

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin December 2019

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

THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

Advent is a season of waiting. The leaves have all fallen; the weather is cold, the trees are barren. It is a good time to remember the Holy Spirit moving across the waters at the moment of creation, being breathed into Adam's inert clay, coming upon Mary in Nazareth, entering our own lives in conception and baptism.

We are all called to conceive God's Child in this world; this is our vocation as Christians. May we all find strength in the memories of those who have come before us, and in the companionship of those with us, offering us, in this time of waiting, the taste of liberation made possible in the birth of a child.

Sabra McKenzie-Hamilton, *Catholic Worker*, December 1996

RECEIVING CHRIST

Our task is to seek and find Christ in our world as it is, and not as it might be. The fact that the world is other than it might be does not alter the truth that Christ is present in it and that his plan has been neither frustrated nor changed. All will be done according to his will. Our Advent is the celebration of this hope.

What is uncertain is not the "coming" of Christ but our own reception of him, our own response to him, our own readiness and capacity to "go forth and meet him." We must be willing to see him and acclaim him, as John did, even at the very moment when our whole life's work and all its meaning seem to collapse.

Thomas Merton

BORN OUTDOORS

Born outside, not in the open air beneath a star-lit sky
but in the night-dark cave beneath the streets;
not amidst the standing summer wheat
but in the gathered winnowed straw
now scattered as your birthing sheet.

Not in the wilds but on the edge of human habitation,
with ox and ass as birth-partner and midwife,
bovine lowing and asinine hee-hawing
ringing out in counterpoint to Mary's screams.

Born as you would die, outwith the gate,
to unhinge our doors and upturn all our barricades
and make the place of death, Skull Hill,
the birthing place of endless life.

Outdoors because there are no limits here
but only your weak-limbed infantile embrace,
helpless on the straw and then, three decades hence,
helpless on the wooden cross once more.

Dying outside just as you were born,
inside our pain,
that we might never need
to dwell outside your love.

From *An Invaded Life*, a book of poetry by Fr. Rob Esdaile (see page 15)

£7 (incl p+p) from Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church,
Hampton Court Way, Thames Ditton, Surrey KT7 0LP.

LIVING RESPONSIBLY

Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last 200 years. We are not God. The Earth was here before us and was given to us. The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits and we still have not solved the problem of poverty.

We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.

Pope Francis *Laudato Si'*

SONG OF THE ANGELS

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among people,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman, Fellowship of Reconciliation, USA

LANDMARK REPORT SHOWS FOOD BANK USERS SURVIVE ON £50 A WEEK

10/11/2019

Commissioned by the Trussell Trust and conducted by Heriot-Watt University, ***State of Hunger 2019*** is the most authoritative piece of independent research into hunger in the UK to date. It reveals the average weekly income of people at food banks is only £50 after paying rent, and almost one in five have no money coming in at all in the month before being referred for emergency food.

- 94% of people at food banks are destitute
- Almost three-quarters of people at food banks live in households affected by ill-health or disability
- 22% of people at food banks are single parents - compared to 5% in the UK population
- More than three-quarters of people referred to food banks were in arrears
- The first annual report of a three-year long research project, it shows definitively for the first time the three drivers hitting people simultaneously and leaving no protection from hunger and poverty. These drivers are problems with the benefits system, ill health and challenging life experiences, and a lack of local support.

The most common source of income for people at food banks is the benefits system. Problems with benefits are widespread, affecting two-thirds of people at food banks in the last year. Key benefits problems highlighted by the research are: a reduction in the value of benefit payments, being turned down for disability benefits, being sanctioned, and delays in payments like the five week wait for Universal Credit. Statistical modelling shows the positive impact an increase in the value of benefits could have, estimating that a £1 increase in the weekly value of main benefits could lead to 84 fewer food parcels a year in a typical local authority.

The majority of people referred to food banks also experienced a challenging life event, such as an eviction or household breakdown, in the year prior to using the food bank. Such events may increase living costs and make it harder to maintain paid work or to successfully claim benefits.

Particular groups of people are more likely to need a food bank. One risk factor is being a single mother - 22% of people at food banks are single parents, the majority of which are women.

Almost three-quarters of people at food banks have a health issue, or live with someone who does. More than half of people at food banks live in households affected by a mental health problem, with anxiety and depression the most common. A quarter of people live in households where someone has a long-term physical condition; one in six has a physical disability; and one in 10 has a learning disability, or live with someone who does. Ill health often increases living costs and may be a barrier to doing paid work.

Amanda explained to researchers that £130 of her £138 fortnightly benefit payment for a health condition goes to paying arrears, leaving her with only £8: "If I don't pay my bills, then I'll get the house taken off me. After paying arrears, I've got £8 a fortnight and that's to pay for gas, electric, water. So it's just impossible, it really is. I go to bed at night wishing I never wake up in the morning."

The study also found that the vast majority of people at food banks have either exhausted support from family or friends, were socially isolated, or had family and friends who were not in a financial position to help.

Chief Executive Emma Revie said: "People are being locked into extreme poverty and pushed to the doors of food banks. Hunger in the UK isn't about food — it's about people not having enough money. People are trying to get by on £50 a week and that's just not enough for the essentials, let alone a decent standard of living.

"Any of us could be hit by a health issue or job loss - the difference is what happens when that hits. We created a benefits system because we're a country that believes in making sure financial support is there for each other if it's needed. The question that naturally arises, then, is why the incomes of people at food banks are so low, despite being supported by that benefits system?

"Many of us are being left without enough money to cover the most basic costs. We cannot let this continue in our country. This can change — our benefits system could be the key to unlocking people from poverty if our government steps up and makes the changes needed. How we treat each other when life is hard speaks volumes about us as a nation. We can do better than this."

The Trussell Trust is calling for three key changes as a priority to protect people from hunger:

- As an urgent priority, end the five week wait for Universal Credit
- Benefit payments must cover the true cost of living
- Funding for councils to provide local crisis support should be ring-fenced and increased

The key findings and full report can be read here: www.stateofhunger.org
<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38273>

REFLECTION ON CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY'S NORTH EAST REGIONAL GATHERING

Fr Chris Hughes 10/11/ 2019

Church Action on Poverty is nationally facilitating a number of 'roadshows' engaging with local groups to explore issues related to poverty with a particular focus on '*Speaking Truth to Power*'. On 9 November, St Nicholas's Anglican Cathedral was the venue for the regional gathering for the North East of England, hosted by Church Action on Poverty North East.

Niall Cooper, the CEO of Church Action on Poverty nationally introduced the theme of the day '*Speaking Truth to Power*'. He noted that 'truth' does not seem to be held in much esteem at the moment. Niall then facilitated a 'fire side chat' with three women living and working in disadvantaged communities in Tyneside, who in different ways have attempted to speak truth to power. It was evident that one reason truth needs to speak to power is that many of our law-makers have no idea what it could be like to be living on zero contracts or welfare payments. The word 'ignorance' came up a great deal in the discussion.

Three workshops then followed. Niall Cooper showed (but with little sound) a short film made by Church Action on Poverty called '*Edgelands*'. It portrays the life of young people in Lancashire, where there is little adult support as they seek to deal with caring for sick parents, little money, homelessness and drug culture. The film was very much in the style of Ken Loach, revealing the stark reality of so many young people on these 'edgelands'.

Rev Tracey Hume, a Methodist Deacon from Blaydon, Gateshead, talked about the Gateshead Poverty Truth Commission, which is bringing together those in authority and power with those experiencing poverty, so that it is the experiences and reality of those in poverty which will inform policy.

Rev Chris Howson, the Anglican Chaplain at Sunderland University led a reflection on Matthew's Gospel parable of the talents. He gave an 'alternative reading' of the parable arguing that the hero of the parable is the man who buries his talent since he is the one speaking truth to power.

The final input of the event was led by Debbie Honeywood, who plays Abbie in the new Ken Loach film '*Sorry We Missed You*'. After showing the trailer, Debbie talked about the issues in the film and how she prepared for the role. She worked in a care home for four weeks and discovered what life was like for carers as they sought to balance their holding up of a creaking social care system while still seeking to be mothers to their own children even if it is on a phone. Debbie spoke very powerfully on how people portrayed in the film are in isolated vulnerable situations. Communities of support have disappeared.

In the ensuing discussion, Debbie responded to a criticism of many of Loach's films and especially in '*I, Daniel Blake*' that one is left with no sense of hope. Debbie's response was to say that it was the family, the one place where people are not isolated, that was the source of hope. This point is made very clear in the film when policeman makes it clear to the son that in having a family that cares he has an advantage that sadly many do not have.

As I left the event, I reflected on the 'them' that have power. It is 'big business' and 'big government'. I wondered on how we can build relationship with those in power so that people in run-down communities in Tyneside can speak truth to power. It also struck me that although 'big business' is not democratically accountable, 'big government' is supposed to be.

We are at the start of an election campaign, so I do wonder if in a very limited extent, those who have power is not simply 'them' but in a restricted way it is 'us'. When politicians want our vote, we have more power over them than once they are elected for up to five years. So perhaps at this stage of an election where the next one may not be till autumn 2024, speaking truth to power, could also involve the opportunity, or perhaps an obligation, we have to ask our politicians to make commitments on the issues that matter to us. I appreciate that people may be sceptical on promises made, but at least with promises on particular issues politicians will be accountable to the electorate for the commitments made. It would be regrettable if this opportunity to speak truth to power while those who seek power need our vote is wasted. So I am left wondering what commitments do I want those who want my vote to make. I sense the possibility of speaking truth to power will only increase if we all ask that question.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38272>

A FRANCISCAN BLESSING

May God bless you with a restless **discomfort** about easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may seek truth boldly and love deep within your heart.

May God bless you with holy **anger** at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may tirelessly work for justice, freedom, and peace among all people.

May God bless you with the gift of **tears** to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, or the loss of all that they cherish, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and transform their pain into joy.

May God bless you with enough **foolishness** to believe that you really can make a difference in this world, so that you are able, with God's grace, to do what others claim cannot be done.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF ASSASSINATION IN EL SALVADOR

Thirty years ago this month (15-16 November 1989), in the midst of the Salvadoran civil war, six Jesuit priests their housekeeper and her daughter were massacred at their residence on the campus of the 'José Simeon Cañas' Central American University (UCA).

Armed uniformed men burst into their residence and slaughtered everyone inside, dragging their bodies outside to the garden. Those killed were Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín-Baró, Segundo Montes, Juan Ramón Moreno, Joaquín López y López, Amando López together with Elba Ramos and her 16 year-old daughter Celina Ramos. Their bodies were found by the husband and father of Elba and Celina who planted roses where their bodies lay.

The killings were carried out by members of the Atlacatl Battalion, an elite unit of the Salvadoran Army.

Read more: <http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/martyrs/uca-martyrs> (<http://www.romerotrue.org.uk/martyrs/uca-martyrs>)

Brigid Benson has written a deeply personal account of her response to the atrocities:

The Romero Trust reminds us each year of the Anniversary of the Assassination of Archbishop Romero (now St Oscar Romero) on March 24 1980. The Trust also commemorated this week another dramatic multiple assassination in El Salvador - that of six Jesuit priests, along with their housekeeper and her daughter on the night of 15/16 November 1989 in the midst of the civil war. They were massacred at their residence on the campus of the Catholic University in San Salvador. I recall this event clearly and still with great emotion.

I was a voluntary campaigner and translator/interpreter throughout the 70's, first for Chilean refugees and then in the late 70's and 80's for various Central America human rights campaign groups and visitors from the region. I will never forget their powerful testimonies and heartrending stories of loss, torture, disappearance of loved ones - often community campaigners, unarmed civilians, men & women and many young people trapped in grinding poverty, punished for trying to organise to improve their lot.

British campaign and aid organisations invited some of them to visit Europe to tell their stories. The Jesuits, including several of those killed, visited the UK several times and their testimonies were powerful.

In 1987, due to my previous voluntary experience, I had the opportunity to work full time for the Central America Human Rights Committee and visited El Salvador in 1988 where I met with the Jesuits at the University where they worked, did pastoral work and published a regular Newsletter which we read avidly as it gave us a vivid human centred understanding of people's suffering, casualties of war and how their faith led them to stand up for the poor. I was moved again by how hardworking and caring these Jesuits were, and brave, knowing the threats against them and the assassination of their Archbishop as he said Mass in the Cathedral.

In 1989 I moved to Manchester with my young family and was absolutely devastated to learn about the assassination of the Jesuits I had met only the year before. How anyone could kill such kind, good holy men was unthinkable. I wanted to make sure their deaths did not go unnoticed in the local Catholic community so I went to the Jesuit run Church on Oxford Road Manchester, opposite the main University, bustling with hundreds of students. I managed to speak to one or two of the priests, told them about my encounter with the Jesuits in San Salvador and entreated them to include a mention in their next Sunday homily. I was willing to say a few words to bring this terrible event closer to Manchester Sunday Catholic churchgoers.

I expected these fellow Jesuits to be grief stricken and in mourning but they were impassive and distant. I attended Mass that Sunday and waited & waited - nothing, not a mention. I sat sobbing with my 2 year old son, who never saw me cry, that this attack on unarmed priests from the same order and their helpers, could go unmentioned, let alone with no homily for their great dedication to the poor and democracy in Central America, even if they did not share the same political analysis or views on the role of the Church in society. If I say Opus Dei, perhaps you will understand why.

PAX CHRISTI – PEACE SUNDAY 19 JANUARY 2020

Peace Sunday 2020 will be on 19th January. Resources coming soon!

The theme for 2019 is "Good politics serves peace" to be marked on 19 January 2019

Every year Pax Christi promotes the Holy Father's World Peace Day Message on the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. This is in the Liturgical Calendar cycle of prayer. Pax Christi sends resource materials to every parish in the country to help them mark and celebrate the day.

Full text of the World Peace Day Message 2019

<http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/12/18/181218a.html>

One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations....today more than ever, our societies need "artisans of peace" who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family.

<http://paxchristi.org.uk/news-and-events/peace-sunday/>

MASSIVE INCREASE IN UK ARMS SALES TO SAUDIS SINCE START OF YEMEN WAR

Source: CAAT 18/11/2019:

Government statistics show that the UK Government licensed £5,335,852,492 worth of arms to Saudi Arabian regime in the first four years of its ongoing bombardment of Yemen (26/03/2015 – 25/03/2019), an increase of almost 50% on the value of arms licensed in the four years preceding the war, which amounted to £3,572,049,751 worth of arms (26/03/2011 – 25 /03/2015).

According to the United Nations, the bombing has created the worst humanitarian crisis in the world. UK-made fighter jets, bombs and missiles have all played a central role in the bombing.

Since the bombing of Yemen began in March 2015, the UK has licensed £5.3 billion worth of arms to the Saudi regime, including:

- £2.7 billion worth of ML10 licences (Aircraft, helicopters, drones)
- £2.5 billion worth of ML4 licences (Grenades, bombs, missiles, countermeasures)

In reality the figures are likely to be a great deal higher, with most bombs and missiles being licensed via the opaque and secretive Open Licence system.

In June 2019 the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government has acted unlawfully when it licensed the sale of UK-made arms to Saudi forces for use in Yemen without making an assessment as to whether or not past incidents amounted to breaches of International Humanitarian Law. The Government was ordered not to approve any new licences and to retake the decisions on extant licences in a lawful manner. Since then, the former Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss, has admitted multiple breaches of the ruling.

Andrew Smith of Campaign Against Arms Trade said: "The bombing has created a terrible humanitarian crisis in Yemen, but the arms companies have treated it as a business opportunity. This war would not be possible without the complicity and support of arms dealing governments like the UK and US, who have pulled out all stops to maximise arms sales irrespective of the human cost.

"Regardless of who wins the election next month, there must be a fundamental re-evaluation of the UK's relationship with the brutal Saudi regime. It is long past time for Westminster to end the arms sales and stop its uncritical support for the dictatorship."

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38327>

STAND UP FOR FAITH AND FREEDOM ON #REDWEDNESDAY

Fionn Shiner 8/11/2019

People across London will be standing up for those persecuted for their faith at a special #RedWednesday event in the heart of the capital. Organised by Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need, this year's #RedWednesday on 27 November includes a candlelit Cross procession, leaving Parliament Square at 6.15pm. Leading the procession will be Rehman Chishti MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The procession arrives at Westminster Cathedral at 6.30pm, in time for a liturgy focusing on persecuted Christians in countries such as Iraq, Pakistan, and Nigeria.

Patricia Hatton, Head of Fundraising and Marketing at ACN (UK), who launched #RedWednesday, explained that the procession shows solidarity to persecuted Christians - the world's "most widely targeted" faith group according to Pew Research Centre. She said: "Following the endorsement of #RedWednesday in the Bishop of Truro's review into FCO support for persecuted Christians - commissioned by former Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt - the procession is a real chance for Christians to stand together and in a very visible way, show that the lives of Christians and other persecuted minorities matter. We urge individuals and groups to come along - to add your voice to the call to stop the persecution of Christians and other faith groups."

This year, in addition to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office being lit red, Westminster Cathedral, Lambeth Palace and St George's Cathedral, Southwark will follow suit. Across the UK, 120 buildings are going red, including 13 cathedrals, the Mersey Gateway and the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, Glasgow. Buildings are going red in 15 other countries.

The call to highlight religious persecution on #Red Wednesday comes after ACN's 2019 *Persecuted and Forgotten?* report found that Christianity in parts of Iraq and Syria is approaching the point of total extinction following genocide carried out by Daesh (ISIS). The Christian populace in Iraq has reduced by more than 90 percent, from 1.5 million before 2003, to less than 150,000 today. In response to *Persecuted and Forgotten?*, Mr Hunt tabled an early day motion, calling on the government to help Christians in Iraq and Syria. The EDM was signed by 43 leading parliamentarians.

This is a free event. If you would like to attend, please contact Catharine Crowson, Events Manager at ACN (UK), on Catharine.crowson@acnuk.org 020 8661 5159 or 07984 173428. Groups welcome.

LINK: www.acnuk.org

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38265>

BISHOP LINKS EXTREME WEATHER TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Ellen Teague 12/11/2019

More than a week of severe weather and flood warnings have led the lead bishop on the environment to ask: "Are we serious about the urgency of meeting the challenge of climate change?" Bishop John Arnold of Salford has told *The Tablet*: "The recent extreme weather, with several accounts of a 'month's rainfall in a day' or a 'week's rain in an hour' in various parts of the country, is a stark reminder that climate change is not something which is just happening somewhere else". He warned that "we also face disruption of our seasons and its serious impact on agriculture, threats to our transportation systems and damage to housing and the predictions will only get worse."

On Tuesday an emergency Cobra meeting was convened to discuss the government's response to the flooding, with more rain forecast. Particularly badly affected are Yorkshire and Derbyshire where hundreds of homes have been flooded and transport disrupted after torrential rain. An early sign that Yorkshire's River Don had breached its banks on 8 November came from a twitter report of flooding around St Oswald Church, Kirk Sandall, near Doncaster. In Derbyshire, the River Amber flooded the churchyard of All Saint's Parish Church in South Wingfield, with gravestones visible above the water. In both cases evacuation orders were issued locally.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic primary was amongst six Doncaster schools closed on Monday. On the Friday before, St Mary's Catholic High School in Upper Newbold, Chesterfield, was shut, "due to flooding and its impact on the school's electricity supply". St Michael and All Angels Catholic Primary School in Wombwell was one of seven schools closed in Barnsley, partly because teachers could not get to work.

Many churches assisted people affected by flooding. St Cuthbert's in Fishlake, a village near Doncaster submerged by the River Don, has stayed open round the clock since 8 November. It has been a dropping off place for blankets, sleeping bags and food. Police used it for rest and hot drinks and some stranded residents slept there and at the pub next door. Supplies were distributed from the church to isolated people in remote areas by tractor. In nearby Bentley, mops and buckets were being collected at St Peter's Church in readiness for the clean-up operation.

Tributes were paid by Anglican leaders to Annie Hall, the chair of Derby Cathedral Council and a former High Sheriff, who was swept to her death by floodwater near Matlock on 8 November.

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/12206/bishop-links-extreme-weather-to-climate-change>

FRACKING HALTED AFTER GOVERNMENT PULLS SUPPORT

2/11/2019: The government has called a halt to shale gas extraction - or fracking - in England amid fears about earthquakes. The indefinite suspension comes after a report by the Oil and Gas Authority (OGA) said it was not possible to predict the probability or size of tremors caused by the practice. Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said it may be temporary - imposed "until and unless" extraction is proved safe. Labour, Liberal Democrats and the Green Party want a permanent ban.

Fracking was suspended at the end of August after activity by Cuadrilla Resources - the only company licensed to carry out the process - at its Preston New Road site in Lancashire caused a magnitude 2.9 earthquake. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy said that, after the OGA concluded that further seismic activity could not be ruled out, "further consents for fracking will not be granted" unless the industry "can reliably predict and control tremors" linked to the process. However, it has stopped short of an outright ban. Asked on BBC Radio 4's Today programme why that was, Mrs Leadsom said shale gas is a "huge opportunity" for the UK. "We will follow the science and it is quite clear that we can't be certain. The science isn't accurate enough to be able to assess the fault lines, the geological studies have been shown to be inaccurate. So therefore, unless and until we can be absolutely certain, we are imposing a moratorium," she said.

Opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn tweeted that the pause was an "election stunt" and that Labour would ban fracking permanently. Former Conservative energy minister Sam Gyimah, who is now a Liberal Democrat, said Mr Johnson's "conversion to environmentalism" was "skin deep". "It's interesting that just as we approach an election he has decided he is against fracking." Asked whether the UK should explore methods of delivering fracking safely, Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said fossil fuels "need to stay in the ground" and that the government must make an "absolute commitment" to end it altogether.

Analysis: Katie Prescott, BBC business correspondent

Andrea Leadsom emphasises that this is not a ban - and the government is 'following the science'. However, scientists say it's hard to see a time with our current technology that fracking in the UK wouldn't cause earthquakes. Professor Richard Davies from Newcastle University says: "The UK is crisscrossed with faults and it's difficult to avoid them because the current imaging techniques used by the industry do not yet provide enough resolution to detect many of them." The big question for the businesses working in this sector is whether they are happy to spend any more money in this regulatory environment. Do they think it's worth investing, in the hope that the "science" will one day find in their favour and the regulation could change? Or will they decide that two moratoriums in 10 years is just too many, and that fracking has no future in the UK.

Friends of the Earth said legislation should be passed to make the fracking moratorium permanent. "For nearly a decade local people across the country have fought a David and Goliath battle against this powerful industry," said chief executive Craig Bennett. Charity CPRE said it had long called for fracking to be stopped and said the move would help the UK meet its target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 (see following statement below – Ed.)

Anti-fracking campaigner Barbara Richardson, who has protested at Preston New Road, said she was "cautiously optimistic", adding that local people were "worried" about the impact of fracking. "They want this to go away, they want some respite from this, they've been fighting this for five-and-a-half years," she told BBC Breakfast. Claire Stephenson from Frack Free Lancashire said campaigners were celebrating that the fracking industry in the UK is "finished", but added that protests will continue until an "outright ban" is in place. Susan Holliday, chair of Preston New Action Group said: "We will only feel able to celebrate once Cuadrilla start work on decommissioning and the site is restored."

Why frack?

Fracking is a process in which liquid is pumped deep underground at high pressure to fracture shale rock and release gas or oil trapped within it. Assessment by the British Geological Survey in 2013 suggested there were enough resources in the Bowland Shale across northern England to potentially provide up to 50 years of current gas demand. But research published in August estimated there were only five to seven years' supply. The UK's fracking industry, which has said the process could contribute significantly to future energy needs and create thousands of jobs, dismissed the report's findings.

Fierce opposition

Fracking must be halted for 18 hours if it causes a tremor measuring 0.5 magnitude or above. The government announcement is the second time it has placed a moratorium on fracking. The first suspension, which lasted a year, was in November 2011 during the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. The fracking industry has faced fierce opposition from both communities and environmental groups. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has in the past supported fracking, writing in the Daily Telegraph that the discovery of shale gas in the UK was "glorious news for humanity". A recent report by the National Audit Office found the UK had spent at least £32.7m supporting fracking since 2011. All fracking in Scotland has been suspended since 2013 and the SNP recently confirmed a policy of "no support" for the extraction method. The Welsh Government has also opposed fracking for several years, with a "moratorium" in place since 2015, while there is a planning presumption against fracking in Northern Ireland.

The suspension in England will put pressure on Cuadrilla Resources which has so far invested £270m in the country's shale gas industry. Cuadrilla Resources has 30 full-time workers but also employs a number of contractors. A spokeswoman for Cuadrilla Resources declined to comment. The BBC understands Cuadrilla and other fracking companies were not told of the government's decision in advance. Ken Cronin, chief executive of UK Onshore Oil and Gas, which represents fracking companies, said: "Going forward, we are fully committed to working closely with the Oil and Gas Authority and other relevant regulators to demonstrate that we can operate safely and environmentally responsibly."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-50267454>

FRACKING BAN HAILED IN BATTLE AGAINST CLIMATE EMERGENCY, SAYS CPRE, THE COUNTRYSIDE CHARITY

9/11/2019; The announcement that there will be a ban on all new fracking is a fundamental step forward in ensuring the UK meets its target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, says CPRE, the countryside charity. Tom Fyans, Deputy Chief Executive of CPRE, the countryside charity, said: "Today we celebrate alongside the local communities, campaigners and environmentalists who have been campaigning valiantly to stop fracking for many years. This is a fantastic win for local democracy and everyone who cares about protecting the countryside from climate catastrophe and mass industrialisation."

"CPRE was absolutely resolute in its opposition to policies proposed by the government to 'fast-track' fracking through the planning system, removing local people's voices from the decision-making process. When calls were made to change the rules to allow fracking to continue, even when it caused ever bigger earthquakes, countryside campaigners said "no!" We've long called for fracking to be stopped, and are thrilled that our messages have resonated finally."

"In a state of climate emergency, the decision to ban new fracking is absolutely essential but CPRE urges the next government to go even further with a range of policies that will help tackle the climate emergency. As the recently-confirmed host of COP26 in Glasgow in September 2020, the UK must become a genuine world leader in tackling the climate emergency. Further action must be taken to speed up our transition to renewable energies, and bring in steadfast policies to ensure a sustainable transition to zero carbon agriculture. Furthermore, we must restore our peatlands and essential soils and improve the energy efficiency of our existing homes through a retrofit strategy to bring down carbon emissions. Today's announcement should signal the start of a step change in the way we tackle the climate emergency."

● CPRE is the countryside charity that campaigns to promote, enhance and protect the countryside for everyone's benefit, wherever they live. With a local CPRE in every county, we work with communities, businesses and government to find positive and lasting ways to help the countryside thrive - today and for generations to come. Founded in 1926, we're a grassroots organisation, with more than 100 local groups, a branch in every county and 60,000 members and supporters. Campaign to Protect Rural England, 5-11 Lavington Street, London, SE1 0NZ. Tel: 020 7981 2800 www.cpre.org.uk

TACKLING OUR THROWAWAY CULTURE – THE 2020 COLUMBAN SCHOOLS COMPETITION

Ellen Teague *The Tablet* 08/10/2019: Columban missionaries are urging young people to challenge 'throwaway culture' through its third Schools Journalism Competition. The title is: *Tackling our Throwaway Culture*. Young people aged 15-18 inclusive are invited to write an article or produce a short video report that informs, challenges and raises important issues on the topic. Financial prizes are offered.

It is an issue dear to me personally and to the Columbans. Twelve years ago I visited Manila in the Philippines for a Columban climate change conference. On a free afternoon one of the visiting priests and I walked down to the Columban Parish of Malate by the Pacific Ocean, and strolled across the road to look over the sea wall and see the waves. Well there were waves alright – waves of plastic, going out about 100 yards into the ocean. Children were playing in them! We felt outraged and returned to the Columban house determined to call for a clean-up. "It is cleaned up once a week," we were told, "but the problem is that much of Manila's waste largely ends up in the ocean and constant clear ups do not solve the problem." Manila, with a population of 12 million people, is the most densely populated city in the world, and has a massive problem disposing of its waste. And Manila is not unique.

Here in Britain, the average person produces half a pound of plastic waste every day. From bottles and bags to plastic pots, tubs and trays, our lives are full of it. Our decades-long addiction to plastic packaging has had a profound impact on the world we live in. Plastic debris contaminates our food supply, fills our oceans and kills plants and animals. And consider food waste. A third of all food produced globally is wasted and, if food waste were a country, it would be the world's third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, behind the US and China. Other sectors can be scrutinised too, such as fashion, where young people are under considerable peer pressure to constantly buy the latest clothes.

Pope Francis, in the *Laudato Si'* papal encyclical of 2015, suggested that modern society has a "throwaway culture". He said: "The Earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." In bemoaning that "once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish," the pope rebuked the consumerist mindset, where goods, food and even people are discarded after their perceived use and worth wears out. We live in a world where everything is seen as disposable, replaceable or temporary, and overflowing landfills and oceans full of waste are obvious signs. Part of the problem is that we don't recognise how this issue starts with the individual. There are obviously lifestyle changes we can make to respond. In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis called for "a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint."

There are examples of parishes banning plastic cutlery, plates and cups in their halls as part of a commitment to live sustainably. Others have initiated parish gardens where food is grown and distributed without plastic packaging. We can do much as individuals and communities. Schools too are looking seriously into recycling and looking at ways for pupils to interact with the natural world and learn to wonder at God's creation.

Columbans are involved with projects around the world which tackle the throwaway mentality and have made a commitment to investments which are environmentally and socially responsible. In the Philippines the Tetra Bag Project is a Preda recycling project that has turned throwaway aluminum foil drinks' pouches into raw material for livelihood projects for survivors of sexual exploitation, youth rescued from prisons, students, and dozens of waste paper collectors. Wonders of Waste or WoW Bags is separate project which also addresses plastic pollution and offers a livelihood to poor communities. For ten years the project has worked in Malate parish and close to 100,000 plastic cartons are recycled annually to make into varied bags which are sold in Britain and Ireland.

In Pakistan, Columban Fr Liam O'Callaghan says: "The environmental crisis is the context in which we live here, the 'signs of the times, and scores of people are sick and dying every day because of it". Ecological education has become a priority and across Hyderabad Diocese the Columbans hold workshops in parishes and schools. Practical suggestions for parish action include tree planting and training people to avoid the use of plastic bags, which cause pollution and block sewage systems. The Columbans often give out eco-friendly bags made from old clothing.

So the culture of 'throwaway' is pervasive in our world today. Columban Missionaries believe the issue of a "throwaway culture" raises serious moral and ethical concerns about the wasteful use of our planet's finite resources. Young people can play their part in making a difference to promoting a sustainable future.

Students aged 15-18 are invited to write an article or make a video report that informs and raises important issues on the topic: '*Tackling our Throwaway Culture*'. Two separate strands are underway – one for students in Ireland and one in Britain. Each has two categories, writing and video. The competition encourages students to use their journalistic writing and mobile skills to look at a topical issue which is relevant to society today and resonates with Catholic Social Teaching. The closing date for entries is 14 February 2020. The Columbans have secured some high-profile judges from the world of journalism, including *The Tablet's* online editor Ruth Gledhill for the British competition and *Tablet* home editor Liz Dodd for the Irish competition. Winning articles and videos will be announced in Columban media on 16 March 2020.

For more information about the 2020 Schools Journalism Competition and to enter see:

www.columbancompetition.com

<https://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/12102/tackling-our-throwaway-culture-the-2020-columban-schools-competition>

THE AMAZON SYNOD: GOD WHO SPEAKS

Francis Stewart from the CAFOD Theology team reflects on the Amazon Synod in the light of the *Year of the Word* now being celebrated in England and Wales until December 2020.

“Do you have eyes, and don’t see, do you have ears, and fail to hear?” (Mark 8:10)

The working document for the Amazon Synod included this warning from Jesus to the disciples for their lack of faith in God’s signs and wonders.

The synodal assembly has seemed like new territory for the Church – truly a sign and a wonder. Yet what we are seeing is not a change in the way God speaks. We trust that God has always spoken through his sidelined and rejected people. Instead this is a change in the way in which we, the Church, listen.

The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor

Over the past month, the bishops of Pan-Amazonia have been, in Pope Francis’ words, “listening to the voices of the poor and reflecting on the precariousness of their lives, threatened by predatory models of development.” These are the voices of people who experience the earth, as he says, “not as a resource to be exploited, but as a home to be preserved”. Throughout history, however, they have not been accustomed to having their voices heard.

“I think that indigenous communities are the most invisible people on the planet,” says Yesica Patiachi Tayori of the Harakbut people in Peru. Yet now it seems that the Synod has indeed had eyes to see, and ears to hear. At CAFOD we have heard the hope this has brought to the indigenous people.

Yesica, who attended the historic meeting, told us: “The Synod is very positive for us. Pope Francis wants to listen to us. We bear the true witness, because we are the ones who suffer. He has given us hope that we are not alone.”

Hearing the Word in the Amazon

For many Amazon people, being Catholic can look very different from how it looks to you or me. Some indigenous communities, dwelling in places where rivers are the only roads, have access to the Eucharist just once a year. For some in those remote communities, hearing God speak from the scriptures is all the more central to their faith and life.

Furthermore, their radically different experience could illuminate the Scriptures for the Catholic community in England and Wales, if we have the listening ears.

Consider how the Scriptures are unlocked by the experience and situation of those who hear it. If you are persecuted daily, and your land, source of life, heritage and healing is slashed and burned, wouldn’t you read the story of God as a crucified healer slightly differently?

The indigenous and traditional communities whom CAFOD accompanies in the Amazon are faced by the invasion of agribusiness and mining interests, destroying the ecosystems on which they depend. When these interests are defied, community leaders and those who support them are often threatened with violence, even assassination. In solidarity with the people of the Amazon, we often speak of God’s love for the persecuted. But in the story of Jesus Christ, God is the one persecuted and crucified.

A new kind of trust

With the light of the Synod to guide us, how might we interpret those words of Jesus with which we began: “Do you have eyes and don’t see, do you have ears and fail to hear?”

Shortly after the disciples have witnessed the feeding of the four thousand, they still worry about not having bread for their own journey. Jesus points them back to the wonder of the hungry masses fed with five loaves and two fish – haven’t they missed his point? This seems like an invitation to a profound trust: trust Jesus’ way- take no purse, have no worries, have faith and love, and you will be fed.

To the threatened peoples of the Amazon, perhaps this is a trust in their own reserves, integrity and inherited wisdom. Against the ‘package of progress’ peddled by agribusinesses -their fertilizers and modified seeds and industrial agricultural techniques- a brave trust in humbler, more respectful ways of caring for the earth is the bread that will satisfy.

The indigenous peoples have expressed their wish to be heard, to be respected and to be accompanied. There is a profound hunger in the Amazon and the Synod has shown that the Church is being asked to respond in new and creative ways. Not by focusing on numbers of baptised, nor remaining just a ‘visiting Church’ to the remote communities of the Amazon; it must be present in an integral way: first offering the means and support for people to defend their way of life, and then offering the word of God as an inspiration to trust and stand by this way of life – before it is gone forever.

<https://blog.cafod.org.uk/2019/10/31/the-amazon-synod-god-who-speaks/>

THE AMAZON SYNOD: NOW IS THE TIME - A STRONGER ROLE FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Sr Birgit Weiler, MMS 08/11/2019

The urgency to strengthen the role of women in the Church in general and the Amazonian Church in particular was a prominent topic at the recent Amazonia Synod in the Vatican. Not only many women, but also a good number of bishops, were outspoken about it, recognising that it has to be part of the "new ways for the Church and an integral ecology" in the Amazon region.

It was already a novelty at the Synod that, according to bishops with a long standing experience of Bishops' synods convoked by the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, this one had been the one with the highest number of women - over 30 - participating in different functions in the Synod. Many presented their reflections during the time set aside for short interventions.

The statement which at the same time is a call - '*Es la Hora*' or '*Now is the Time*' - and I have used as the title for my reflection - has its origin in the intervention of the secretary of the Latin American and Caribbean Religious (women and men) Conference (CLAR), Sr Daniela Cannavina from Argentina. She reminded us of the words of Pope Paul VI at the conclusion of Vatican Council II (1965) when he said, in a deeply prophetic spirit: "The hour is coming and in fact has come, when the vocation of woman is being achieved in its fullness, the hour in which woman acquires in the world an influence, an effect and a power never hitherto achieved. That is why, at this moment when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel can do so much to aid mankind in not falling." Sr Daniela called attention to the fact that already 54 years have passed since these words of Pope Paul VI and we still continue to reclaim that this hour finally may come.

Now is the time for transformation

Many women and also bishops stressed at the Synod that now is the time to make it possible for women to assume their rightful place in the Church which demands a stronger role for them in various fields: pastoral care, theology and Church government. The pastoral and ecclesial situation is an imperative, as well as the growing awareness in many societies and cultures worldwide of the equal dignity of men and women, and the women's rights claim for necessary changes in our Church which have been awaited for so long. Therefore, the affirmation '*Now is the Time*' became for many of us a kind of call or inspiring motto during the Synod.

In many moments of formal and informal encounter, and during sharing in the Synod or in the small working groups, there was the awareness that there needs to be persistent common efforts to overcome machismo and clericalism in our Church in general and in the Church of Amazonia in particular. There was also a call for many more women to be in leadership positions in the Church which do not require priestly ordination and for which many women have the necessary professional skills, qualifications, talents and skills.

In the small working group in which I participated during the Synod, one of the bishops, for example, appointed some time ago a woman as vicar general of his diocese who is exercising her responsibility of leadership in all affairs which, according to Canon Law, do not demand to be taken care of by a priest. Out of his experience and conviction the same bishop said that to become a synodal Church does not only mean to walk together as a faith community but also to discern and to decide together and that in the different phases of the process women need to be fully included.

In different moments of sharing reflections and insights it became very clear what was eventually stated in the final document of the Synod, namely the recognition that the need for a stronger role for women flows out of the given reality. In many parts of the Amazon region Church is present thanks to women and their strong faith commitment, because of the great shortage of priests. The vast majority of Catholic communities are only visited two or at most three times a year by a priest and have the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist. Many women, especially women religious, accompany and lead Christian communities, coordinate pastoral work and foment various initiatives like bible groups in which members of the community read together the Word of God and reflect on its meaning for their life in the Amazon context and in their communities. They are involved in caring for the health of the people, including indigenous knowledge and wisdom concerning herbal medicine and different treatments for many diseases present in that region. There is a commitment to an integral ecology and a Christian creation spirituality and its practice in daily life. For this reason, as the final document manifests, there is a call to create a ministry for women as leaders of Christian Catholic communities. It is explicitly said that this would be in answer to the "changing demands of evangelisation and [pastoral] attention to the communities" (102).

Women committed to care for the environment and the survival of Amazonia

Inspired by their faith commitment, many women, especially from the indigenous communities, are strongly committed to care for the territory of the Amazonian peoples with its rainforest, rivers and waterfalls; and to help their communities to discern well what is at stake when big companies come to offer them money and other benefits in order to get their consent to major projects with vast and long lasting negative impacts on the ecosystem of the region. Those ecosystems are very rich in biodiversity and at the same time very vulnerable.

One of the indigenous women from Peru, as a representative of the indigenous communities in the Amazon region, said during her intervention in the Synod: "Many institutions and big extractive companies want to see us, the indigenous communities divided; they want that we disappear as such." Therefore, she asked in deeply touching and moving words Pope Francis and all the participants in the Synod that the Church may recognise this critical moment of the Amazon region and its people at this point of history and be an ally of the indigenous and all the other different Amazon populations in their struggle for maintaining a living Amazonia.

Along the same lines, the German scientist Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, who is an expert in questions of climate change and its repercussions in different parts of the world, and who took part in the elaboration of the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, stressed very much that according to scientific studies there are only 10 years left to stop the ecological collapse of the region. This would be through massive deforestation and multiple negative impacts on the ecosystems of the Amazon through projects which are mainly driven by the economic interest of maximum profit in a short time. As Amazonia is the "biological heart of our planet", said Schellnhuber, and is extremely important for the regulation of the climate on the Earth, its collapse would have very disastrous consequences not only for Latin America but for the whole world.

Though at times women, especially those who are leaders of communities and organisations, sometimes let themselves be corrupted by companies or authorities, generally they are known for being much less corruptible than men. Many of them live out the strong vision of an integral ecology which is an essential part of their cultures and reminds them that human beings only can have a good future and a fulfilling life when they learn to live in community with the other people and with the other living beings, woven together in a web of life characterised by respectful interaction and interdependence.

One woman religious highlighted in her intervention at the synod that part of the new way in which we need to operate as a Church in Amazonia is the fostering of good education for women in conditions of poverty, especially in the indigenous communities. Many of them, after finalising their studies, prove to be highly committed to putting their knowledge at the service of their communities and of promoting a truly sustainable development which allows for a Good Life in the indigenous sense. It always implies ethical and community dimensions and means a Good Life for all and not only for a few.

The petition for strengthening the role of women in the Church and the explicit request expressed in many consultations realised in the Amazon region in preparation of the Synod, that the Church may allow for the permanent diaconate for women (see final document 103), are to be understood within the whole commitment of the Church in Amazonia. That is an undertaking to respond to the call to new ways for the Church in order to respond more fully to the very challenging social, cultural and ecological realities of this specific region with its potential, deep wounds and high risk of ecological devastation and collapse. Through the final document the Church of Amazonia has assumed the commitment to be an ally of the peoples in struggling for the life of this region, a struggle for which the wisdom, knowledge, skills, talents of all peoples in that region are required.

At the same time, this struggle needs very much the commitment and solidarity of the people in other areas of the world in the awareness that all of us are part of Amazonia. To care for Amazonia is an expression of our love of God, that is love in action in solidarity with Amazonia and its peoples.

- Birgit Weiler is a German Medical Mission Sister and theologian, who has worked with REPAM and participated as one of the experts in the Synod for Amazonia. She has been on mission in Peru since 1988, focusing on theology and pastoral work. She is linked with the Columbans, especially in Peru, in the mission to promote the care of the Earth, our common home, as inspired by *Laudato Si'*. She fosters a Christian creation spirituality and an ecological lifestyle.

- This is the fourteenth in a series of Columban articles this year about the Synod on Amazonia, held during October 2019 at the Vatican.

All the articles are available on Independent Catholic News: www.indcatholicnews.com/search/amazonia and at <https://columbancenter.org/Synod-on-Amazon-Model-for-World> - The series of articles is called 'Synod on the Amazon: Model for the World'.

LINKS

Closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Address of Pope Paul VI to Women 8 December 1965:

https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651208_epilogo-concilio-donne.html

Final document of the Amazonia Synod – summary: www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2019-10/amazon-synod-final-document.html

JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE URGES SAFER PASSAGE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

14/11/2019 JRS responds to new parliamentary report on the safety of migrants and asylum seekers

On Monday MPs published a report indicting the UK's excessive focus on border security, leading Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) to once again call for safe and legal routes to migrate and seek asylum.

The report, compiled by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, says that "A policy that focuses exclusively on closing borders will drive migrants to take more dangerous routes, and push them into the hands of criminal groups." It comes in the wake of the tragic deaths of 39 people whose bodies were found in a lorry container in Essex last month.

Sarah Teather, Director of the Jesuit Refugee Service, said: "This report is further evidence of the harm caused by a migration policy obsessed with making movement as difficult as possible. A new approach, which makes it easier for people to move when they need to and truly prioritises the protection of human life, is urgently required."

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee called for the government to establish more pathways to seek asylum from outside of Europe, and to encourage other European countries to do likewise, echoing longstanding calls for safe and legal routes from the Jesuit Refugee Service. JRS in Europe is involved in advocating for humanitarian visas for those seeking sanctuary.

Sarah Teather commented on this recommendation: "We welcome the call for more pathways to seek asylum from outside of Europe. At JRS UK, we work with Vietnamese victims of trafficking. They were vulnerable to traffickers because there were no regular routes by which they could migrate. Many asylum seekers we serve have also been forced to make dangerous journeys, because the alternative was certain death if they stayed where they were. This will continue for as long as governments in safe countries cut off routes to reach them."

For more information about the Jesuit Refugee Service in the UK, please visit <https://www.jrsuk.net/>

TORY MINISTER CALLS WHITE POPPIES 'ATTENTION SEEKING RUBBISH'

May Bulman *The Independent* 10/11/2019

Military veterans are calling on a Conservative minister to apologise after he called white poppies "attention seeking rubbish" and urged people to "ignore" those who wear them.

Veterans minister Johnny Mercer last month accused people who wore the white "pacifist" poppy - an alternative to the traditional red poppy, usually worn to symbolise commitment to peace as well as remembrance for war victims - of "hijacking symbolism" for their own ends. He said on Twitter: "Ignore the wearers of them. If you don't want to wear a poppy don't bother; they fought and died so you could choose. But don't deliberately try and hijack it's symbolism for your own ends."

Mr Mercer's remarks have prompted a backlash from some military veterans, who argue he should instead spend energy on addressing issues that face former servicemen and women settling back into civilian life. A letter to Mr Mercer signed by 12 former members of the armed forces states: "As veterans who wear white poppies, we do not expect the Minister for Veterans to encourage people to ignore us. We would expect someone in your position to be aware that a percentage of white poppy wearers are former armed forces personnel. We wear white poppies because we share the values that they represent: remembrance for all victims of war of all nationalities, including both civilians and armed forces personnel; a commitment to peace; and a rejection of any attempt to celebrate or sanitise war. We suggest that instead of worrying about what poppy someone might wear, as Minister for Veterans, you would be better spending your energy addressing the issues afflicting veterans of all services."

The letter, seen exclusively by *The Independent*, goes on to point out that veterans are disproportionately represented in the homeless population, in prisons, and among those with mental health issues. "While the state pays for the waging of war, veterans are expected to rely on charity when they return to civilian life," it states. "In recent years, the government has been cutting the welfare state on which veterans should be able to rely, while maintaining the seventh highest military expenditure in the world. We look forward to receiving an apology from you, along with a public acknowledgment that your comments were unfair and inaccurate."

Debate around which colour poppy to wear on Remembrance Sunday has become particularly divisive in recent years. While critics of the white poppy often associate it with left-wingers or conscientious objectors – despite it being worn by some war veterans – opponents of the red poppy have sometimes suggested it glorifies military conflict – a claim vigorously rejected by the Royal British Legion.

Since adopting the symbol in 1936, the Peace Pledge Union, Britain's oldest secular pacifist organisation, has repeatedly argued that the white poppy is both a rejection of militarism and a mark of remembrance for all victims of war, soldiers and civilians alike, of all nationalities.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/veterans-white-popy-johnny-mercer-remembrance-day-sunday-a9196606.html>

THE MOTHS HAVE EATEN ME: REFLECTIONS ON FAILURE, FAITH AND GRACE

Brian Cahill 26/10/2019

Twenty years after he entered a Trappist monastery, Thomas Merton was reflecting on the failures of his past, and in doing so, helping the rest of us reflect on the failures in our past. He wrote in his journal: "It does not seem that I have willfully sinned, i.e., with my eyes wide open, in a serious matter. But there have been repeated failures, failures without number, like holes appearing everywhere in a worn-out garment. Nothing has been effectively patched. The moths have eaten me, while I was confusedly intent on what seemed to me to be good, or important — or necessary for survival." It is not my intent to minimize Merton's sins and failures before his conversion and call to monastic life. But I am comfortable in stating that my sins and failures are the one area where I have exceeded him. In his analogy about the moths, Merton could have been writing about me.

In my first marriage, there were sins of omission, of negligence, of passivity, of failure to act, failure as a husband, failure to notice my daughter LeAnn's depression early on, failure to make my son Ed feel safe and loved as a young child, and especially later as he was struggling with his sexual identity. There were "repeated failures" where I discovered too late that "nothing had been effectively patched" because I was "confusedly intent on what seemed to me to be good or important or necessary for survival." The moths had devoured me and I didn't even know it happened.

Years later, I would experience further, greater failure — my failure to prevent my oldest son, John, a police officer, from taking his life in 2008. And in 2016, I was helpless to stop my daughter LeAnn from ending her life after battling with mental and physical illness.

In *Falling Upward*, Franciscan Fr. Richard Rohr writes, "Life, if we are honest about it, is made up of many failings and fallings, amidst all of our hopeful growing and achieving." He goes on: "We grow spiritually much more by doing it wrong than by doing it right." His point is that our failings can be a foundation for our ongoing spiritual growth. In his earlier book *Immortal Diamond*, Rohr writes, "Grace is what God does to keep all things he has made in love and alive — forever. ... Grace is not something God gives; grace is who God is. ... Grace is found at the depths and in the death of everything."

I am in my late 70s, but it has only been recently that without completely understanding it, I have begun to experience grace arising from the worst kind of pain, from the depths of pain, and in the death of two of my children. Some years after John died, I wrote *Cops, Cons and Grace: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Suicide*. I wrote the book to honour my son, and to help other cops avoid what happened to John, and to begin to explore the relationship between pain and grace. I'm still exploring that mysterious terrain, that symbiotic connection, but for most of my life, I was clueless about such a connection.

It has taken me a while, but I have found, especially after losing two children to suicide, that to directly face the pain, horror and grief that arises from such losses is the only way to survive, the only way to honour lost loved ones, the only way to meet our responsibilities to our existing loved ones in this life. In *Healing Through the Dark Emotions*, Miriam Greenspan makes a powerful argument for aggressively confronting our suffering as the most effective and healthy way to grieve and to heal.

As a potential husband, I was the poster boy for lack of self-awareness. After eight years in the seminary and six months on active duty in the Marine Corps Reserve, I met Karen and drifted into marriage and fatherhood with no idea of what I was doing, but with unfounded optimism and a firm sense that I was in control of everything. Periodically, the reality of our flawed marriage would begin to creep into our consciousness. But we stayed together for 30 years, ultimately neither of us happy, me convinced that if I just planned enough for the future, everything would get better, and Karen pretty sure that it would not get better. Eventually, she realised she was right and that was the end of our marriage. I realise now that I drove Karen crazy with my blind optimism, my incessant future planning, my lofty expectations, my passivity and my limitless denial, and she, not intentionally, had been slowly chipping away my spirit with her depression and distance.

I have a framed photo of my three children from my first marriage. John is 4, Ed 3, and LeAnn is a year and a half. The picture is black and white, but I remember that LeAnn wore a pink dress that day. The boys are wearing long-sleeved, striped T-shirts, the kind they wouldn't be caught dead wearing a few years later. None of them are looking directly at the camera. They are all blond; they are all smiling, innocent. They all look as if they're feeling loved and safe. I stare at this picture of my babies and I have to fight the urge to want to go back to that time, to go back to that time when God and Karen had given me such beautiful children, when I thought I knew what I was doing, when I thought I was in control, when I thought I was entitled to be happy, when it never occurred to me that young children need a laser focus of attention beyond a parent's stated love, when it never occurred to me that everything is fragile and nothing is safe.

There's a picture taken when Ed was 3 and John was 4. He and John had just created a tower of large hardwood blocks. The tower is as tall as they are. John is standing on one side with his arms folded and a broad smile of accomplishment on his face. Ed is standing on the other side of the tower with his arms folded just like his big brother's. He has a smile of satisfaction on his face, but his eyes reveal a hint of awareness that the entire structure could come crashing down at any minute.

There is a picture of the kids and me taken by a tourist at Glacier Point in Yosemite in the summer of 1981. We're in shorts and T-shirts. John is on my right, LeAnn is in the centre, and Ed is on my left. John is 15, Ed 14, and LeAnn 12. John is not smiling, not because he is unhappy but because he's a teenager, and he definitely knows he has to be cool. LeAnn's shoulders are slumped but she is smiling. Ed is partially sitting on the railing, looking slightly beyond the camera, not smiling, not frowning, almost looking like he was forming a question in his head, and quite possibly, by this time, not feeling loved, not feeling safe.

Today, there is grace in my life, the grace of my second marriage and my life with Donna, and the grace of Danielle, Donna's daughter, who became my daughter and gave me a second chance to be a father. There is the grace of my relationship with Ed; there are scars and there is distance, but I know he loves me and he knows I love him. And where there is love there is grace. There is grace in having watched my granddaughters grow into adulthood.

There is the grace of close, supportive friends who understand the difference between empathy and sympathy. There is the grace of my work doing suicide prevention training for police officers and in a unique, intense and unexpected way, there is overwhelming grace in my prison ministry work, and an undeniable sense of God's presence every Sunday morning and Tuesday evening when I'm with a bunch of lifers in the San Quentin chapel. But I have learned that grace in my life does not make the pain go away. And the pain can lead to feelings of failure and guilt and regret. My counsellor periodically reminds me that if I give in to the guilt, then my love can't flow. And my Jesuit spiritual director reminds me that guilt is the final, futile, stupid effort to retain control. But some days it is impossible not to regret the past.

None of the above readings and reflections are a guarantee that Merton's moths will not revisit me, and nothing — not even God's grace — can erase my past and the loss of two of my children. But it seems I have become a little better in spotting and appreciating manifestations of God's grace: a well-timed, loving and insightful challenge from Donna; a smile from my 4-year-old great-granddaughter that lights up the room; a cop who comes up to me and thanks me for the suicide prevention training I did and makes me feel close to John; an inmate in our Tuesday night San Quentin spirituality group who has been down 30 years and who suddenly has figured out that God loves him and has forgiven him and he needs to forgive himself. And while he may not realise it, his grace-filled "aha" moment is a reminder to me that God has forgiven me and I need to forgive myself.

As I write this, I'm asking myself: If I had not lost two children would not these graces still exist? I think the issue is not the existence of these graces, but whether at a time in my life where I thought I was in control, brimming with self-sufficiency, would I have recognised these incidents as gifts from God, gifts of God? I don't think so. I would have seen them as my due, as confirmation of my optimism and sense of control — my perspective before my brokenness, before I acknowledged my failings and fallings — before I began to understand how God really works in our lives.

● Brian Cahill is the retired executive director of San Francisco Catholic Charities and the author of *Cops, Cons and Grace: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Suicide*.

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/moths-have-eaten-me-reflections-failure-faith-and-grace>

HARROW: YOUNG PEOPLE TRAINED UP TO TACKLE BULLYING WITH DIANA AWARD

Source: St Dominic's Sixth Form College 06/11/2019

A hundred students took part in a one-day anti-bullying training session run by The Diana Award at St Dominic's Sixth Form College in Harrow, West London, on 29 October. Young people from nine local schools, aged 14-17, worked together and acquired vital skills to enable them to change the attitudes and behaviours of bullying in their school or College by building their skills and confidence to address different situations, both online and off.

The Diana Award's free Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programme which is available to schools across the UK, sees trainers working with students and other young people to change the attitude surrounding bullying. The programme has a strong peer-to-peer focus, with trainers giving young people the skills and confidence to become Anti-Bullying Ambassadors to tackle bullying in their schools long after the training has finished. The Diana Award's anti-bullying work is recognised as world-class thanks to this sustainable approach.

The training looked at bullying in different situations including face-to-face and online. At the end of the day, pupils made an action plan of how to approach bullying issues that may arise in their schools and committed to their roles as Anti-Bullying Ambassadors. Commenting on the training Andrew Parkin the Principal at St Dominic's said: "It is really important that Catholic schools and Colleges take a lead in ensuring that all forms of bullying are tackled robustly so as to foster a climate of tolerance and respect for all our students."

The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Ambassador programme is run by the charity, The Diana Award. The Diana Award was founded as a legacy to Diana, Princess of Wales' belief that young people have the power to change the world for the better. Its mission is to foster, develop and inspire positive change in the lives of young people.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38428>

The Diana Award <https://diana-award.org.uk/anti-bullying/about/>

St Dominic's Sixth Form College www.stdoms.ac.uk

RESOURCES

ADVENT REFLECTIONS

A set of four reflections based on the readings for each week of Advent with prayers and ideas for action.

Download at: <https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/resources/advent-reflections-for-2019/>

ADVENT PRAYER JOURNEY

An A4 sheet based on the daily readings with prayers and reflections. Please feel free to photocopy and circulate.

Download at: <https://jpshrewsbury.files.wordpress.com/2019/11/an-advent-journey.pdf>

BISHOP JOHN ARNOLD LAUNCHES LIVE SIMPLY COOKBOOK

Elouise Hobbs 11/11/2019

The Bishop of Salford has officially launched *The Live Simply Book of Recipes and Tips* which was written and produced by a group of dedicated volunteers in Oxford. Last week, Bishop John Arnold, Bishop of Salford, celebrated Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes, Wheatley, part of Corpus Christi Parish in Oxford, to help launch the book that had been created by the parishioners to help others to live and cook more simply.

For the past 18 months, the Parish of Corpus Christi has been working towards a *LiveSimply* Award. Created by the charity CAFOD, the award hopes to enable parishes, in response to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, to take greater responsibility in caring for the planet and for our neighbours, especially those living in poverty. This latest initiative was driven by Pope Francis's plea for everyone to be more careful with food waste. Corpus Christi parish is just one of many around the country who have started their *LiveSimply* journey with CAFOD. There are now over 50 groups across England and Wales who have been presented with the award. The group are hoping that their example will inspire others to also take up a simpler way of living.

The Live Simply Book of Recipes and Tips - price £5 (+£1.60. P&P)

To order copies e-mail livesimplyrecipe@gmail.com to obtain payment details.

Find out how you can get involved in *Live Simply* at cafod.org.uk/livesimply

POETRY: AN INVADED LIFE BY FR ROB ESDAILE

An Invaded Life is the title of Fr Rob Esdaile's latest book of poems, just published, which gathers reflections on a rather disparate series of themes, as he explains in the introduction: "I have long had the custom of writing a reflection for our parish 'Advent Carols and Readings by Candlelight' service each year, trying to tease out what the Christmas feast is really celebrating. Next comes a series of moments from Lent, Holy Week and Eastertide that have caught my eye. What is this Passion thing about - this great surrender, this fruitful dying and new life born of loss? At the heart of the book are some poems recording the gradual failing of my dear mother's health over several years and the privilege of accompanying her on that journey. (She died in August.) I hope they might encourage others facing the challenges of aging or of 'parenting the parents.' Reflections on my experience of ordained ministry - which I hope might encourage others to consider this path as a joyful calling - lead in turn to some sidelong glances at contemporary life before some final thoughts on 'End Times' and dealing with change."

This is Fr. Rob's fourth book of poetry and is available from Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Hampton Court Way, Thames Ditton, Surrey KT7 0LP, priced £7 (including postage and packing). Cheques to Our Lady of Lourdes parish.

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/38223>

TATE LIVERPOOL: FIRST MAJOR UK EXHIBITION OF AMERICAN ARTIST THEASTER GATES

Theaster Gates (b. 1973) is one of the world's most influential living artists. In *Theaster Gates: Amalgam*, the artist explores the complex and interweaving issues of race, territory, and inequality in the United States. The exhibition takes the history of Malaga as its point of departure. During the 19th century, this small island off the coast of Maine, USA, was home to an ethnically-mixed community. In 1912, on the orders of the state governor, Malaga's inhabitants were forcibly removed to the mainland. They were offered no housing, jobs or support. *Amalgam* presents sculpture, installation, film and dance that respond to this history. Highlights include a new film, *Dance of Malaga 2019*, which features the choreography of acclaimed American dancer, Kyle Abraham. Gates's musical collective, *The Black Monks* provide the film's score. Their blues and gospel-inspired sound can be heard throughout the exhibition, continuing into an immersive 'forest' installation.

Theaster Gates is a socially engaged artist living and working in Chicago, Illinois. He began his career studying urban planning, which continues to influence his work. He is best known for his projects in South Side, Chicago, where he has redeveloped abandoned buildings for community use. Reminiscent of the ongoing work in the Granby area of Liverpool, Gates shows how art can transform places and improve the lives of the people who live there.

Tate Liverpool, Royal Albert Dock Liverpool. Liverpool L3 4BB 13 December 2019 – 3 May 2020

<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/theaster-gates-amalgam>

VIVIAN SUTER – EXHIBITION AT TATE LIVERPOOL

Explore the tropical landscape of Guatemala through Vivian Suter's immersive installation of hanging paintings. Navigate your way through the maze of colourful hanging paintings, which form Vivian Suter's (b. 1949) large-scale installation *Nisyros (Vivian's Bed) 2016-17*. Suter's work is inspired by the tropical landscape of Panajachel in Guatemala, where she lives and works. The environment plays an important role in the making and development of her work. She leaves her artwork outdoors to be exposed to the elements so that natural substances, such as volcanic and botanical matter, are incorporated into the work. Look closely at the hanging canvases and see whether you can spot the leaves or twigs congealed in the thick paint or the random imprints of her dog's paws.

You can find Vivian Suter in our ground floor Wolfson Gallery. It is the first solo display of Vivian Suter's work in the UK. Tate Liverpool, Royal Albert Dock Liverpool. Liverpool L3 4BB 13 December 2019 – 15 March 2020

<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/vivian-suter>

DIARY DATES

NOVEMBER

22 The Determinants of Food Poverty – a feeding Liverpool event chaired by Bishop John Rawsthorne and Prof Hilary Russell 9am-1pm LACE, Croxteth Drive, Sefton Park, Liverpool L17 1AA. Details: Steve Atherton 0151 522 1080

s.atherton@rcaol.co.uk

23 Time Out Quiet Day 10am-4pm at The Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 6TW. Input and time for individual quiet prayer and reflection. Cost £10. Tea & coffee provided. Bring your own lunch. For more information or to book: Tel 0151 722 2271 email: winniecenacle@mail.com

23 Sustainable Chester Winter Fair 11am – 4.30pm St Mary's Creative Space, St Mary's Hill, Chester CH1 2DW. Friends of the Earth are hosting their 2nd Winter Fair, now under their new organisation Eco Communities. A range of stalls, crafts and entertainment throughout the day. Stalls selling eco, ethical, sustainable goods welcome. Charities and causes.

Interactive stalls where people can share crafts and skills to make a more eco, low carbon footprint and sustainable world.

23 Advent Reflection Day starting at 10am Burnley and Pendle Faith Centre, Barden Lane, Burnley, BB10 1JD. Details:

bea_foster@hotmail.com

25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women unwomen.org/en

27 The Centre for Alternative Technology and the era of Climate Change joint meeting of CWDF with Chester University's Department of Geography and International Development. 7.30-9PM Best Building, University of Chester, off Parkgate Road, Chester CH1 4BJ. Speaker Dr Jane Fisher, local Chester resident and senior lecturer on the staff at CAT. Contact 01244 350323.

29 CAFOD Shrewsbury Memorial Mass St Mary's Crewe. Details: chogan@cafod.org.uk

29 Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People www.un.org/en/events/palestinianday/

29-1 December Holy Rood House Retreat *Dreaming Dreams for Advent*. Exploring Advent themes through dreams with writer and researched in the Catholic faith Veronica Whitty and members of the Holy Rood community. Holy Rood House & Thorpe House Centre for Health and Pastoral Care, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 1HX enquiries@holyroodhouse.org.uk

DECEMBER

1 World Aids Day National AIDS Trust worldaidsday.org

1 Prisoners for Peace Day wri-irg.org/en/campaigns - Send greetings to individuals/Human Rights Groups acatuk.org.uk

3 Pre-Election Q&A session 7.30pm The Queen's School Chester CH1 2NN

10 Time Out Quiet Day 10am-4pm at The Convent of Our Lady of the Cenacle, Tithebarn Grove, Lance Lane, Wavertree, Liverpool, L15 6TW. Input and time for individual quiet prayer and reflection. Cost £10. Tea & coffee provided. Bring your own lunch. For more information or to book: Tel 0151 722 2271 email: winniecenacle@mail.com

10 UN Human Rights Day unmeditation.org/

18 International Migrants Day un.org/en/events/migrantsday/

NJPN continues to have a weekly column in *The Universe*, and some of these are uploaded onto our website.

Independent Catholic News <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/justice-peace-environment>

World Council of Churches <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/>

UK Parliament News <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/>

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

- Sign up for regular news and information from NJPN (plus copies of this newsletter & back issues) and resources at www.justice-and-peace.org.uk or contact admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk 020 7901 4864

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