

## JOHN HUME RIP

*By John Battle, Commission Chair*

*(adapted from John's universe article)*

Sorting family papers this summer, my wife's father's family in Derry turned up a handwritten letter to her Uncle Eddie from John Hume written in 2001. It congratulated him on his 80th birthday and thanked him for his key role in establishing the Credit Union with him and helping make the credit union a national model. In these times when politicians across the world are held in low esteem, the death of Northern Ireland's John Hume is a timely reminder of the potential for good in dedicated and hardworking politics committed to justice and peace. He was a man with a vision of the possibilities of peace in practice in Northern Ireland. As time passes so



*Wikipedia commons license*

quickly now, three decades of the violent "Troubles" in Northern Ireland (which cost over 3,500 lives - mostly Catholic) are nearly a forgotten world away from today's realities. The fact that our own children and grandchildren can go over to Northern Ireland and enjoy family visits without fear or restrictions worse than the virus lockdown is largely due to the lifetime peace-making efforts of John Hume.

John Hume was not a high profile party politician yet he has emerged as one of the most important political leaders of the twentieth century; the politician who crafted the Northern Ireland Peace Process signed in 1998 for which, jointly with David Trimble, he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

For years John Hume "kept hope of peace alive", refusing to accept there was no workable alternative, furrowing a lonely path in the face of opposition and taking real personal risks to bring about a peaceable settlement to the violent, deadlocked Northern Ireland. Despite direct threats to his life, vandalism to his home and torching of his car he never had a police body guard or carried a gun (though all Northern Ireland politicians could). He simply insisted on an alternative to bombs and bullets. He patiently negotiated a compromise statement with Conservative Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Brooke stating, "Britain has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland ". He engineered an IRA ceasefire in 1994 after clandestine meetings with Gerry Adams for which Ian Paisley called him a "messenger boy for the IRA"; nationalists called him a sell-out, derided as a naive man in the middle. But it was his insistent commitment to bringing people and communities together, rooted in courteous yet tough minded outreaching dialogue that characterised his approach. In the later words of Pope Francis he was prepared "to cross the street" for peace. He had an unshaken opposition to violence whether of the IRA, UDA, British Army or police and an unswerving commitment to peace-making built on a vision of society with human rights and democracy at the core. His belief was in an "agreed Ireland".

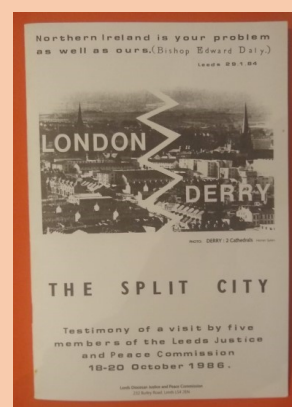
John Hume was a man of language. He spent his life talking, listening, reassuring, questioning, explaining, and persuading. Meeting up with him occasionally in the House of Commons he always came across as a thoughtful man, reflecting before speaking, crafting his words deliberately but treating all those he spoke with full respect. In conversation everyone was as important and valuable to him as the leaders and Presidents he spoke with. He once commented that "political leadership is like being a teacher... It's about changing the language of others. I say it and I say it until I hear the man in the pub saying my words back to me". He became known in political circles for introducing "Humespeak" a vocabulary which became the language of the peace process, rooted in reconciliatory words never wavering from compromise and commitment to peace. He cited his father, echoing a practical search for solutions to everyday human problems; "you can't eat a flag" he said. John Hume was not a crude nationalist. He was a peacemaker in the mould of Martin Luther King ("we shall overcome") and Gandhi ("Be the change you want").

In 2006 he was awarded an honorary degree by the Peace Studies department of Bradford University. Professor Tom Woodhouse (Professor of Conflict resolution in the Peace Studies department) in his oration at the ceremony commented *"It is of course well known that he holds the Nobel Prize, but I should also point out that he is the only person in history ever to have been awarded not one but the three major peace prizes, that is the Nobel Peace Prize; the Martin Luther King Prize; and the Gandhi Award for Nonviolent Peacemaking."* He went on to say *"As the architect of the Northern Ireland peace process, John Hume's work has significance way beyond Northern Ireland itself. What he achieved there has truly global*

*significance. It demonstrated not only the importance of conflict resolution and peace research, but also the urgent need to extend this work in the modern world.*

Northern Ireland today still has dividing walls between communities. It has yet to have a fully accepted and workable "truth and reconciliation" process to heal the wounds and lay to rest the violent suffering of the past. There is political work still to be continued. But in laying John Hume to rest, may he now rest in true peace in eternally in the community of saints and remain here a role model for present and future politicians. John Hume rest in peace.

During the 1980's the situation in N Ireland was one of the J&P Commission's priorities. It organised a series of seminars in conjunction with the Peace Studies department at Bradford University. At our invitation, the then bishop of Derry, Edward Daly, came and preached on Peace Sunday 1984 at Leeds Cathedral. He encouraged the Commission to make a visit to see the situation for themselves. This took place in October 1986 and the photo below is the cover of the booklet of the observations and reflections of those who undertook the trip.



In their report they acknowledge the perseverance and determination of then Commission member Thelma Laycock (of the Cathedral parish) in making the trip come to fruition.

## Hiroshima & Nagasaki remembered

*By Joe Burns, Commission Treasurer*

It's easy to get into a social justice silo: 'I'm a peace activist' or 'we must do more about Climate Change'. Well, if you need any convincing of the connectedness of these issues then try this quote by Bruce Kent, President of MAW (Movement for the Abolition of War), Vice President of CND

*"The elephant in the kitchen when it comes to Climate Change is clearly the world's military. The world spends something like 2 trillion US dollars a year on its military. At least half of that vast sum goes on military production with a massive CO2 output. The military are both a major cause of climate change and hence, of the conflicts which result from the movement of peoples as deserts spread."*

We briefly reported last month how Bishop Marcus had signed a call to action by Christian CND on the issue of the continuing possession of nuclear weapons. Their statement was very clear:

*"As Christians we reject nuclear weapons. We believe that their capacity to indiscriminately kill millions of our brothers and sisters, and to catastrophically destroy God's creation, makes them contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ."*

It echoes the words of Pope Francis, who said in 2017 that humanity cannot fail

*"to be genuinely concerned by the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of any employment of nuclear devices. If we also take into account the risk of an*

*accidental detonation as a result of error of any kind, the threat of their use, as well as their very possession, is to be firmly condemned ..."*

Last month it was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Across Yorkshire there were commemoration events to mark this significant anniversary.

In Bradford, there is a memorial in Norfolk Gardens every year at this time. However, concerns about the limited space available led them to moving the event online.



*Bradford Event Organiser Mollie Somerville (left) with her husband David on the far right of the picture*

In Leeds there was a vigil in Park Square attended by over 40 people (suitably distanced). After laying down a wreath at the foot of Park Square's Ginkgo tree, the Lord Mayor (in the pink jacket) proceeded to read out the Mayor of Nagasaki's own anniversary speech commemorating the lives lost 75





years ago and reaffirming the peace movement's commitment to nuclear abolition. Councillor Blackburn read out the Mayor of Hiroshima's annual speech.

There were also events held in Hebden Bridge and in Keighley.

On 7 July 2017 – following a decade of advocacy by ICAN and its partners – an overwhelming majority of the world's nations adopted a landmark global agreement to ban nuclear weapons, known officially as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons. It will enter into legal force once 50 nations have signed and ratified it.

So far, 44 nations have ratified this treaty. The UK is not among them. It is only through continued pressure from people like ourselves that we will be able to change UK Government policy. Given the current pandemic situation, and the financial consequences of what we are going through, it makes it all the more obscene that, in our name, our Government continues to spend billions on immoral weapons of mass destruction.

## REFLECTION

### Unbearable Light

A poem by Sr.Kate Holmström (shcj)  
of Harrogate

#### **Part 1: *The Light and the Terror***

**6 August 1945**

Flash! Crash! Lives shattered, History shattered  
in one great, hideous gash.

Is this mad world annihilated?

What happened ? One thousand suns.

Lightning. A lethal streak, stroke, most  
formidable strike.

Bewildered, prostrated. Writhing bodies  
maimed and blinded. PAIN !

*Oh God, are you there?*

Why this? Denial, refusal.

And still not over. Still lingering.

Survivors, even now, live on or partly live.

*Lord, have mercy.*

#### **Part2 *The light and the awe: Transfiguration***

"He was transfigured before them,  
And his face changed and shone like the sun,  
His clothes became dazzling white  
Such as no one on earth could bleach them.  
Moses and Elijah appeared in glory.  
The disciples were terrified and overcome by fear.  
They fell to the ground."

BUT

*"This is my Son, the Beloved, in him I am well  
pleased:*

*Listen to him."*

*"Be not afraid"*

And when they looked up, they saw only Jesus.  
And they kept silent

And in those days told no one any of the things  
they had seen".

*The heavens and the earth are filled with your  
glory.*

*All the earth bows down before you.*



## **NONVIOLENCE AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

*By Carol Burns, Leeds Pax Christi group*

The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative began in April 2016, when Pax Christi International held a conference, whose purpose was to reaffirm the centrality of active nonviolence to the vision and message of Jesus, to the life of the Catholic Church and the long term vocation of healing and reconciling both people and planet. The Vatican Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (now part of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development) was an official co-sponsor of the conference. About 9 staff people from the Vatican were involved in the conference and had input into the final document. This conference led to the setting up of the initiative which aims to promote active nonviolence as a counter to the culture of violence and militarism which pervades our world. It led directly to the message of Pope Francis for World Day of Prayer for Peace 2017. In this message he talks about how the world is fighting a third world war piecemeal and how the Church can be part of presenting the alternative way.

You can read the full text of the pope's message here:

[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco\\_20161208\\_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20161208_messaggio-l-giornata-mondiale-pace-2017.html)

Nonviolence action is often associated with actions such as Extinction Rebellion or the Plowshares activists, however these are only one example of working for justice and peace

Many of us involved in the work of justice will have been involved in active nonviolent action over many years as we write letters to our MP's, attend vigils, try and live a life in harmony with the environment. Active

nonviolence recognises the many different types of violence we experience in world from poverty, environmental damage as well as the possession of nuclear weapons for example.

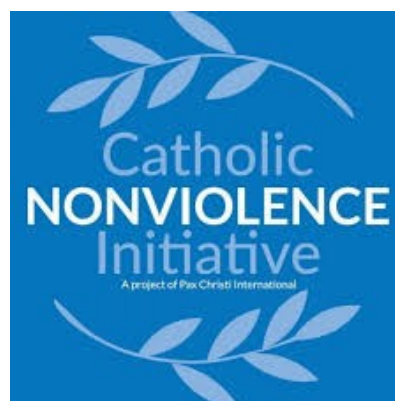
However the pervading solution to conflict is always to use violence as a way of resolving differences rather than finding alternative methods. There is much to do to offer alternatives and to support those who wish to take a nonviolent path.

In recent weeks we have witnessed the power of nonviolent protest in Belarus recently and the bravery of the Black Lives Matters protesters in America.

The Catholic Non Violence Initiative has a website with many examples of how active nonviolence has been successful as well as other fantastic resources for working in parishes, with groups and in families

In this issue of the newsletter we are reminded of the commitment to nonviolence that was made by John Hulme who at great personal cost never gave up his belief that a negotiated solution was the only way forward for Northern Ireland.

Research shows that nonviolent solutions are often more cost effective and long lasting, but without resources they have little chance of success. If we invested even a fraction of the money used for weapons in nonviolent solutions what a difference we could make.



## WHERE IS YOUR MONEY INVESTED?

*Leeds Pax Christi Group*

Many of us are wondering what we can do in this time of pandemic when there are no meetings and very little parish activity in our work for peace.

The Leeds Pax Christi group have been continuing to meet online and plan activities as well as joining in, like many of you, with national Pax Christi prayers and vigils.

We were delighted when Bishop Marcus responded to our request to sign the Christian CND statement -as you heard in the last newsletter

In June 2020 the Nuclear Weapons Finance Working Group comprising representatives from the main UK faith groups including Pax Christi produced a timely report concerned with the significant amount of corporate financing that supports nuclear weapons production, entitled *Banks, Pensions and Nuclear Weapons Investing in Change*.

You can read the details of their report here:

<https://moneyleftofnukes.wordpress.com/read-the-report/>

This multi-faith group has been in dialogue with some of the main banks and pension providers many of whom seem open to discuss investments further. You can see the details of their report here

The group estimates that £32 billion is invested in nuclear weapon production by UK financial institutions

As customers of banks and as well as contributors to pension funds we can challenge the investment choices of these

institutions to make positive choices towards ethical investments.

Should we be asking ourselves is 'Does our money or investment facilitate the nuclear arms race?' The report from the Nuclear Finance Working group gives the information to support you to urge your bank or pension provider to review their investment and focus on causes that support health and life

It's not just individuals, however, who can challenge institutions and so the Leeds group have also written to Bishop Marcus to ask if we can start a dialogue about diocesan investments and how a large body like the diocese can also begin a dialogue with our banks and our pension providers.

We'll keep you in touch with our progress.



The Leeds Pax Christi Group comprises members from Leeds, Pudsey, Garforth, Bradford & Harrogate. If you want to find out more then please email

[Carol.burns@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Carol.burns@yahoo.co.uk)

There is a J&P Issue Action Group on peace & nonviolence. It is focussing on the Israel Palestine situation at present.

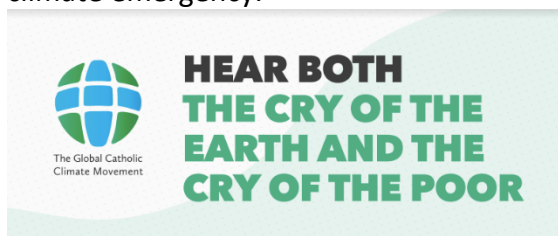
If you are interested, then email

[jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk](mailto:jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk)

for details of the next meeting.

## **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, THE PANDEMIC AND THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY.**

Several J&P members in the diocese have just finished an on-line programme presented by the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM - based in Rome) to 'graduate' as LAUDATO SI ADVOCATES in October. As part of the course, Dr Lorna Gold (Trócaire and GCCM) presented a sobering assessment of the growing existential threat posed by the climate emergency.



Her paper of 2019, printed here, discusses the issue of Catholic Schools and their possible role in eco-conversion and action. It was written in 2019, before the onset of the pandemic. As our schools reopen, it is timely to see how she addresses the question of how to direct the energies and passions, understandable fears and apprehensions of pupils in Catholic schools about climate change onto the paths of spiritual and community eco-conversion – now in the additional context of the pandemic. This issue must concern all those charged with the welfare of pupils in Catholic Schools. It may well be that the time has come, because of the unprecedented pandemic but also because of the overarching unprecedented climate emergency, to begin to think and act in unprecedented ways – not only in our parishes but crucially in our schools.

The paper has also been brought to the attention of those charged with the oversight of our Diocesan Catholic Schools.

(Dr Lorna Gold, Coordinator of the Laudato Sí Project in Trócaire and vice-chair of the

Global Catholic Climate Movement board. She is a member of the Laudato Sí Working Group of the Council for Catechetics. She also lectures in Maynooth University and is a member of the ministerial advisory group on the National Climate Dialogue. Her most recent book published by Veritas, 'Climate Generation – Awakening to our Children's Future' tells the story of a mother waking up to the intergenerational challenge of climate change. Dr Gold gave a keynote presentation for the GCCM Laudato Si Advocacy programme in summer 2020. She argued that the situation is, if anything, more alarming and threatening than it was a year ago, before the pandemic.

### **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE CLIMATE STRIKE MOVEMENT**

*"I have come that they have life and have it to the full." (John 10:10)*

By Dr Lorna Gold (2019)

#### **Context**

In September 2019, people from all over the world are preparing to mobilise again to call on governments to take urgent action on climate change. In the face of growing signs of climate breakdown, and slow response from governments, a truly global social movement has been emerging over the past twelve months.



2019 Berlin Climate Strike (wikimedia commons license)

The movement is being led by teenagers, many of whom like Greta Thunberg, have been staging weekly 'climate strikes' – skipping school each Friday to highlight the existential threat posed by climate change. Other campaigns groups have agreed to join the teenagers in September in an unprecedented show of inter-generational solidarity in the face of the climate crisis. These groups include more established NGOs, as well as unions, faith groups and newer groups such as 'Elders for a Safe Planet', 'Extinction Rebellion' and so on. Above all, the call is for peaceful protests in as many places on the planet on the same day.

### The science

The science on the current state of the climate is alarming. The events of summer 2019 have shocked even the most well qualified climate scientists. The summer has brought dramatic melting of the Greenland ice-sheet, unprecedented heatwaves in Europe, a ring of fire in the Arctic Circle, and burgeoning methane lakes in Siberia. Most recently, the world has watched on as horrific fires in the Amazon rainforest burn uncontrolled. These fires driven by disastrous economic and political policies underpinned by a deep populist denial of climate change. Scientists have warned that the likelihood of irreversible feedback loops has increased dramatically in the past few months. This means that what is lost now is never coming back. The changes to eco-systems are permanent. Many countries have called climate emergencies, but are at a loss when it comes to translating that urgency into policy implications. Those implications require far reaching political and social change. Without a massive sea change in public understanding and 'buy in' to the changes needed, the changes will be too late to avoid catastrophic

climate change. In the words of campaigner Bill McKibben when it comes to climate change 'winning slowly is another way of losing.' At present, the world is losing the climate change battle. The most recent IPCC status report on keeping global warming below 1.5 °C came to the startling conclusion that the next decade of humanity is the most important since humans have stepped on this planet. Speaking at the launch of the report in November 2018, Deborah Roberts, the co-chair of the working group stated that: **"The next few years are probably the most important in our history."** Scientists have said that there is one decade to make the vast changes needed – but actually the next two years are critical given the long-term nature of policy change. The times we are living in are unparalleled. The stakes for the generation born and in school today could not be higher. It is against this backdrop of science, urgency and mobilisation that Catholic schools today are thinking about how and whether to engage in planned protests.

### Catholic Ethos and Values

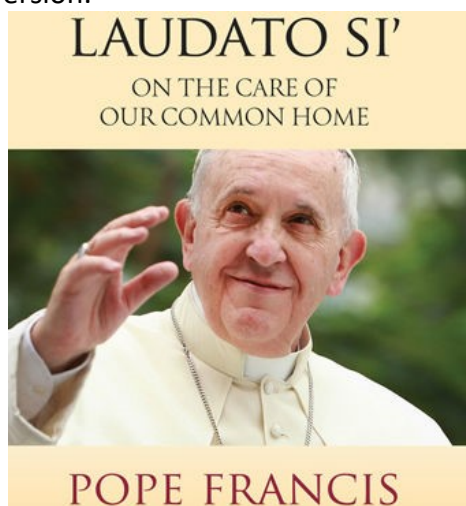


The engagement of Catholic schools in the whole issue of climate change very much calls

into question the essence of what it means to be a Catholic school in the 21st Century. The specific purpose of a Catholic education is the formation of boys and girls who will be 'good citizens of this world', loving God and neighbour and enriching society with the leaven of the gospel. Beyond religious education, participation in the sacramental life of the church, fostering a sense of broader community, many schools are asking



what is distinctive about the ‘ethos’ and ‘values’ of Catholic education. Pope Francis has challenged traditional viewpoints in three key documents [1] which all point to the need to rethink our Catholic identity in view of protection of Creation. In *Laudato Si*, in particular, Pope Francis states that: “Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience” (LS n217) He goes on to talk about the need for an “ecological conversion” which is also a “community conversion.”



For Catholic schools, which are first and foremost called to be an authentic experience of living community, this call to ecological conversion and to be “protectors” is key to the definition of ethos in the future. Any experience of authentic Christian living, which witnesses to Gospel values, must model care for other human beings – but also for all the myriad of species in Creation. This goes from the very simplest of tasks, such as engendering responsibility to recycle well, to only use what is needed, to engage with nature in a loving manner – all the way up to how to challenge those negative behaviours and social norms that promote destruction of nature. Catholic schools have a key role to play in modelling and promoting simple living, sustainable consumption and, for

example, avoiding the traps of fast fashion and youth trends which impact on the environment.

### **Courage of Gospel Witness**

However, given the scale and urgency of the climate crisis, and the unprecedented threat to the next generation, it is right to pose the question of whether Catholic schools could play a more prominent role in publicly endorsing or participating in the global days of action for climate change – especially those led by teenagers. Such engagement would be based on the premise that climate change is at odds with a genuine and consistent ethic of life in all its fullness. Teaching pupils about the Catholic values around life is only consistent within a much more integrated call to protect all life on the planet. Climate change is the greatest social injustice of our time. It speaks to the need for greater concern for those living in poverty and the common good. The call to witness to Gospel values challenges those in wealthy nations, those with high GHG emissions, to act in solidarity with those living in poorer communities affected by climate change. Acting to protect creation is also about witnessing to the fact that we are all global citizens and called to speak out on behalf of those who have no voice. On the darker side, it is very clear from surveys that climate change ranks very high in the fears cited by teenagers and young people about their future. Many young people are facing high levels of ‘eco-anxiety’ and in some instances, this is leading to higher levels of depression and despair about their future. This growing anxiety is accompanied by a sense that the older generation has abandoned the youth to climate change and is unwilling to make necessary changes to their lifestyles to enable emissions reductions.

In light of this, the global days of action on climate change offer an important opportunity for schools in a number of ways:

- Taking part in a march or organising a protest can give students, parents and teachers a chance to work together as a wider community to do something very concrete and practical to give witness to Gospel values. Parents can be engaged in the creation of a day of action.
- Participation offers the school community a chance to witness to Gospel courage by being prepared to stand up and take a stance on the most important intergenerational issue - Working on a day like this fosters teamwork and builds up the sense of community in the school.
- Organisation and participation in marches, particularly if led by older students, can go a long way to counter the sense of hopelessness many are experiencing by enabling 'active hope'
- Engagement in the day of action is a chance to live the vision of integral ecology – ecological conversion – in the school community. It does not need to end at the end of the day but can foster a conversation about Laudato Sí in action
- Catholic schools can bring a spiritual dimension to the protests through ensuring there are moments for prayer and reflection, and a blessing of those marching.

### **Addressing safety concerns and child protection**

Child safety concerns are paramount for every school, particularly when it comes to taking part in large public demonstrations. As well as the usual concerns over adult-student ratios, there are genuine concerns over public order, the risk that any protest could turn conflictual, and other related concerns. As with any such participation, the primary concern has to be the pupil safety and well-

being. Local guidance from police and public authorities should be listened to.



*Picture: courtesy of CAFOD*

Many schools have engaged in large protests successfully. Some have closed early in order to facilitate student participation. Others have organised buses to attend events as an extra-curricular activity. Some have integrated participation into a whole day of activities around ecological action, involving parents and students. Participation in a large event, however, is not essential. In many ways, localised events organised by schools in individual parishes and towns can be just as impactful – if not more. Doing these in a coordinated way – on the same day as the global protests – can make the students and community feel part of the global day.

Some examples from Ireland:

- On the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Laudato Si, 24 May 2019. St. Mary's Secondary School in Lisdoonvarna organised a morning of events on ecology in the local town hall. The upper school marched from the school down the main street to the town hall.
- A Catholic primary school in Dublin held art classes making banners about care for creation before the major protest on March 15<sup>th</sup>. They then held a march in a circuit down the street in front of the school and back around. They received thousands of 'hits' on social media.
- Tree planting on school grounds held in many schools – with grandparents helping

younger children plant trees on the day of action.

- In Maynooth, the local secondary school joined the local 'Maynooth Community Climate Action' group on the town square for a protest during lunch break. The local police and volunteer stewards helped guide the students. Several hundred local people took part in the protest which was led by the teenagers.

[1] Evangelii Gaudium, Amoris Leticia and Laudato Si

## CHRISTIAN CLIMATE ACTION

By Joe Burns, Commission Treasurer

In August, the Climate Change Action Group of the Commission hosted a Zoom call with the Passionist Fr Martin Newell – who is a key member of Christian Climate Action. This ecumenical group is associated with the Extinction Rebellion movement.

Fr Newell spoke passionately about how time for action is running out and that is one of the reasons why he has found himself in the position of supporting many of the nonviolent but disruptive actions of the Extinction Rebellion movement. We urgently need to make people aware of the Climate Emergency which is already unfolding and sometimes going on a demonstration is not enough.



*Photo Courtesy of Passionists UK*

There is a Christian Climate Action group in Yorkshire. Last Lent, shortly before lockdown, they held an Ash Wednesday service in Leeds where all who were joining in did a walk around the city and stopped at significant places for prayer – such as outside a branch of Barclays Bank in order to highlight their continuing investment in fossil fuel projects.

This is an example of nonviolent direct action – which can take many forms. Writing to your MP expressing your concern about our Climate Emergency is another one. Going on a Climate Strike or demonstration is one too. However, Fr Newell focussed more on the more disruptive actions – such as people lying in the road and blocking some of the bridges in London. Doing this is clearly a nonviolent action but does carry with it the possibility that you might be arrested for what you are doing (as you are causing an obstruction on the highway).

His contention is that more actions like this are going to be needed in order to bring the gravity of the situation home to people and – by doing that – achieve more radical action on Climate Change by politicians. He recognised that not everyone is in a situation where they are able to take action that might result in arrest. However, there may well be some younger or older people with no caring responsibilities who might want to think about joining in these more disruptive actions.

### CHRISTIAN CLIMATE ACTION



For more details about this group take a look at their website:

<https://christianclimateaction.org/>





## A WAY THROUGH THE WOODS

By David Jackson, Shipley

(This article first appeared in the Tablet Blog in July)

*I tried to write about the shape of a post Virus Church and patterns of Eucharistic worship and failed. Rather than add to many such attempts, I could reflect how, aged over 80, the possibility of never returning to previous patterns of practice, represents, not a diminution of an interaction with Jesus really present in the Eucharist, but an invitation to an enhanced relationship with Jesus, the universal Christ, really present in the whole of creation. The same presence of Divine Love, both modes interacting and transforming each other.*

### PREVIOUSLY

*As an altar boy I 'served at Mass' almost daily for 10 years, prior to entering a Seminary, aged 17. For 9 years I attended Mass every day, until ordination. As a priest I said mass*

*every day for a further 9 years. As a married man I have attended Mass most every Sunday and many weekdays over the past near 50 years. Since 'lock down' and the closure of churches due to the Coronavirus I have not 'been to mass' but have watched streamed masses each Sunday for the last 4 months. This practice has shaped my life, but has it transformed my life into a life lived in Christ?*

### GOING TO THE RIVER.

Walking down to the river through the lynch gate of the woods, I passed under a mighty fallen broken bough, arched as an embossed, carved beamed roof.

I entered the cathedral, crossed myself at the stoup of the river, before taking my seat, a late lover, repentant but forgiven near the side-chapel of the baptism font.

The congregation, priestly all, a heron, a wren, frantic water flies, were already busy praying





at their packed places in the pews, joined now by a thrush, busily telling its beads, an adoration, unselfconscious in dappled brown.

A cowed heron knelt motionless in a side chapel, lost in contemplative adoration. Beady-eyed as a cleric – nonetheless content, as were all.

The service had begun a few aeons ago, so I grew content to listen as the river uncurled its readings from the book of the story and revelation of the earth in quick cadenced flow over the tumbled stone lecterns.

Blood red campions swayed in vested processions, meadow-sweet incensed the great sunlit shafted pillars, white great tall bell flowers tolled the hours – but soft, softly.

The black vested alders bowed to the water's murmur and joined all the tree choirs singing a soft descant to the hymn of the earth, in slow ranks, swaying sleeves of vestments rustling in unison.

The service entered a deep silent thanksgiving, with filled eyes, the work of the choirs of the community of the earth. My happy, sad tears fell to the river, and were consumed by unnamed fish, gliding.

I did not queue for communion or leave my seat in the side chapel. The wood carved choir stalls sang on, the earth filled the great eucharist with unaffected joy. Body, Blood of creation's silent groans and laughter.

As the time for communion crept in slow as an hour, the body holy, the bloodshed, the tabernacles stood open, emptied out, always, for ever, for all, as fountains, in flow as constant as the river running.

The gift shared, the Body broken, the Bloodshed, from the green shades, to the rippling waters came the lovely procession of the saints, recognised among the poets, bobbing as wagtails, dipping as dippers, lightly – in the shadows, shades - was that

Wordsworth buried in a book? Others drifted by as clouds.

Surely Gerard Manley Hopkins, John Clare, Mary Oliver. But as swifts cart-wheeling above, fly Rumi and Farid-Ud-Din Attar, he of roses, in holy conference of the birds, earnestly with, of course, it has to be, Francis and Clare

Then, in a final blessing on the further bank, in mist fires, a figure bent over the kindling of the grateful rich, poor earth and offered the company grilled fish. And we did take and eat. I felt at my shoulder, turned to glimpse, George Herbert, smiling rounding the path to the woods. Does he walk with that fearsome, lovely man de Chardin? Of course.

But I left long before any aeon's end, before the heron rose in slow departure. I bowed under the trees and genuflected towards the altar of the Presence, stooped under the arch and wept my happy way towards the graveyard of my living worshipping ancestors. Which reminds me.

When next I walk to the worship of the cathedral of the woods, to the thanksgiving of the river, I must remember to call in, not passing by the glad graves of the risen, grandparents Joe and Hannah, my old uncles and aunts, too numerous to tally, my Mum and Dad, but no - their partying may frighten the birds, not to mention the fishes. They may well leave it to us, past caring, past cathedral's need.

I take the way back through the woods. To the cries of the earth and to heed the cries of the poor.

#### **AFTER WORSHIP.**

*We have missed the company of the eucharistic community for the last 4 months and may not to be able to get back soon – if ever. So we can return to the source of the sacrament. Wheat and grape, human hands*



*working the fruit of the earth already reflect, in the cycle of birth, death and resurrection, the real presence of Christ. From this and breathing with the diastole-systole beat of its heart, came Jesus, the Man of life, death and resurrection – a reflection and summation of a paschal mystery already embedded deep in earth's cycle of life. We can go back from the Eucharist to its context in that wider sacramentality of the real presence of the Universal Christ. We return to the first house of worship, the first solemn liturgy, the basis and ground of all creation where stood the first tree of Adam's garden and of Calvary and we can bow our heads before the Real Presence of the universal Christ, Lord of all Creation, the Alpha and the Omega, there – at the river in the woods in the presence of the community of all the earth and its peoples.*

#### NOLI ME TANGERE

*A closing thought – developed from a meditation from Richard Rohr (23/7/2020) on the day after Mary Magdalen's feast day. The risen Jesus, now the Christ, in the garden ('in the garden'!!) prizes Mary from her tearful embrace: 'Do not cling to me'. Maybe we are being invited to stop clinging to our customary ways of worship and, like Mary, are being asked to give ourselves not just to the 'Real Presence' of Jesus in the Eucharist, but to that of which it is a mirrored reflection - 'the Source of all love'. This is the real presence of the Universal Christ, found in the contemplative hearts of all humanity and by way of the path through the trees – in creation – the first book of revelation. This path leads through a contemplative reading and praying with the community of the church, to that second volume – the record of that Divine-Human dialogue contained in Scripture. May it be that the love of Jesus in the Eucharist has done its slow work of transformation with us and so frees us to love and 'let go' of our customary practices? A life lived in Christ transforms. If*

*we can ever gather again to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist, it will be immeasurably enriched by our experience of that wider sacramentality of the sacred earth and its peoples which give it a transforming potency we may have never experienced or realised as fully before.*



The J&P Commission **Climate Change Issue Action Group** welcomes new members.

Simply email Helen at

[jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk](mailto:jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk)

and she will send you details of the next (Zoom) meeting.

The purpose of the group is to help direct the work of the Commission on Climate Change by taking action themselves and recommending where the Commission's scarce resources can be used to best effect.

#### RICHARD ROHR

Richard Rohr writes and features in a number of publications. His daily reflections often have issues of Justice at their core.

Take a look at the Centre for Action and Contemplation website if you have not heard of him before.

<https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

## Letter to Power

*By John Duffy, J&P Leeds Commission*

"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not." Jeremiah Ch 31

There is no guarantee that a vaccine will be found for coronavirus. But there is this sure guarantee – there will be no vaccine for arid stream beds, acid raindrops, melting icecaps, burning grasslands, blazing forests, deserts spreading, empty oceans, coral bleaching, whales beaching. No more snowfalls.







Millions fleeing, starving cities, wars for water, millions dying, children choking, nations begging. Fear of sunlight. This will be a hostile environment, more hostile than the one that turns back boats of refugees, lets people drown in hostile seas, lets mothers starve to death as the baby cries and cries, the final face in her dying eyes, builds inflammable buildings, exiles grandparents to islands they have forgotten, that have forgotten them.



And you (and I) will be that drowning man, dying mother, burning neighbour, bewildered pensioner in a strange Trinidad, the hungry child beside the cold stiff mother: he cries; he has no recourse. The hostile environment will press its knee on our neck, and we will cry for Mercy, we will cry for life and the future will tell us – You had warning, you had time. You could have changed me. And now you suffer and you know this: now there is only me.



## Events

 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept – 4 <sup>th</sup> October	<p><b>2020 Season of Creation</b></p> <p>This newish season in the Church's year runs from 01 September (creation Day) through to 04 October (feast of St Francis).</p> <p>Join with people around the world praying and taking action to raise awareness of and campaigning for action about Climate Change and its devastating consequences for the poorest communities of our planet. See the season of creation website for details of events that you could join with and ideas for events that you could organise yourself <a href="#">Season of Creation Website</a></p>
 10 <sup>th</sup> Sept 10-11am	<p><b>Pax Christi: "Making Active Nonviolence A Way of Life"</b></p> <p>Through study, reflection, discussion and prayer, deepen your understanding of the spirituality and practice of nonviolence.</p> <p>This is a 5 week online set of sessions and people wishing to join are invited to sign up via Eventbrite.</p> <p><a href="#">Register for these sessions</a></p>
 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept 7.30-8pm	<p><b>J&amp;P Issue Action Group: Peace and Non-Violence</b></p> <p>A meeting to progress ideas for action in relation to peace and nonviolence – one of the Commission's priorities. Anyone is welcome to come and join this Zoom-based meeting. Please email <a href="mailto:treasurer.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk">treasurer.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk</a> and we will send you a link near to the date of the meeting.</p>
 26 <sup>th</sup> Sept 12-1.30pm	<p><b>75 Years is enough: Leeds Campaigners to form giant peace sign</b></p> <p>This event is being organised by Yorkshire CND.</p> <p><i>In Leeds at 12 noon on 26th September, we are calling for local citizens, be they campaigners, supporters, local councillors or religious and civic leaders to form a <b>peace symbol in Millennium Square</b> to mark out Leeds as a city of peace. Will you join us?</i></p>
 3 <sup>rd</sup> Oct 11am–3pm	<p><b>Christian CND Conference and AGM</b></p> <p>Join the Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament for its 2020 Conference. As the world continues to come to terms with the Covid-19 crisis, it has illustrated the need to prioritise public spending on socially productive projects including health care rather than nuclear weapons, which do nothing to keep us safe. <a href="https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/christian-cnd-conference-2020-tickets-104617927036?">https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/christian-cnd-conference-2020-tickets-104617927036?</a></p>

***Please forward this email E-News onto 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.***

***See our website for details of these and other events which may be of interest.***