

NJPN Column in the Catholic Universe: Matt Jezorski – Pilgrimage of Peace

In December 1918, brothers Tom and Peter Allen died two days apart in Nelson, Lancashire, two more casualties of the influenza epidemic that tore through the post-war world.

They were Catholic conscientious objectors who refused to join the slaughter of the First World War and were on compassionate leave from prison to attend the funeral of their mother when they died.

Years of ill treatment in cramped, filthy conditions left them weak and malnourished and especially susceptible to the illness.

On 15th May, International Conscientious Objectors Day, I will be cycling the 50 miles from my home in Warrington to the Allens' grave in All Souls Cemetery, Barrowford, paying prayerful tribute to their courageous witness and that of other Lancastrian peacemakers whose stories I encounter along the way.

My journey is part of a wider Pilgrimage of Peace being organised by Pax Christi England & Wales between 15th and 21st May, the Feast of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, the Austrian farmer martyred for refusing to fight for Hitler. Bruce Kent will be visiting the embassies of the nuclear armed states, reading parts of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and delivering a personal message. Pat Gaffney will be telling stories of women peacemakers as she walks from Victoria to the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park.

A week is not enough for Bellerive FCJ Catholic College in Liverpool, which is holding a peace month. It will feature a sunflower growing contest, bake sale, praying with the Pax Christi Icon of Peace and celebrations of women peacemakers. Activities conclude with a visit by Archbishop Malcolm McMahon, President of Pax Christi, to coincide with the feast of Blessed Franz.

Up and down the country, Pax Christi members and supporters are walking, cycling, dancing, and knitting for peace. In doing so they will be bearing witness to peace, building awareness of Pax Christi's work, and raising vital funds to support it.

On International Conscientious Objectors Day, as I cycle the hills of Lancashire, the courage of Tom and Peter Allen and that of so many Lancastrian

peacemakers will be at the forefront of my mind. And, since I am not really built for hills, I hope some of their courage rubs off on me!

Donations to: tinyurl.com/PaxDonate.

Matt Jeziorski is an Executive Committee member of Pax Christi.

NJPN Annual Conference 23-25 July at:

<https://www.justice-andpeace.org.uk/conference/>