

A CARMELITE APPROACH TO JUSTICE

On Saturday 16 September the Commission held a Day of Reflection with the Carmelite nuns at their Wood Hall monastery, near Wetherby. We made the practical arrangements and they did the hard work of putting together talks and time for prayer – as well as devising a programme that left some space for silent reflection.

Here, Sr Philomena reflects on the theme of that day.

The Carmelite Sisters have lived at Wood Hall, near Wetherby in the Leeds diocese for almost 50 years. Our life is one of withdrawal from the world for the sake of an intense life of prayer. One might well ask if our lives are of any value to anyone, especially when considering matters of Justice and Peace? But it is only when we have a deep belief in our union, as Christians, with Christ's own prayer for His people, that our way of life here makes any sense. Our prayer focus has to be world-wide.

St Teresa of Avila, the foundress of our way of life as Carmelite Nuns, urges us not to let our prayer be confined to the four walls of our cells but to be always, reaching out beyond ourselves especially to all those who suffer in our world. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrote *"If we cling to Christ we will hear the multitudes within His heart, suffering, weeping, praying"*. This sums up our way of life, and surely that of every Christian, so that our prayer and our deep concern is for all who suffer.



The challenges for us resulting from this journey into the heart of Christ, is how we, in our cloister, can be more united with those who suffer in the

wider world and on our own doorstep, and how we can campaign for a more just society and a fairer distribution of wealth. Nowadays in our Churches, there are many who, because of ageing and ill health, are no longer able to be so active on the front line, and, who like ourselves in our enclosed convent, still have a vital "activity" of clinging to Christ and encountering the multitude in His heart who are so in need of help. All of us can share, too, in that essential rôle of Moses who held up his hands in prayer on the mountain top as the battle waged below, and pleaded for the victory of his people.

From our earliest days at Wood Hall we were made very aware, and in a more direct manner, of the gross injustices in our world. This was due in no small way to our local Justice and Peace Commission. We have learned so much from you all.

What we wanted to share together on the day at our monastery is our co-dependence on each other. There is a need for the Martha and the Mary to be alive in all of us, each one of us has to sit at Jesus' feet, listening to those calling to us from His heart, and having heard, giving oneself in love and service, but also in intercessory prayer.

All things and all people, so to speak, call on us with small or loud voices. They want us to listen. They want us to understand their intrinsic claims, their justice of being. But we can give it to them only through love, the love that listens.

Paul Tillich

The day was a great success and, given the level of interest that it generated, we are hoping that there can be a similar day in the Spring of 2018. As one participant put it :

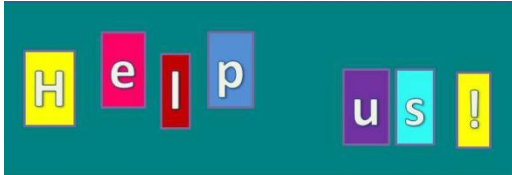
I really enjoyed the day, and was surprised by the Carmelite sisters. I had expected quiet, unworldliness - but found strong, well-informed women with a great sense of humour!

CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COMMISSION

It is almost a year now since we started to appeal for financial support – especially for regular financial support in the form of standing orders. We have been much encouraged by your response to this – so a big **THANK YOU** all round

but

we still need more people to help us financially!



We are grateful to the Diocese for the use of office premises but due to their own financial position they are unable to offer any direct financial support to the Commission. We are also grateful to the Grail society, the Las Casas Institute and CAFOD who have funded specific events and activities that we have

organised. We also deeply appreciate those parishes and religious in the Diocese, as well as individuals, who have offered donations towards our work.

Please consider if you could give something regularly to the Commission. We especially need this to help pay for our ongoing activities such as the maintenance of our website and the regular production of this newsletter.

At the start of our appeal we had a total of £240 per year coming to us in the form of regular donations. Currently, we are expecting to receive almost £1500 by the end of this financial year – a six fold increase!

However, our annual expenditure on the website and newsletter communications is more in the region of £4,000.So, we only need another 40 people to give £5 per month and we would be in a much more stable position. If you cannot give something on a regular basis could you organise a fundraiser to help the work of the Commission? 'Every little helps', as one supermarket chain would have it.

TACKLING UK POVERTY BY John Battle

Arguments between the major political parties over student tuition fees have eclipsed any discussions of tackling real rising poverty here in the UK.

The Government believes that the reforms introduced by the new 'Universal Credit' (which attempts to simplify and roll all social security benefits together) has resolved the problem by pushing benefit claimants quickly into work. The mantra "work is the way out of poverty" is regularly repeated.

The problem is that the available work has changed and at the bottom end part time, temporary, zero hours contracts and self-employment are all that's on offer in the so called 'insecure gig economy'. Often people in work, even cobbling together two or three part time jobs, cannot earn enough to make ends meet. It is widely acknowledged that wages have fallen behind rising inflation and living costs are projected to

rise four times as quickly as wages by 2019.



In reality, those in increasing poverty are actually working and are experiencing a squeeze on their household budgets. Both working and non working benefits have been frozen and the new Universal Credit system, now being introduced, is not working properly and is leaving even those in work short of funds and

driven to food banks.

The reason is that the wage “top up” payments that used to support low wages (‘working tax credit), has been cut and child benefit payments are now restricted to the first two children which for many families is a cut in basic family allowances. Furthermore a total ‘cap’ has been put on Universal Credit payments and as this new system includes housing benefit for rent support rising rents are taking up too much of the total money received. If most of the Universal credit is going on rent it leaves little for food, clothing and childcare costs.

On top of all of this there is built into the application system for Universal Credit a six week delay before you can get a payment. That means if you lose your job (usually with no pay off) you have to wait six weeks before receiving any money. The rent payments go short, risking evictions.. Now national charities including Church Action on Poverty, Shelter, the Mental

Health Foundation and politicians from all parties are calling for the Universal Credit roll out to be paused and for work allowances to be restored, the six weeks delay to be abolished and for housing and child allowances to be increased in next month’s Budget to take the pressure off the increasing numbers of working poor now forced to go to food banks and charities such as the SVP.

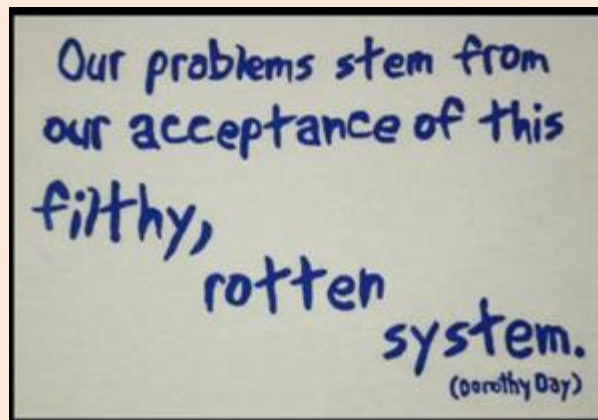
Meanwhile, Pope Francis has declared Sunday 19th November “World Day of Prayer for the Poor” with the prayer;

“Loving God, open our eyes to hear you in the cry of those living in poverty, open our eyes to see you in the lives of the oppressed, open our hearts to meet you in others and to respond with mercy and compassion. Pour out on us your grace, so that we may grow as your faithful people, always seeking your kingdom of Truth, Justice and peace through Christ our Lord Amen”

UK FAMILY POVERTY: A DIOCESE ACTS – Save the date.

Kala Sangam Centre, Forster Square Bradford

Sat 10 February 2018 10:30 – 3:30pm



Although we are still in the early stages of planning, we are in the process of organising a workshop-based conference about the various aspects of family poverty in the UK today.

This event is aimed at all those who care about family life. We know the fantastic work done throughout the Leeds Diocese by conferences of the SVP and numerous other organisations to help those who do not have enough to live. This conference will aim to take us deeper into this subject – what are the causes of family poverty in the UK today? – and what is the ‘just’ Gospel response to the policies and associated systems that give rise to this poverty?

More Details to follow in November

NONVIOLENCE WORKS!

A brief report from the open meeting organised by Pax Christi through the Peace Studies department at Leeds Beckett University on Tuesday October 3rd.



After some formal introductions, **Pat Gaffney**, General Secretary of Pax Christi UK set the scene. The groundwork for the nonviolence conference at the Vatican in 2016 started in 2013. Having the conference itself was something of

a breakthrough, in terms of the support from the Church establishment. However, the conference was only a starting point for a process which is continuing and growing, in terms of the numbers of people involved. Everyone was delighted when the pope chose the theme of 'nonviolence: a style of politics for peace' for Peace Sunday in 2017 and the hope is that Pope Francis will go on to write an encyclical about it.



Marie Dennis is an author of several books and Co-President of Pax Christi International. She has been a leading light in the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative. She

described how the Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference, and the conversations since then have included people from across the globe. They knew that it was essential first of all listen to the people who are in the front line. The conference included participants from the Philippines, Northern Nigeria and other areas directly affected by violent conflict.

Since the conference meetings have been exploring a number of topics such as exploring the best biblical exegesis about Jesus' approach to conflicts, how to explicitly integrate Gospel nonviolence into the life of the Church and a fundamental review of 'Just War' theory (in reality, is there any conflict situation today that could justify war as the solution?). This global dialogue, mediated through the use of modern technology, is growing and the global presence of the Church means that Catholics have a unique contribution to make – though in answer to a question, Marie

agreed that there was much that could and must be learned from working ecumenically.



Maria Stephan is senior policy fellow at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), where she focuses on the dynamics of civil resistance and its relevance for violent conflict prevention and democratic

development. Maria is the 'go to' person in terms of the quantitative academic research into the examination of the outcomes of violent vs nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution. Her collaborations with other researchers have examined over 400 major conflict situations since 1900. Cutting to the chase, in terms of outcomes, nonviolent approaches are seen to be around twice as successful as violent approaches, on a range of measures. The main problem is that 'if the only tool you have is a hammer then all your problems start to look like nails.' Countries spend billions on having plenty of violence-based 'tools' in their conflict resolution toolkit. Very few spend significant amounts, if any, on developing nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution. Isn't it time we really started advocating for change in this area of Government policy?

FIND OUT MORE / DO MORE

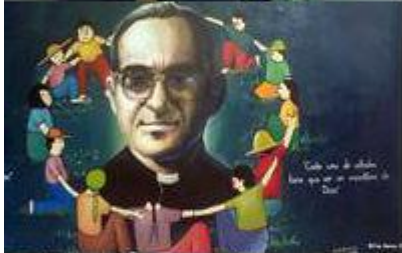
The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative website <https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/> has many interesting resources to explore further the ideas touched on here.

Pax Christi UK play a significant role and also have resources that you might find helpful. <http://paxchristi.org.uk>

Read the book!

"Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict" by Erica Chenoweth & Maria J Stephan

HELP US TO GROW THE NETWORK OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISTS IN YORKSHIRE



Who can you get to sign up to this newsletter??

Communication is key to working for social justice:

- So we understand and can learn from what other people are doing
- So we do not feel isolated when we do try and do things
- So we can ask for help about a particular issue

There is no diocese-wide communication mechanism for social justice issues apart from this newsletter and our Facebook page. So who else might be interested to receive the newsletter and who might be interested to see our Facebook posts?

One of the commonest comments we get when visiting parishes is that they had no idea that the Commission existed - let alone any idea of the sorts of things that it does, or that there were groups in parishes across the Diocese who meet regularly.

Yet, working for Justice and Peace is not optional: we are all called to work for Justice & Peace. That doesn't mean we should all be in an SVP group or a J&P group. Many people, younger people especially, undertake social action and social justice action through all sorts of groups, and in all sorts of ways. Even so, it is still good not to feel isolated and to know that you are part of a community of activists across Yorkshire – a community that you can call on for help with your social justice actions.

So this appeal is directed not just towards people who are part of a group in their parish. It is directed towards *everyone* who understands that the Gospel calls us all to action to help build God's Kingdom of Justice and Peace.

If everyone receiving this newsletter got 3 other people to sign up our mailing list would immediately go through the 1000 mark – and that would be a great problem to have!

Three final points:-

- **It's easy to sign up** (all we need is someone's name, email address, their parish/organisation and locality).
- **It's only 1 or 2 emails a month.** No one gets bombarded with emails (as we can only pay for between 10-15 hours of someone's time each week it's just not feasible!)
- **It's easy to unsubscribe.** It's just a matter of following the link at the bottom of each email newsletter.



NUCLEAR WEAPONS BAN TREATY

On September 19th there was a [letter published in the Guardian](#) urging the Government to sign up (having boycotted the talks about it) to the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. One of the signatories was Archbishop Malcolm McMahon of Liverpool. The Commission was encouraged by this leadership and wrote him a letter of thanks:



Leeds Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission

Hinsley Hall, 62 Headingley Lane, Leeds, LS6 2BX
Telephone: 07764 580154

26 September 2017

Dear Bishop Malcolm,

Guardian Letter re Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

I am writing on behalf of the Leeds Diocese Justice & Peace Commission to thank you for being a signatory to the letter published in the Guardian on 19 September encouraging the UK Government to seize the opportunity to make the abolition of nuclear weapons a reality.

It is a very welcome intervention at a time of escalating tension and a great example to others in the Catholic Church of taking a wider perspective on being pro-life. Thank you.

We know that you have a meeting of Northern Bishops coming up shortly and we encourage you to seek the support of all of them to promote the Gospel messages of nonviolence by asking them to actively promote the abolition of nuclear weapons.

With warmest regards,

John D Battle (Chair)

MILLION MINUTES CELEBRATING YOUNG PEOPLE AWARDS.

In 2016 nearly 250 young people were nominated for these awards which celebrate the remarkable work done by many young people in putting Catholic Social Teaching into action.

The main nomination categories are:

The Jimmy Mizen Award: Promoting solidarity and Peace.

The Cardinal Hume Award: Living out the option for the poor.



NOMINATIONS FOR 2017 CLOSE ON 13 OCTOBER.

see:

<http://millionminutes.org/awards/>

The Joseph Cardijn Award: Protecting the dignity of workers.

The Dorothy Day Award: Fostering community and participation.

The Barbara Ward Award: Caring for the environment.

The St Josephine Bakhita Award: Celebrating human dignity.









Young nominees should be aged between 11 and 25.

Last year there was **NO ONE** nominated from any **Catholic School, college or university in Yorkshire.**

Who could you nominate? Let's have lots of nominations from Yorkshire this year.

EVENTS – See our website for a more comprehensive set of listings

 Tue 10 – Fri 13 Oct	<p>THE WORLD ON OUR DOORSTEP & A HEART4REFUGEES <i>Various events on the Green at Horsforth with a final event in St.Margaret's Church on Fri evng</i> This event has been organised by Horsforth Churches together in collaboration with The Refugee Council and Leeds City of sanctuary. There will be a 'refugee' village on the green, an art exhibition, regular 'conversations' to highlight particular aspects of refugee life and a final event on Friday 18:30-21:00 at St Margaret's church in Horsforth which will include food, stalls and music. See our full event listing on the website for more details.</p>
 Wed 12 Oct Thur 13 Oct	<p>GOSPEL STREET <i>12 Oct :St Matthias Church, St Matthias Street, Leeds LS4 2EL at 7:30 pm</i> <i>13 Oct: Christ Church, Wakefield Road Hipperholme HX3 8AA</i> What if Jesus walked down the streets of one of our cities today? GOSPEL STREET is a collaboration between award-winning writers, including rapper and hip-hop artist Testament, to create a powerful mix of theatre, comedy and spoken word.</p>
 Sat 21 Oct	<p>BRITAIN AND PALESTINE 1917 – 2017 ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF BROKEN PROMISES <i>Quaker Meeting House, School Lane, Liverpool L1 3BT 10:00 – 16:15</i> If you want to understand some of the history of conflict in Israel and Palestine – and the key role that Britain has played in exacerbating it – then this conference will be well worth a day out in Liverpool. It is free to attend and has been organised by Liverpool Friends of Palestine. Please use the contact form at the bottom of the homepage of their website to let them know if you intend to go : http://liverpoolfriendsofpalestine.co.uk/</p>
 22 Oct – 29 Oct	<p>ONE WORLD WEEK The theme for 2017 is "Good Neighbours – my world depends on us". More information and ideas for action and prayer from http://www.oneworldweek.org/v2/ Let us know what is happening in your parish and we will happily include it on our website.</p>
 Wed 25 Oct	<p>INAUGURAL MEETING OF JUSTICE & PEACE GROUP AT BARNOLDSWICK The parish of St Joseph in Barnoldswick are setting up a J&P group and their first meeting is at 7:15pm in the parish centre. ALL WELCOME. If you are from surrounding areas and have experience of being in a J&P group you would be very welcome as well.</p>

 Sat 28 Oct	<p>ONE WORLD WEEK: MULTICULTURAL SHARED MEAL <i>Mass at 5:30 followed by meal in the Newman Centre, St Theresa's, Station Road Crossgates, Leeds 15</i> In John Henry Newman parish in the east of Leeds there are more than 20 different nationalities in their congregations. The mass and meal will be a great celebration of this</p>
 Fri 03 Nov – Sat 04 Nov	<p>RESURRECTION OF HOPE: DIGGING DEEP FOR A JUST PEACE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL To mark the year of the 3 big anniversaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 years since the Balfour Declaration • 50 years Occupation of Palestinian Territories • 10 years Blockade of Gaza <p>Hexham Kairos and Peace and Justice in the Holy Land in partnership with Minsteracres Retreat Centre have organised this event on Nov 3rd/4th to coincide with the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration and the arrival of the "Walk for Justice in Jerusalem". See the URC website for more details and to download a booking form. http://urc-northernsynod.org/event/resurrection-of-hope-in-palestine-and-israel/</p>
 Tue 07 Nov Wed 08 Nov	<p>TANJA <i>7-8 Nov: The carriageworks, Millenium Square, Leeds 10 Nov:</i> The UK's first Theatre Company of Sanctuary presents 'Tanja' written by Rosie Macpherson An impassioned call to arms, a play and a campaign: 'Tanja' is a dramatic exploration of immigration detention centres, starring Emily Ntshangase-Wood – a former Yarlswood detainee. See the Carriageworks website to book tickets for Leeds http://www.leeds.gov.uk/carriageworks</p>
 Fri 10 Nov	<p>TANJA Theatre in the Mill, Bradford See details above And see the Theatre in the Mill website: http://www.brad.ac.uk/theatre</p>
 Sat 18 Nov	<p>VOICES FROM THE MARGINS CONF & CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY AGM 2017 <i>St Mary's Church and Conference Centre, Bramall Lane, Sheffield S2 4QZ</i> Join Church Action on Poverty in Sheffield to hear how churches are listening to people in poverty, and share ideas for how we can stand alongside those on the margins. The Conference will include: Prayers and shared worship, Inspiring stories from churches, projects and people with lived experience of poverty.</p>
 Sun 19 Nov	<p>FIRST WORLD DAY OF THE POOR A newly instituted day by Pope Francis. He says <i>"I invite the whole Church, and men and women of good will everywhere, to turn their gaze on this day to all those who stretch out their hands and plead for our help and solidarity."</i> How will you celebrate this day in your community?</p>
 Sat 25 Nov – Sun 26 Nov	<p>LEEDS PEACEJAM CONFERENCE <i>Leeds Trinity University</i> This residential event is aimed at young people aged 14-21. The Peacejam organisation was set up by a group of Nobel Peace prize laureates and they hold conferences like this across the world to encourage young people to become more engaged in issues of social justice and the building up of civil society. See their website for more details and to encourage teenagers to get signed up via their school. http://www.peacejam.org.uk/</p>
 Find us on Facebook	'Like' our page on Facebook and 'follow' us to help keep up to date with the key issues and concerns that the Commission is working on.

Please forward this E-News to anyone else who you think might be interested. Even better, get them to send us their email address so we can add them to our contact database.