Trump's words and policies provides today's youth with hope for the future and in the possibility of change.

It is not that the Pope and Vatican News have suddenly become demotic, reducing their vocabulary to the popular English cultivated by The Sun – sometimes Oxbridge – journalists. There is no fear of long words and sentences and they clearly and accurately express important ideas. There is no talking down to youth or diluting the Christian message for take-away consumption. The language and embeddedness in previous papal teaching found in Leo's *Magnifica Humanitas* is both traditional and typical of the broad expansive themes in the encyclicals of recent Popes.

In the three weeks following its publication we have had much learned commentary on AI and Catholic Social Teaching. But what stands out in this encyclical? There is a clear acknowledgement of recent historical humanism that shares many of the Church's values, with a willingness to name names and be concrete and specific. "Certain events make it clear that history can also change when individuals truly take the dignity of everyone seriously: the civil rights movement in the United States of America, closely associated with the testimony of Martin Luther King Jr., or the end of apartheid in South Africa following the release of Nelson Mandela and his decision not to surrender the future to hatred. In different contexts, many courageous and generous women have also stood out, including Saint Laura Montoya, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, Dorothy Day, Marie Skłodowska-Curie, Maria Montessori, Elisabeth Elliot, Wangari Maathai, Benazir Bhutto and countless others from every continent whose commitment has contributed to making history more humane".

This embrace of those who have struggled against injustice extends to what Leo calls "authentic culture and art" which "preserve this spark, resisting the normalization of evil". As a result, he suggests certain works have taken on an almost prophetic significance: "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony can be seen as a desire for unity; Guernica as a denunciation of dehumanization; Schindler's List as a call not to consign the past to oblivion". This is not someone who thinks a global Church needs to deny its European past.

Citing Beethoven and Nelson Mandela presents an insurmountable criterion for both artistic and moral excellence. But Leo partially lets us off. "The twentieth-century Catholic author J.R.R. Tolkien...", he writes – [approvingly] – "described our responsibility in this way: 'It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till.' The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization.' This feels comforting and reassuring, fresh, relevant, addressing us and our potential rather than a consistory of cardinals.

Most importantly, *Magnifica Humanitas* shows a clear understanding of the preoccupations and anxiety of youth in the UK simply expressed. It is not only that Gen Z (born 1997-2012) today look unlikely to have "a clean earth to till" and a climate to foster food security in the future. "For young people, job insecurity is particularly devastating. As the Bishops of the United States of America have recalled, work is not merely a source of income but a crucial sphere in which identity is formed, friendships and relationships are forged, practical responsibilities are learned and one's vocation is discerned. When access to work is hindered by high levels of unemployment, inadequate systems of training or structural barriers, many young people find the path to their human and professional fulfilment blocked".

Older Catholics find themselves in the unusual position of discovering their Gen Z grandchildren looking to Popes for leadership, direction and hope but rarely darkening the door of a church. Francis gained their respect putting his weight behind countering climate change, manifesting in different ways his concern for the Palestinians, and, overall, for his spontaneity and accessibility. Leo has also won many hearts by following Francis' lead on these issues dear to youth, notably by his condemnation of the Israeli and American wars in the Middle East. Very few are likely to tackle a 42,000 word encyclical but very many are likely to appreciate Leo sharing their concern for their future.

Magnifica Humanitas ends with the sub-title *The Song of Hope: The Magnificat*. Perhaps the Peruvian side of the Pope coming to the fore, the Latin American theme of liberation having the last word? It took me back to vespers with the Dominicans at their Mayfair priory, Johannesburg in the midst of the anti-apartheid struggle in the mid-1980s: one of the rare times when some of the mighty were being pulled down from their thrones. Leo provides encouragement today, particularly pertinent for the older generation in this threatening time: "With the same faith as Mary, let us become 'weavers of hope' in our world, sharing who we are and what we have, so that the presence of Jesus may grow among us and his Kingdom take shape".

True, becoming 'tessitori di speranza' rolls off the tongue better than 'weavers of hope'. But the reality is that there are a lot more potential weavers who are English-speaking than Italian.

<https://www.ianlinden.com/latest-blogs/hope-in-pope-leos-encyclical>

• *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.*

SUPERPOWER SUICIDE

Chris Chatteris SJ. Source: Jesuit Institute South Africa June 4, 2026

'Superpower suicide' is a striking phrase used by the historian of totalitarianism, Professor Timothy Snyder. He argues the United States is in the process of committing 'superpower suicide', thanks to the Trump administration's geopolitical blunders. Two egregious examples are the unwinnable war with Iran and the inexplicable alienation of its traditional allies in Europe.

It occurs to me that the United States is not alone. Witness the fatal self-harm that Putin's Russia is inflicting upon itself, by hubristically taking on Ukraine in a war which Russia is losing and which is destroying its economy. The parallelisms between the USA and the Russian Federation are instructive. Both have had the image of their overwhelming military might humiliatingly trashed by lesser but highly motivated and ingenious adversaries. This has been a stupendously costly lesson in dollars for the United States and in rubles and recruits for Russia. One hopes this is a sobering lesson for other would-be aggressors. I imagine that China's Xi Jinping is paying close attention as he ponders an invasion of Taiwan. What he notices happening in the Strait of Hormuz and the Black Sea must surely give him pause.

Snyder also mentions an economic ingredient to the US suicide overdose, namely the attempt to put the clock back on energy. One of the most unbelievable pieces of news recently has to be the Trump administration's payment of over a billion dollars to a French energy company not to build a planned wind farm in the US. Incredible, but there is a logic to this lunacy. It follows from the administration's 'drill baby drill' policy, and it is also an expression of Trump's animus against renewables and his quaint belief that he can leverage the US's leadership in the extraction of shale oil to maintain global economic dominance. The saying attributed to Sheikh Ahmed Yamani comes to mind: "*The Stone Age didn't come to an end because we ran out of stones!*"

Putin, too, made the mistake of overreliance on hydrocarbons. He built up a vast war chest through the sale of oil and gas, and he calculated that it would be sufficient to fund a short 'special military operation'. However, after almost five years, warfare itself has evolved to the point where long-range drones have made significant portions of what is a very inflammable Russian industry vulnerable to attack. Hence, that which fuels the Russian economy is literally going up in smoke.

All wars are horrible, and they often lead to further wars. Obviously, therefore, it would have been better if neither of the two had ever happened. However, it can be argued that there are a few unintended consequences of these two conflicts which offer humankind sobering and useful historical lessons. Firstly, annexing territory in the face of determined resistance is extremely difficult in the age of drones. Israel is just beginning to discover this in Lebanon. The second is that even the greatest superpower needs allies. The third is that if superpowers use energy as a gambit in waging war, then those affected by scarcity and price rises will naturally seek alternatives. This double suicide of superpowers might just make the world a safer and greener place. We can but hope and pray.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55144>

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FOR PALESTINIANS THE NAKBA HAS NEVER ENDED

Jan Harper (Merseyside Pax Christi) reports on an online event that took place at 1pm Friday May 15 (our time) and was joined by people all over the world. Pax Christi International facilitated it with our General Secretary Martha Ines Romero:

This week Pax Christi International gave us an opportunity to hear first-hand from Taybeh, one of the earliest Christian villages in Palestine. The Christian community of Taybeh has welcomed visitors and pilgrims alike to visit the sites where Jesus himself walked. Fr Bashar Fawadleh, one of three local clergy shared the Gospel passage with us which describes Jesus walking in Taybeh.

Now Taybeh faces its own persecution as extremist settlers headed by the notorious Price Tag extremist violent group regularly visit Taybeh to intimidate and harass the residents and to damage the sources of livelihoods, including in March this year their burning of a cement plant and their regular burning of cars, buildings and livestock. All this despite the villagers reporting the incursions and usually being ignored or left without any protection.

With every action by the settlers and inaction by our own politicians and church leaders in the UK, Israel grows bolder. No consequences equals no fear. The Palestinian Authority is virtually impotent it does not receive any financial support and is largely ineffective.

Despite some villagers leaving through constant intimidation, Fr Bashar and his community largely remain, supporting the local community through pastoral work, including the construction of a local hospital for the community, welcoming visitors to their beautiful guest house – where traditional Palestinian culture including the dabke dance is held. There is also Palestinian ceramics which Taybeh is well known for a children's football team, education etc, and the traditional Taybeh beer which is famous and delicious!

Fr Bashar has many plans with his community:

- He encourages us to support financially Donations can be made through Pax Germany.
- To visit as a sign of international solidarity and support.
- To speak about the current situation for the community and to press our governments and our church leaders in the UK to act for some concrete actions to uphold the rights of the Taybeh community to live free from fear and intimidation.
- To condemn all settler attacks and to isolate those who fund and promote groups such as Price Tag and other settler groups

Palestinians in Taybeh number around 1200 and as part of the Christian community we need to ensure they are supported to remain through our prayer, advocacy, donations, visits. Fr Bashar exudes calm but speaking to us yesterday his words were clear. International solidarity visits and church visits from the recent local churches are welcome but now they are not enough, so much more is needed.

After hearing from Fr Bashar, Ann Farr, Pax Christi Working Group on Palestine /Israel shared a beautiful image of the Ascension and included the following poem from John O'Donohue:

*As the fever of day calms towards twilight
May all that is strained in us come to ease.
We pray for all who suffered violence today,
May an unexpected serenity surprise them.*

*That we might see through our fear of each other
A new vision to heal our fatal attraction to aggression.
That those who enjoy the privilege of peace
Might not forget their tormented brothers and sisters.*

*For those who risk their lives each day for peace,
May their hearts glimpse providence at the heart
history.
That those who make riches from violence and war
Might hear in their dreams the cries of the lost.*

*That the wolf might lie down with the lamb,
That our swords be beaten into ploughshares
And no hurt or harm be done
Anywhere along the holy mountain.*

John O'Donohue

- May 15 was the 78th anniversary of the Nakba (Catastrophe) a reminder of the tragic events of 1948 when Palestinian people lost their homes, their land and their way of life.

EID CELEBRATIONS IN GAZA OVERSHADOWED BY ISRAELI ATTACKS

May 29, 2026 **Heather Kieran writes:**

While Muslims in other parts of the world have been celebrating Eid al-Adha, Eid celebrations in Gaza have been overshadowed by the continuation of Israeli attacks. In just 24 hours, nearly seven bombs were dropped on two residential buildings in Gaza City, killing at least 14 Palestinians, including children. Some of the children's bodies were torn apart so violently that their remains had to be collected from the ground. These attacks happened as families were shopping, moving through crowded streets, visiting each other, trying to create a moment of normalcy amid the war.

Yesterday I received this text: "A young woman was killed on Eid eve while shopping and kids were screaming around her, many returned stained in blood just because they were shopping a bit late, a crime punished by blood. On Eid, ten kids were killed: Sidra, 6 years old, Sara, nine, Nour 12. I hope they had a happy day before they died..."

Then I woke this morning to the news that Benjamin Netanyahu has given orders to the Israeli army to seize control of 70% of the Gaza Strip. This comes on the back of Israel's defence minister saying that he is committed to the ethnic cleansing of Gaza through large-scale migration of Palestinians as part of Israel's long-term plans for the territory. These Israeli Plans inch closer to extermination. And why are the parties to the Genocide Convention failing to Act-- the United States, France, Germany, the European Union and our own United Kingdom?

The poem (right) is by Nadera, a poet and writer born and raised in the Shujaiya neighbourhood of Gaza City. Her family is originally from Gaza. In Autumn 2023, she started her third year in the English Language Education Department at Islamic University where she was a student of Palestinian poet and activist Refaat Alareer, a victim of the Israeli bombing of the Gaza Strip in December 2023. Since most schools in Gaza have been destroyed during the war, Nadera has been organizing English classes for children in her neighbourhood. She is a member of the 'We Are Not Numbers' (WANN) – a project established in 2015 by Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor for emerging writers from Palestine to tell their stories and advocate for their human rights.

<https://euromedmonitor.org/en>

<https://wearenotnumbers.org/>

<https://wearenotnumbers.org/what-surrounds-gaza/>

WHAT SURROUNDS GAZA?

Look here, look there.

From the North:

*Our lost, our orange trees, our fields,
our Jafa.*

And enemies

*eating the fruit of our trees,
wearing our clothes.*

From the south:

Enemies.

Tanks

Tents.

Displaced people.

Desert.

The pyramid of Cheops

From the east:

Our lost land

our identity

our Palestine,

land I've never seen.

And enemies...

Killing us, targeting us,

in our homeland.

From the west:

The sea, and boats...

For our enemies,

eating our fish from the sea.

Our sea

Our beach.

Under our sky,

under our clouds.

So, what is above Gaza?

Are there any enemies on the moon?

Nadera Raied Mushtha

GAZA HOSPITAL WARNS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISIS AMID SEVERE POWER SHORTAGES

Source: Kuwaiti Government News Service June 3, 2026

Health authorities in Gaza have warned of a worsening humanitarian and medical crisis at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital after the facility entered a critical phase, due to severe electricity shortages and the failure of a main backup generator. The Israeli authorities are not allowing replacement parts to enter the territory.

During a press conference of Sunday, the Director of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital Dr Raed Hussein said the hospital is facing exceptional and dangerous conditions as its operational capacity declines due to repeated malfunctions affecting generators used to supply power to essential departments. He noted that the remaining backup generators have become severely worn out after operating continuously for more than a year without interruption and are no longer capable of meeting the hospital's minimum daily needs or ensuring the continuity of basic medical services.

Dr Hussein added that the failure of a fourth backup generator has led to near-total paralysis in several vital departments, most notably operating rooms, which have completely ceased functioning, directly affecting medical teams' ability to deal with emergency and critical cases. He warned that the ongoing electricity crisis threatens to halt other essential services, including dialysis units, neonatal incubators, intensive care units and medical laboratories that rely entirely on electrical power to operate equipment and devices. The hospital director appealed to international organizations, humanitarian institutions and concerned parties to take immediate action to save the health sector in central Gaza.

Dr Hussein also appealed for a direct and sustainable electricity source for the hospital, as well as the urgent entry of new generators and spare parts to avert a humanitarian and health catastrophe.

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital is the only government hospital in central Gaza and provides medical services to around half a million residents, making it one of the most important healthcare facilities in the area. Parts of the hospital were destroyed in October 2024, after it was attacked by Israeli warplanes which caused a massive fire. Much of the area surrounding the hospital has been badly damaged by repeated attacks which have caused numerous casualties. The hospital is desperately overcrowded.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55141>

CENSORSHIP SURROUNDING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA

May 30, 2026 **Heather Kieran writes:**

As images and accounts of human suffering in Gaza continue, the accusation that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians has been fiercely debated and argued with the world's leading genocide scholars declaring that Israel's war on Gaza meets the legal definition of genocide. The 1948 Genocide Convention defines genocide as: "Any act committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group."

I have increasingly found that to use the word genocide with regard to what is happening in Gaza is either considered to be "offensive" or denied. During the Gaza war, efforts to deny that Israel has committed genocide against Palestinians have included exploiting the accusation of antisemitism to delegitimise such statements and to characterise those making them as antisemites. The word and thought police have become stronger and more omnipresent in our society. I refuse to censor myself. But these really are awful times for those who champion human rights and seek justice. The genocide in Gaza continues and people are suffering greatly. And there are too many other places to mention whose people are also experiencing horrific violence, bombing and killing, and forced displacement, such as the West Bank, Lebanon, and Iran. It's a truly difficult time to live in our world.

Today's poem (right) by Omar Sakr addresses the censorship and silencing of language surrounding the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

ALGO IN GENOCIDE

*Okay I won't use the word Jewish
And I won't use the word Zionist
And I won't use the word genocide
And I won't use the word apartheid
And I won't use the word settler
And I won't use the word colony
And I won't use the word killed
And I won't use the word watermelon
And I won't use the word Palestine
And I won't use the word resistance
And I won't use the word law
And I won't use the word moral
And I won't use the word men
And I won't use the word God
And I won't use the word river
And I won't use the word sea
And I won't use the word free
And I won't use the word children
For the young of ___ are always ___*

*What are we left with at the end?
A murdered dictionary and field
after silent field of unmarked graves.*

Omar Sakr

BISHOP JOHN ARNOLD ELECTED PRESIDENT OF CARITAS EUROPA

Source: Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales May 15, 2026

Bishop John Arnold has been elected President of Caritas Europa and will serve a four-year term, starting from May 2027, whilst continuing in his role as Bishop of Salford. Elections for key positions in the organisation took place at its Regional Conference which was held in Zagreb, Croatia, from 4-7 May. Caritas Europa is a network of 49 organisations from 46 countries, and the Regional Secretariat is its main statutory decision-making body. It is one of seven regional bodies in the Caritas Internationalis confederation.

Alistair Dutton, Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis, said: "Congratulations to Caritas Europa's new President-elect, Bishop John Arnold. In 2013, I went to the Philippines with him, during his 12 years as chair of CAFOD, to see the devastation caused by Cyclone Haiyan and how Caritas Philippines was responding. Now it's a great pleasure to welcome him back into the family in his new role. I look forward to working with him again as he takes it up at Caritas Internationalis' General Assembly next May."

Bishop Arnold attended the Regional Conference where he learned of his election. Describing the impact of the organisation as "truly impressive," he said: "I feel very privileged to be able to take up a role in the work of Caritas at the European level. I have long been aware of the effective collaboration which exists between the Caritas agencies around the world and the impact that Caritas has on so many of the pressing issues that confront our world today. Closely allied to Gospel values and to Catholic Social Teaching, Caritas confronts the poverty and conflict which impacts on the lives of so many people. It is my hope that I can assist in promoting that work."

Bishop Arnold will succeed President Mgr Michael Landau when he takes up his post in May 2027. The next mandate of the network's governance runs from 2027-2031.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55005> **LINK: Caritas Europa** www.caritas.eu/

A DRONE LANDED IN MY MUM'S GARDEN TODAY

Yuliia writes, May 9, 2026: A drone landed in my mum's garden today. She talked about it the same way people in Wales talk about the weather.

My family did not first meet Russian violence in 2022. It began long before I was born. My great-great-grandmother had a large family in Ukraine, and then came the Holodomor of 1932-33 – the famine created under Stalin's Soviet regime, when food was confiscated, movement was restricted, villages were punished, and millions of Ukrainians were left to starve despite Ukraine producing food. Historians estimate that around 4 million Ukrainians died, while many countries now recognise the Holodomor as a genocide against the Ukrainian people.

Sometimes statistics become too large for people to emotionally process, so let me put it differently. Imagine entire cities emptied of people. Imagine children becoming familiar with hunger before they had even properly experienced childhood. Imagine parents making impossible choices simply to keep one child alive.

During this famine, my great-grandmother was sent away to work for a wealthy family when she was only nine years old so that she might survive. One of her brothers and sisters did not. Nine. An age when children should be safe, messy, curious and protected. Instead, she learned something far heavier and far too early: that survival sometimes demands the loss of childhood itself. She survived. She grew older, married, and became pregnant, perhaps believing that after famine, after unimaginable hardship, life might finally offer some peace. Instead, the Second World War arrived. Her husband, my great-grandfather, was killed, and she gave birth during wartime, carrying the unbearable weight of bringing new life into a world shaped by destruction, uncertainty and grief.

People in Britain understandably remember the Second World War through sacrifice, military service, rationing, the Blitz and enormous national grief. Around 450,000 people in the United Kingdom died – roughly 1 in every 100 people. That suffering mattered deeply. But Ukraine experienced something on a scale that is difficult for many people outside Eastern Europe to fully imagine. Ukraine was one of the main battlefields of the war. It was occupied. Cities and villages were destroyed. Jewish communities were annihilated during the Holocaust. Millions were displaced, deported, starved, executed or sent into forced labour.

Around 8-10 million people from Ukraine died during the Second World War. That means approximately every fifth person. Please stop for a moment and try to imagine what that means. Imagine looking around your workplace, your school, your street, your friendship group, your family gathering, and every fifth person simply gone. Imagine entire communities shaped by absence, by silence, by grief so immense that survival itself becomes the main achievement. My grandmother's childhood was shaped by this reality. She grew up without her father, in the long shadow of war, in scarcity and rebuilding, in a society carrying trauma so large that people often simply continued because they had no alternative. Survival was ordinary. Grief was ordinary. Endurance was ordinary.

And somehow history found our family again. My mother, my grandmother's daughter, has now lived for more than four years in one of the hottest war zones in Ukraine. Today, during our phone call, we spoke about drones, in the casual way people begin speaking about terrible things when they have lived with them long enough. And then she told me that one had landed in her garden today. Her garden. The place where grandchildren should visit. Instead, there are drones. Fear. Sirens. And the exhausting emotional calculation of living every day not knowing whether your home will still be standing tomorrow.

And then here is me. Living in Wales with my children. Safe, yes. Grateful, deeply. But also displaced. And I want to say something uncomfortable here, because people often misunderstand displacement, imagining it as some softer, easier version of suffering. Displacement is not small. Displacement is grief that follows you everywhere. It is waking up every day in safety while part of your heart lives somewhere dangerous. It is building a life you did not choose while trying to raise children inside uncertainty. It is missing language, home, ordinary moments, family dinners, familiar streets, versions of yourself that belonged somewhere. You survive, but a part of you is permanently elsewhere.

War destroys in different ways. Sometimes it destroys buildings. Sometimes it destroys certainty. Sometimes it separates families across countries and leaves people carrying invisible grief for years. And this is perhaps what people often misunderstand about Ukrainians. People see resilience and assume strength means we are untouched. No. Resilience usually means somebody had no choice except to continue. Holodomor. World War II. Russian invasion. All generations of women in my family shaped by survival.

So, forgive me if small cruelty, intimidation, online hatred, gossip, attempts to shame me, diminish me or somehow break me do not land in the way some people imagine they will, because when your family history includes famine, war, death, occupation, displacement and repeated attempts to erase your existence, your relationship with hardship changes.

And if anyone still thinks Ukraine is somehow an “underdeveloped country,” perhaps they misunderstand us entirely. Because maybe one of the most developed things a people can become is extraordinarily good at surviving what should have destroyed them.

When history repeatedly tries to bury a nation and that nation still somehow continues producing love, intelligence, humour, beauty, courage, community and stubborn hope, what you are witnessing is not weakness. It is extraordinary human endurance. We are not fragile people. We are descendants of survivors. And people shaped by survival are extraordinarily difficult to break. Just saying.

- *Yuliia left her homeland in Ukraine in search of a safer life in Wales for her family.*

WCC DENOUNCES DEADLY CYCLE OF VIOLENCE IN RUSSIA'S ONGOING INVASION OF UKRAINE

Source: World Council of Churches June 2, 2026

The World Council of Churches has denounced the deadly cycle of violence in the context of Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay WCC General Secretary said in a statement: “In the early hours of today, Russian forces launched hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles at Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine, reportedly killing some 18 people and injuring more than one hundred. This follows two other deadly attacks on Kyiv last month in which 24 people were killed, and Russian reports of a Ukrainian drone strike on a college dormitory in the Russian-controlled Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine, reportedly killing 21 students.

“We call for an immediate end to this war, to stop the death and destruction. We urge all WCC member churches and all people of good will to pray and act for peace - a lasting peace in the region and throughout the world, based on respect for international law and for fundamental moral precepts.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55133>

REFLECTION: PRAYING WITH BOAZ IN JUNE – FOR REFUGEE WEEK 15-21 JUNE

“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” - Deuteronomy 31:8

These verses from Deuteronomy are spoken by Moses to Joshua, not long before Moses’ death and Joshua’s crossing over into the promised land. Moses builds Joshua’s courage firstly through the promise of presence. Knowing his own death will come soon, Moses does not reassure Joshua of his own presence as an earthly mentor, but that of “the LORD himself.”

We’ve all experienced the power and impact of knowing we’re not alone in something. Whether it’s a specific situation that fills us with trepidation, dread, nervousness or throughout ongoing periods of grief or depression, knowing that someone is there alongside us, present with us in it, makes all the difference.

For Joshua, this was not only human presence, but the presence of the living God - one with the power to go before him as well as be there alongside him. Following on naturally from the promise of presence, is the promise of faithfulness - or continued, unconditional presence: “he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

While the word “leave” allows room for some form of returning later on, the word “forsake” is much stronger, implying a complete abandonment, leaving something or someone behind forever. Although the people of Israel may continually choose to leave and forsake God, the promise made by God here to Joshua through Moses is one of complete devotion, pursuit of relationship and communion with his people. It is because of these promises that God can give the instruction to Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged. The command is built on a secure foundation - the promise that God will be with him, and continue to be with him whatever happens.

As we approach Refugee Week from 15-21 June, the theme of courage feels more relevant than ever. With the rising popularity of far-right politics, and the intensifying scapegoating of people seeking safety in the UK, we know it is an uncertain, fearful time for many people in our communities. But we also know that welcome, solidarity and community are more powerful than hate and fear. And our belief that everyone should have safety, dignity and a home, remains just as strong now as when we started this work over 20 years ago.

- *Boaz Trust provides stable accommodation (and support to access housing) for people experiencing homelessness because of insecure, uncertain or recently changed immigration status (including people with refugee status, people refused asylum and people with No Recourse to Public Funds). We do this through our shared houses across Greater Manchester and through the outreach support we deliver as part of the Restricted Eligibility Support Service (RESS) and the Refugee Homelessness Prevention Project (RHPP). <https://www.boaztrust.org.uk/pages/15-our-story>*

THE WATERS OF BAPTISM: HEALING THE WOUNDS OF OUR DIVIDED CHURCH

The Society of St Pius X is once again under scrutiny following its announcement of the ordination of four men as bishops without a papal mandate. Announced on 26 May, the Society intends to consecrate Revd Paschal Schreiber (Switzerland), Revd Michael Goldade (United States), Revd Michel Poinset de Sivry (France), and Revd Marc Hanappier (France). Ordaining bishops without a papal mandate is forbidden except under extraordinary conditions, and these consecrations will be illicit in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church.

For many Catholics, it may be tempting to dismiss the SSPX as schismatic traditionalists operating outside ecclesial obedience. Yet this instinct sits uneasily with the example of Jesus, who consistently sought out those on the margins. In Luke's Gospel, the parables of the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Prodigal Son remind us that disciples of Jesus are called to seek those who have strayed and guide them back into the fold. The pope reflects this Christ-like instinct, praying for the Holy Spirit to lead and enlighten the SSPX rather than abandon them in their disobedience.

This moment also invites a wider reflection on justice and peace within the Church itself. Fracture, polarisation, and exclusion are not only ecclesial problems; they are wounds that affect communities, relationships, and the credibility of our witness. The work of reconciliation begins at home. When parts of the Body of Christ drift to the margins, the whole Body suffers.

Recent ecumenical gestures such as the pope's meeting with the Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Archbishop Sarah Mullally, on 27 April remind us that his heart remains open to all separated brethren. Mullally's gift of Lambeth Palace honey evokes Proverbs 24: "wisdom is sweet to your soul." Wisdom here may be the recognition that the waters of baptism bind us more deeply than any ecclesiastical division. United in baptism as God's children, we are called to work for the healing of the wounds in the body of Christ.

Communion has always existed on a spectrum. After the East–West schism of 1054, many churches in Europe and the Middle East remained in communion with both Eastern and Western rites. In practice, the boundaries of orthodoxy have often been porous. It is not always straightforward ecclesially, parochially, communally, or personally to determine who is "in" and who is "out." The Church has always lived with this ambiguity.

The SSPX situation is therefore not simply a canonical irregularity. It is a reminder of the human cost of division: the faithful caught between communities, the confusion about belonging, the deepening of wounds when dialogue breaks down. Justice, peace, and reconciliation are not abstract ideals; they are lived realities shaped by how we respond to moments like this.

Perhaps this moment invites us, individually and collectively, to place the situation before Jesus, trusting that his desire is for unity and harmony rather than fracture and discord. The waters of baptism remain deeper than any division we create, and the call to reconciliation remains at the heart of Christian discipleship.

• *James Gordon Reid Haveloch-Jones is an educational consultant, applied theologian, and author of an Amazon Top 50 Study Skills bestseller. He is an Honorary Associate Fellow of St George's House, Windsor Castle, and a trustee of the Heythrop Association at the University of London. He is a Contracted Contributing Writer for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales 'God Who Speaks' initiative. His work has also appeared in the Church Times, National Catholic Reporter, Premier Christianity, ICN, and is featured in the NJPN network. Internationally he has written for BuddistdoorGlobal and is featured in Instituto Humanitas Unisinos. www.jamesgordonreid.co.uk*

IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO BOOK FOR THE NJPN 48TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE, JUST TALK

The Hayes, Swanwick, Derbyshire 24 – 26 July

The invitation is simple: Come and have your say as well as listen to what others have to offer. This conference is not just about speaking. It is about creating space for reflection; encounter; disagreement; curiosity; humility and even courage. The courage to engage respectfully in difficult conversations, led always by Spirit of Truth.

"Dialogue is born from an attitude of respect for the other person, from a conviction that the other has something good to say." Pope Francis

The conference aims to increase participants understanding of how language and other forms of communication are used or misused in our current context, and to help participants challenge disinformation and divisive rhetoric, change narratives, foster dialogue and encounter, and speak truth to power.

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.”

Our keynote speaker, booked some months ago, is Andy Burnham (currently Mayor of Greater Manchester). However, as of this present moment in time, we are unsure as to whether he will be able to come (who knows, he may be making a bid to be Prime Minister by then!).

- Sir John Battle (former Member of Parliament for Leeds West) will be holding an Ecumenical Conversation on Engaging with Community Groups.
- Billy Vaughan, Public Affairs Officer for the Quakers, will be speaking about the right to protest and how that relates to a different part of dialogue, freedom of speech.

In this current climate the need for us all to be able to communicate is more important than ever.

More information and details of how to book: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference-2026/njpn-2026-conference-booking-details/>

SIR GARETH SOUTHGATE: WE NEED TO TEACH BOYS DIFFERENTLY FROM GIRLS TO GET BEST OUT OF THEM

Source: George Sandeman, BBC June 5, 2026: The way boys are taught in schools should be changed to take account of their "fundamental differences" to girls, Sir Gareth Southgate has said. The former England football manager told the BBC this was needed to tackle the crisis facing boys and young men who feel isolated and are struggling with education, employment, identity and mental health. "I think anybody that's worked with either sex at a younger age knows there are some fundamental differences," he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme. He said to get the most out of young people it "might require a slightly different approach when we're educating and developing young men, compared to educating and developing young women". <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0ng87tn>

Sir Gareth has made a documentary for the BBC examining how young men struggling to find work, particularly those who did badly at school, can suffer a cascade of problems later on in life including poor mental health and loss of identity. *Gareth Southgate: Changing the Game for Young Men*, which is released on Monday, June 8, looks at possible solutions to the crisis, including older men volunteering to be mentors and encouraging more men to go into teaching. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/2026/gareth-southgate-changing-game-for-young-men>

The lack of role models for boys and young men was something Sir Gareth spoke of last year when he gave the BBC's annual Richard Dimbleby Lecture. He criticised online influencers willing to manipulate and "trick young men into believing that success is measured by money or dominance". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aCUopox8Zoro>

Speaking to Today presenter Amol Rajan, Sir Gareth warned of historic expectations weighing on boys, and the compounding effect of poor attainment in school, leading to behavioural problems. "That's leading to issues of being employable," he said, referencing a recent study by former Labour minister Alan Milburn about the level of young people not in education, employment or training (Neets). That affects both sexes, he added, but said there were "particular issues for boys". The Milburn review was released on May 28 alongside official figures showing more than one million young people were Neets - the highest level in more than 12 years. Since the pandemic, the number of men aged 16-24 classified as Neet has risen by 40%. By comparison, it rose 7% for women. Read a summary here: <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/milburn-review-young-people-and-work-diagnostic-report-summary/>

Sir Gareth praised work to empower girls, saying "there's some brilliant work going on creating better opportunities for women" - and that trying to improve outcomes for boys was not a case of "either or". "We've taken our eyes off some of the issues that men face through their lives and we have to start thinking about how we address those, as well as the issues for women and girls," he said.

For the documentary, Sir Gareth met three young men in Middlesbrough struggling to find work. Taylor, 20, has been looking for a job for the last five months. He used to work in a warehouse but has struggled since then, particularly with the lack of communication from some employers. Many do not inform candidates they have been rejected or provide feedback about why interviews have been unsuccessful, something highlighted in the Milburn report. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/2026/gareth-southgate-changing-game-for-young-men>

“We shouldn’t be all doom and gloom. As a country there are so many talented kids – we need to nurture and coach them so they are an asset. You just need to reframe stuff for them a bit. Their self-esteem has been hit; they might have had a tough time at school. They’ve seen a pandemic; the world is at war. But they will have talent; they just have to find it. We adults must mentor them, help those kids find what they are good at.” – Sir Gareth Southgate

SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE - PAX CHRISTI ENGLAND AND WALES AGM 2026

Fr Joe Ryan Jun 7, 2026

The Annual General Meeting of Pax Christi England and Wales took place at Maria Fidelis School, Euston, on Saturday, 6th June 2026. The theme for the day was: '*Sowing seeds of Hope*'. Kathryn Lyndon, Chair of Pax Christi opened the day by welcoming everybody and thanking all those who helped organising the event.

Fr Joe Ryan, Executive Committee member, continued proceedings explaining the theme for the day. A packet of seeds containing white poppies, wild flowers and Forget-me-Nots, were available to all the participants. He invited participants present and online to write messages for the 'Washing Line'. Here was an opportunity for all to indicate what they are already doing in working for peace; plans/visions for the future; what has inspired them and any words of encouragement. These comments will be useful in planning the future direction of PCEW.

He explained the concept of a 'mixed grill' input for the morning session. It comprised of video messages and in person presentations.

Martha Ines Romero, Secretary General Pax Christi International, sent a message from her native Columbia. She indicated the privilege of being leader of such a magnificent group of people worldwide, all working together for peace, justice and reconciliation.

Fr Gerry McFlynn, Prison chaplain, and co-president of Pax Christi England and Wales, gave a reflection on Pope Leo's Peace Sunday's message '*Towards Unarming and Disarming Peace*'. He spoke of justifying war in the name of religion; if we want peace, work for justice; working for peace must not be left to politicians and our leaders in Church and State must take the initiative in peace work.

There was a message of solidarity from Japan, as Filo Hirota spoke of her task of working for peace and reconciliation in her native country.

Joan Sharples and Owen Butler shared their experience of dialogue in Peace Pairs. Carol and Naomi spoke of their Intergenerational sharing of ideas. It is hoped to develop this aspect of dialogue between young and old; to build bridges and especially, to engage with young people who are earnestly seeking to get involved in peace movements.

Ann Farr, former Chair of PCEW, shared a message from New York from Mary Yelenick, Pax Christi International representative to the United Nations. Her work involves being an advocate at the UN on nuclear disarmament, anti-racism, active nonviolence, social and economic justice. How special it is to have representatives speaking our name in the United Nations.

Aisling Griffin, Pax Christi staff member on outreach to young people, told us of the forming of the Youth Peace Forum in Florence last November at the PCI conference. Again, a sign of our young people playing their part in peace work.

Pat Gaffney, former Secretary General of PCEW, spoke to us about Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. She highlighted the regular vigils of Women in Black, a public witness every week concerned with violence against women; explored the concept of nonviolent activity as opposed to lip service and listed a number of upcoming activities, especially the *Tablet* event in Chelmsford on 10th July: *Faith in Action: Justice, Peace & the Future of the Church* where Pax Christi will have an input.

As you can see it was a true 'mixed grill' of Peace activities! It is so encouraging to see the extent of the combined efforts of Pax Christi members worldwide and how it can be in inspiration to all at times when we may feel we are getting nowhere in our peace work.

During our shared lunch there were continuous rolling video messages from Pax Christi workers in Africa, USA, Europe and other parts of the world.

We were introduced to Anita Tozzi, the new Westminster Justice and Peace Coordinator as she reminded us of her role of encouraging parishes to get involved in Justice and Peace work.

The new National President of PCEW, Bishop John Arnold spoke of his new role representing the Bishops of England and Wales. He gave a brief outline of his ministry as a priest of the Westminster diocese, Auxiliary Bishop in North

London, his appointment to Salford diocese and his works with CAFOD. This all has led to his appointment as President of Caritas Europa, beginning next year. He looks forward to working with Pax Christi England & Wales in the days ahead.

The official Annual General Meeting followed with Kathryn Lyndon, Chairperson, conducting proceedings. Details of last year's AGM were agreed on as were the Financial returns and other matters. She explained about us not having a CEO with the resignation of Andrew Jackson and the process of replacement being in hand. Kathryn is stepping down as Chair, but is willing to continue on the Executive Committee. Aisling Griffin, Education outreach person, is moving on to a new job and needs replacing. Some members of the Executive are moving on too and need replacing. Anna Blackman was co-opted as a new member of the Executive. Kathryn, made an appeal to all members to consider joining the Executive Committee and indicated that non-members could be co-opted on to continue the work of Pax Christi.

The day ended with a moving Liturgy lead by Sr Katrina Alton, Chaplain to Pax Christi. Bishop John Arnold gave the final blessing.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55163>

POPE LEO BESTOWS SPECIAL HONOUR ON LONG-SERVING VOLUNTEERS

Melissa Nethersole Jun 1, 2026 Source: CAFOD

Volunteers from across the nation have been awarded a special honour from Pope Leo. The accolade - a papal blessing - is in recognition of their unwavering commitment to their communities for over 25 years. Hailing from various parts of England and Wales, the recipients have been honoured for their diverse contributions across a range of activities such as organising Lent and Harvest appeals, hosting community events, raising money for those in need overseas, and campaigning on issues such as climate change and debt justice.

Among the honourees were husband and wife John, 93, and Maureen Mulholland, 87 (below). The couple - from Altrincham in Greater Manchester, have volunteered, fundraised, and campaigned for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) since 1980. They will receive a papal blessing along with six other volunteers from the parish CAFOD group, which last year had its 45th anniversary.

John felt honoured to receive the blessing: "We were surprised and embarrassed to learn that we were to receive these papal blessings. That is because we never dreamt of receiving such an honour and because what was achieved in St Vincent's parish was through a group effort, and thanks to the support of successive parish priests and the generosity of parishioners. We expected no reward, like others in our close-knit CAFOD group, other than knowing that we were providing practical help for some of the poorest in the world and doing so in response to Christ's teaching. However, we feel both humble and honoured and are very grateful to receive our papal blessings."



Local CAFOD Rep, Kathryn Keenan, commented: "John and Maureen's support for CAFOD, along with all the members of the St Vincent's CAFOD group past and present, is truly inspiring. Their decades of dedication to fundraising, campaigning and prayer for CAFOD's work, guided by their faith, has impacted countless lives and given hope and practical support to communities overseas. I would also like to thank Canon Jonathan Brandon, St Vincent's parish priest and his parishioners for their incredible support and generosity over the years."

Christine Allen, CAFOD Director and CEO, said: "It's such an honour for anyone to receive Pope Leo's blessing and this highlights the significant role that volunteers play in strengthening communities and building a better world. Our volunteers continue to inspire all of us through their service. Their example reminds us of the importance of working for the common good."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55120>

ST VINCENT'S ALTRINCHAM CAFOD VOLUNTEERS RECEIVE PAPAL BLESSINGS

Anne O'Connor, St Vincent's parish, writes: Many congratulations to St Vincent's parishioners Christine Cochrane, Tom and Carole Curry, Val Hotter, Terry and Brenda Morris and John and Maureen Mulholland who are to receive a special Blessing from Pope Leo to acknowledge their long-standing commitment to CAFOD. Certificates will be presented by Kathryn Keenan, Community Participation Coordinator CAFOD for Shrewsbury Diocese and Birmingham Archdiocese (North) at a parish Mass at St Vincent's on Sunday, 14 June.

The Mass will be offered for deceased members of the group (of whom there are several), including Christine Cochrane's late husband Will who chaired the group from its inception until his untimely death from the corona virus on 3rd May, 2020.

To help compile this article, group member John Mulholland has shared a comprehensive history of the group – here are some of the many highlights over the past 46 years:

The St Vincent's CAFOD group was formed in 1980 at a meeting called by the newly appointed parish priest at that time, Canon John Burgon, who was keen to establish various groups in the parish. The group decided to meet monthly with the first meeting, later that summer, at Will and Chris's home and subsequently in Westleigh, the parish centre. Carole Curry agreed to act as minutes secretary and, at times, in those pre-home computer days, hand-delivered the minutes to the homes of members! Valerie Hotter succeeded Carole as minutes secretary in 1998 and continued in that role until 2016.

An immediate way to support the work of CAFOD was through fundraising and Canon Burgon agreed to a request for a monthly retiring collection after all Masses, as was the established practice of the SVP. That was a crucially important initiative which has continued since with the support of four succeeding parish priests. However, two years or so ago the diocese ruled that there should be a variety of collections during the year. That change curtailed the frequency of the monthly CAFOD collections and those of the SVP. The collections have been reduced to six, including the two national Fast Day appeals (Lenten and harvest). If there is an emergency, the group has to use one of the six as they recently did for Sudan on Terry Morris's initiative. The SVP have a similar number. The group felt fortunate in the circumstances to have retained six and it remains to be seen whether that will continue.

In addition to raising vital funds for CAFOD's work, the remit of newly-formed group also included education, campaigning, justice and peace and prayerfulness. Speakers were invited to raise awareness; specific projects adopted in various countries, the first being for Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) in Africa. A video of that country was shown to a large gathering in the Infant School Hall and there was a painting competition for the children to show their impressions of Upper Volta. There were also Emergency Appeals due to the increasingly frequent disasters in the world, such as droughts, floods and tsunamis. As always, parishioners responded generously.

For a number of years in the 1980s and 1990s, some members of the group and other parishioners took part in the CAFOD Christmas Fun Run at Upholland, established by Vin McMullen, CAFOD's North West Regional Organiser. Participants, through sponsorship, raised considerable funds for the poorest of the poor.

In March, 1989, Julian Filochowski, the then Director of CAFOD, addressed a packed meeting in the Infant School. He emphasised the importance of CAFOD working with its partners in poor countries and of enabling the people there to achieve real development in their own communities. A well-known poster of that time conveys that message powerfully: *"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; give him the means to fish and you feed him for life"*.

In 1998 members of the group and other parishioners travelled by coach to join the national CAFOD contingent in Birmingham. They joined the massive human chain around the meeting place of the then G7 in the city centre, calling on them to drop the debt burdening the poorest countries. Before joining the chain, they gathered in St. Chad's Cathedral to hear Clare Short, then Secretary of State for Overseas Development, and CAFOD speakers, and to join in prayers. The group was also represented at the 2005 Make Poverty History rally in Edinburgh.

In 2000, in response to Pope John Paul II's call to mark the Jubilee, the group began monthly after Mass sales of Traidcraft goods in Westleigh with growing support from parishioners. In 2004 the final steps were taken to persuade local stores such as Boots, Tesco and Sainsbury's to sell fair trade goods and make Altrincham a 'fair trade town'. Carole Curry, on behalf of the group, had previously lobbied shop managers in the area. It is gratifying that, over the years since, more and more goods bearing the FairTrade symbol have become available nationally. Campaigns, such as that run by CAFOD, have contributed to that welcome outcome.

Prayerfulness and fundraising were combined in May 2013, when the late Kevin McCarthy, popular and long-time leader of parish walks, led a sponsored walk in the Dunham area to raise funds for CAFOD's 'Hungry for Change' campaign to assist small scale farmers in poor countries and curb the power of global food producers. During the walk we halted from time to time and prayers were led by group member Grace Gallagher and other walkers.

Canon John Rafferty, shortly after his arrival as parish priest in 2005, had instituted Friday evening Stations of the Cross throughout Lent, led by different parish groups each week. Until 2020 the CAFOD group participated, with Will and Chris reading from the lectern the very moving Stations composed by Peter Whelan of Holy Angels parish. The other members of the group processed around the church, singing the English words of the Stabat Mater between each Station. In 2020 we joined in the Stations of the recently established Justice and Peace group.

Over the decades the group has supported CAFOD's campaigns, sometimes in conjunction with other local churches, on topics such as the environment and global warming, the banning of landmines, fair trade and cancelling the debt of the poorest countries.

In 2017 they welcomed Fr. Peter Hughes, a Columban priest based in Peru, advocating rights for the indigenous peoples in the Amazon Region, including before the United Nations, and a champion of climate-care action in rainforests in the face of corporate land exploitation. He spoke to a well-attended meeting in Westleigh as well as at weekend Masses.

The following year, helped and encouraged by Shrewsbury CAFOD Co-ordinator, Bridget Fenwick, the group led the parish to engage in 'Sharing the Journey' – Pope Francis' call for solidarity with migrants. They exhibited in church a simple wooden cross fashioned from a migrants' boat in Lampedusa, and asked parishioners to leave prayers and wishes for the refugees at the altar, to be included in a national expo in London later that year.

Sister Eileen, of Loreto and a group member, works for Revive, a Manchester-based charity helping refugees and asylum seekers. The group has supported her work in various ways, especially by promoting and helping to organise charity concerts in church. A few years ago, a group of young Mums in the parish set up a Facebook page requesting adult and children's clothing, toys, baby equipment and furniture to meet specific needs identified by Sister Eileen. An annual Christmas Party is held for refugee children with age-appropriate gifts donated by parishioners which are sorted and wrapped for each child by a volunteer group in the parish centre. There is also a summer party for the children with games and face-painting at Loreto School, Altrincham.

In April 2019 at Westleigh St. Vincent's hosted the presentation 'Caring for Our Common home' by Catherine Green from CAFOD HQ, who had attended a climate change conference in Poland. A lively discussion ensued with promises of local action signed up to by religious, social and educational groups in our area who attended.

The CAFOD group merged with the parish J&P group in recent years but commitment to CAFOD continues. As well as the monthly CAFOD collections, the group also raises awareness of current campaigns, promote petitions and host speakers. In addition, the joint CAFOD/J&P group has broadened its area of interest include supporting ACAT-UK (Action by Christians Against Torture) with an annual Christmas greetings card campaign.

In 2025 the joint group produced an information leaflet for the parish to mark Pope Francis' Jubilee Year of Hope. The idea of Hope drew together many of the great themes of Francis's pontificate, especially mercy, justice, and God's unending love for all His Creation. The Jubilee of Hope encapsulated many ideas in the Social Teaching of the Church, to which Pope Francis himself was an important contributor. Catholic Social Teaching (CST) inspires the work of CAFOD in its efforts to help all our brothers and sisters, especially the poorest, and gives a firm foundation to the parish group.

At St Vincent's we regularly pray for peace after weekday Masses and hold Pray and Reflect services in response to national and international events as they arise, for example the General Election and prayers for peace for Ukraine and Gaza. At Pentecost 2025, the CAFOD/J&P group invited parishioners to sign CAFOD's Jubilee petition against the crippling burden of debt suffered by many poorer countries. Signatures were collected at all the masses on our parish Jubilee weekend, which were returned to CAFOD head office to be presented, alongside those from many other parishes in the country, to the government.

The CAFOD/J&P group raises awareness on climate change and topical issues. Parishioners are kept informed of activities and campaigns via the website and the parish newsletter which contains a Live Simply tip each week. The group also has a Facebook page and Twitter (X) account. The group's page on the parish website provides links to current issues of *MouthPeace*, the quarterly Justice and Peace newsletter for the Shrewsbury, Liverpool and Lancaster dioceses and the monthly E-Bulletin for North West on behalf of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN). The group also maintains close links to Caritas Shrewsbury which has an office nearby at St Aidan's Centre, Wythenshawe in addition to offices in Crewe and Wallasey on The Wirral.

Read THE COLUMBAN MISSIONARIES latest VOCATION FOR JUSTICE which is now in digital format.

The theme for this Summer is Seeking Sanctuary: Responding in Faith, Choosing Welcome.

This includes the winning articles and pictures from the 2026 Columban schools media competition.

<https://columbans.co.uk/publication/summer-2026-seeking-sanctuary-responding-in-faith-choosing-welcome/>

VIDEOS FROM THE NJPN 'SHINING A LIGHT ON FOOD SUSTAINABILITY' EVENT April 25, 2026

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4HAuivOZMEXDJC26yCsjW9lt9j1Nbcf8>

<https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/meetings/videos-from-our-shining-a-light-on-food-sustainability-event/>

ART INSTALLATION MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL TO 15 JUNE to commemorate the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. It honours the victims of nuclear weapons and offers a message of hope for a peaceful future. Specially commissioned by the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, for last year's 80th anniversary of the bombings, the artwork was created by artist Leah Hislop and is available to view whenever the cathedral is open.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/55176>

DIARY

JUNE

5 World Environment Day <https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-day>

6-14 Great Big Green Week www.greatbiggreenweek.com

11 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

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 and 16 Chester Green Weekend <https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/climate-emergency/stories/chester-green-weekend-2025-a-celebration-of-sustainability>

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

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

JULY

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 Day of Reflection at the Laudato Si' Centre with CAFOD 9.45am-3pm. Focus on the interconnected issues of Debt, Climate Change and Food Justice. With CAFOD's Head of Region for Africa; Kayode Akintola, who will share his experience and knowledge of working with communities impacted by the above challenges. The day will finish with an outdoor Mass in the forest, led by Fr Paul Smith. Places are limited and we do have a number of bookings already. Please email me using this link if you would like to join us: kkeen@cafod.org.uk

24-26th 'Just Talk' NJPN Conference at Swanwick <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/>

AUGUST

6 Hiroshima Day and 9 Nagasaki Day Merseyside CND and Merseyside Pax Christi will be holding events to commemorate victims of the atomic weapons dropped on these days in 1945. A vigil liturgy planned for 9 August in Liverpool, no definite venue yet - please look on the Merseyside Pax Christi FaceBook page nearer the time:

<https://www.facebook.com/Merseyside.CND/> and <https://paxchristi.org.uk/>.

SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER Merseyside Pax Christi meetings as follows: 8 Sept, 10 Oct, 12 Nov and 10 Dec

All meetings 2-4 pm at Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool. L1 3BT New members welcome. Contact Jan Harper 07591082195 janharper20211@outlook.com

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

● See also the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com

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