



In the first edition of our 2021 newsletters, with Peace Sunday (17 January) nearly upon us, we are focussing mainly on peace and nonviolence but also provide an update about our SPARK Social Justice project..

Plus, there is the opportunity to find out more about nonviolence through - an introductory course of 5 weekly evening sessions about the basis for Catholic Nonviolence. There will be an initial 'taster' session by Pat Gaffney on 2<sup>nd</sup> February – why not register to find out more??

## **STILL ROLLING WITH THE CATHOLIC NONVIOLENCE INITIATIVE**

*By Pat Gaffney*

*This article was first published in Peace News in November 2020*

I am a cup-half-full sort of person, not I hope naïve, but encouraged by the hope-filled actions around me. In the last year this includes the strengthening of the Black Lives Matter movement, the persistence of the Campaign Against Arms Trade in continuing their legal challenge to UK weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, the long-awaited coming into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Now, in the past month, Pope Francis, declaring that it is no longer possible to speak of a 'just war'. In these sad days of Covid 19, people are seeking out opportunities to make a difference, to create nonviolent responses to all that the pandemic has exposed.

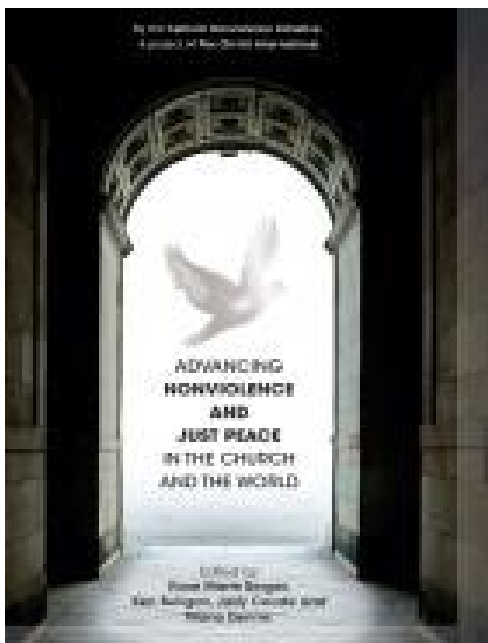
Two years ago, I wrote about the on-going project of Pax Christi International, the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative (CNI), a process of conversations and research, with the Vatican and a global peace community, to deepen understanding and commitment to active nonviolence. While we have not achieved our initial objective, for the Catholic Church to write a teaching document on nonviolence, I think we have perhaps done

more to grow and root an understanding of active nonviolence in communities around the world. It is a little like running a relay race. Teams of people, theologians, peace activists, community workers, academics, dotted around a track, each carry a baton of experience and knowledge of the power of nonviolence, passing these on until they merge to create a whole picture. The work has expanded since 2018 and includes the launch of our second book, *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace in the Church and the World*; the first annual Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action, the development of study guides on Making Nonviolence a Way of Life and regular contributions to the Vatican's Covid Commission on how security might be reframed post Covid.

The fruits of working groups, conferences and commissioned essays, involving more than a hundred contributors, were honed by a skilful team of editors into *Advancing Nonviolence and Just Peace*, published in October. Acknowledging some of the tragic failures of the Church it moves to offer examples of faith communities making connections between poverty, violence, the destruction of the environment and developing on-the-ground nonviolent responses.



Commenting on the work Tiffany Easthom, Director of Nonviolent Peace force says, “Along with providing philosophical and theological foundations... the book provides practical examples of transition, like unarmed civilian protection. Active, compassionate and cooperative nonviolence is essential for our future survival. This book helps chart that path.”



I particularly value the very practical sections on integrating nonviolence into the life of the Catholic community, what could be seen as a checklist of outcomes. Here are just a few.

- Expand Catholic involvement in unarmed civilian protection programmes.
- Strengthen the Vatican’s links with the diplomatic corps and its own diplomats to deepen a commitment to nonviolent prevention of conflict.
- Create information hubs at local, national and international levels to share best practice in civic organising and nonviolent resistance.
- Amplify the lives and approaches of nonviolent peacemakers from all traditions as models and a focus for learning.

Some years ago Pope Francis urged that the Church be a ‘field hospital’ in an unjust and violent world. This needs people well trained in trauma healing, nonviolent resistance, diplomacy, education and more, who see that nonviolence can inform and sustain every aspect of this work.

Between 2018-2020 a group called the People of God (as the name implies, this was a ‘bottom-up’ rather than institutional process) with participants from Germany, Kenya, Korea, Palestine, Central African Republic, USA and Mexico met to plan projects for grass-roots communities that would, among other things, lead to a celebration of nonviolence. A course and survey entitled *Making Active Nonviolence a Way of Life in the Church and the World*, was created, drawing on the texts of the 2017 World Peace Message, “*Nonviolence a Style of Politics for Peace*”. Its five units included the themes Cultivating Nonviolence, Seeing Violence in our World Today, Discerning and Judging based on the Good News of Jesus, Acting with a force more powerful than violence.

To support the first *Catholic Nonviolence Days of Action* the group built a toolkit around the themes of Prayer resources, Acts of public witness, Nonviolence as a way of life, Creating a nonviolent parish and Celebrating nonviolent heroes. The rich experiences of our group elicited films, videos, stories, prayers, discussion ideas, models of actions that were woven into the framework. Aware that no person or group could do everything, we hoped that our ‘pick and mix’ approach would allow everyone to do something!

Pax Christi in England & Wales has offered the *Making Active Nonviolence* course twice so far. Using ZOOM, we had a core of around 45 people over five one-hour sessions. Feedback was illuminating “*I had assumed nonviolence was a very minority interest in the Church – and it is – but it was good to*



hear the enthusiasm and activism of so many Catholics and “I have always viewed nonviolence through political and philosophical stance, this opened up the spiritual connection and how rooted in the gospel the message is”.

In summer 2020 we wrote an appeal to Pope Francis suggesting that response to the pandemic requires a fundamental shift from the ‘unjust normal’ of systemic and structural violence to a culture of solidarity that seeks the fullness of life for all. We believe that active nonviolence - a spirituality, a way of life and a program of action - is key to this global shift. So, we keep on rolling!



**Resources**

Advancing Nonviolence can be ordered here price £20.50 + p&p

<https://www.fast-print.net/bookshop/2299/advancing-nonviolence-and-just-peace>

More on Nonviolence Days of Action and Framework

<https://nonviolencejustpeace.net/days-of-action/>

**Making Active Nonviolence Our way of Life in the Church and the World**

An introductory set of sessions organised by Pax Christi in the Leeds Diocese & the Commission

Pat Gaffney in the article above has brought us up to date with the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative and all it has achieved in the last two years.



Several of us from the Leeds diocese joined the Pax Christi introductory sessions and we’d now like to offer another opportunity to participate - perhaps this could be your Lenten commitment!

The sessions are a way, with others, of exploring what active nonviolence means in our lives and how we can be ‘the field hospital’ in the world as Pope Francis says. Each session includes prayer and reflection and will be participatory with the chance to join small group discussions. It would be helpful if you could commit to all five sessions. Join the taster session on 02 Feb and decide then whether to sign up for the rest.

All sessions will be via Zoom on a Tuesday evening at 7pm and will last about one hour.

<b>02 Feb</b>	<b>Introductory / Taster session led by Pat Gaffney</b>
<b>16 Feb</b>	Cultivating Nonviolence
<b>23 Feb</b>	Seeing Violence in our world today
<b>02 Mar</b>	Discerning and Judging
<b>09 Mar</b>	Acting with a force more powerful than violence
<b>16 Mar</b>	Invitation to take up “active nonviolence”

Click this link to register for the Introductory session now:



[tinyurl.com/leedsjpnnonviolence](https://tinyurl.com/leedsjpnnonviolence)

## **PATHWAYS TO PEACE FOR EARTHLINGS – A LITURGY FOR PEACE SUNDAY**

**Sunday 17 January @ 4pm via Zoom**

*Organised by the Leeds Diocese Pax Christi Group and the J&P Commission*

Join us for an hour of prayer, reflection  
and quiet time on Peace Sunday.



A culture of care by ourselves is needed to promote right relationships between those around us and also between Governments. Equally, *we need a culture of care towards our Common Home* - the Earth. All too often we forget that we all live on the same planet - as Earthlings - and that we share a common fate with it.



**Register to receive the Zoom link [tinyurl.com/peacesundayyorkshire](https://tinyurl.com/peacesundayyorkshire)**

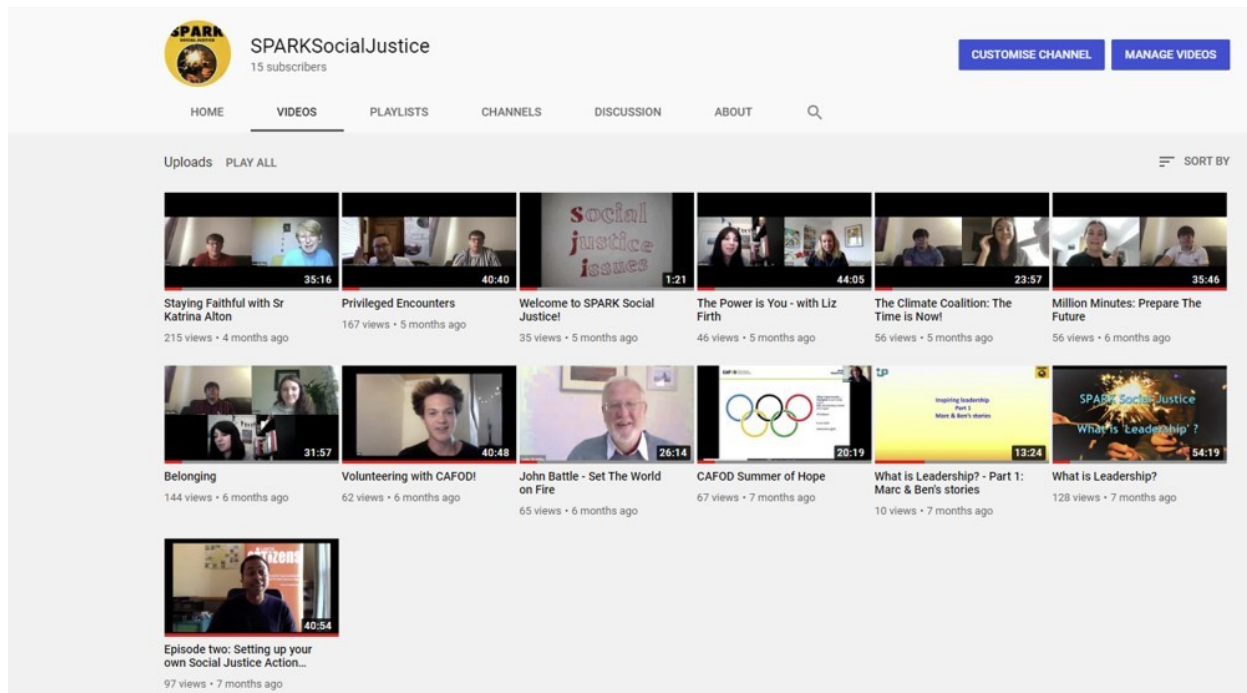
## **SPARK SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT UPDATE**

*By Aoibheann Kelly*

In March 2020, we were looking forward to continuing to deliver a number of interactive workshop sessions to our partner settings, up until July. However, lockdown meant we needed to re-assess these plans - each of the school settings very much wished to continue to set up social justice action groups and were interested to explore ways of continuing to engage pupils with the Spark project during school closure. Following reflection and consultation, we decided to launch a new You Tube channel and invite inspirational guests to share their experiences and stories about what kind of positive difference they have made and

hopefully inspire young people and young adults to make a difference too. This new idea was turned around very quickly – we needed to learn a multitude of new digital skills in a short space of time! We carefully researched and invited a number of brilliant guests to feature on the episodes. Tom Allan, a local young adult aged 18yrs and past pupil of St Mary's Menston, supported the episodes initially but then took on the role of lead host. Tom was invited to write a piece in his school newsletter about his experiences:

*"Justice and Peace asked me to be a part of their newest funded project which in time became the SPARK Project. The initial aim of the project was to go into schools, colleges, universities and parishes around Leeds to set up social justice groups.*



The SPARK YouTube channel - available via this link [tiny.cc/sparkonyoutube](https://tiny.cc/sparkonyoutube)

*This would then allow the creation of a network of groups across our local area which would be able to work together or separately to campaign, fundraise or raise awareness of issues. Some of this was already being done within our school, and, due to its success, I agreed to be a part of the steering group for the project allowing me have a say in the format, delivery and setting up of the project from Day 1. Since the initial meeting SPARK social justice has delivered workshops across Leeds. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, these sessions were halted, meaning students were unable to partake in the concluding sessions and the setting up of social justice groups and begin campaigning/fundraising, etc. However, this led to a reformatting of the project and the start of interviews with inspirational people across the UK. I have been fortunate to be involved in many of the interviews, and have recently been interviewed myself, for the YouTube Channel. These have been so much fun to deliver as I've met so many inspirational people along the way. If you are interested in campaigning, social action,*

*social justice, how to get involved in your local community or just want to be inspired I would highly recommend these videos to anyone.*

*Tom Allan, Year 13*

The weekly You Tube episodes grew in popularity and were shared locally with our partner settings during lockdown and over time, nationally. In the Autumn term, it was agreed that we should launch some new live zoom sessions with young people from St Mary's Menston, St John Fisher High School Harrogate and Notre Dame College in Leeds who were committed towards setting up social justice action groups. We worked in close partnership to plan and deliver the sessions with Young Christian workers – each session was inspired by the model See-Judge-Act and were effective in bringing together young people from different schools across the Diocese who shared a passion for social justice and making a positive difference. We will continue to provide ongoing bespoke support in the new year for these settings. One school has already set up their own Social Justice Action Group and the remaining



two settings have plans to do so in the new year.

*..very informative, learnt there are far more people living in poverty than I realised, poverty is changeable and unfair..*

*'know more about the causes of poverty and it's not what I thought, really good way of explaining it, enjoyed the games and they led well to information, taught us valuable lessons which are easy to remember'*

*'I felt one message which was particularly important was the call for eye contact and importance of making someone feel human and valued and respected'*

*Comments about SPARK sessions*

In addition to this we are launching a new social media campaign for the last 3 months of the project, created to provide a platform to amplify the voices of young adults by inviting them to send in a 1-2-minute video with their ideas and views about a social justice issue. A token payment will be made for the first 25 contributions agreed.

**SPARK SOCIAL JUSTICE  
PRESENTS  
'SPARK VOICES'**

**Are you aged between 18-30yrs?**  
**Do you care about social justice issues and the world today?**  
**Are you inspired by your faith to make a positive difference?**

**Spark Voices** wants to **amplify** young voices and invite you to share your thoughts and ideas via a short 1-2 minute recording. If you'd like to be involved in this new project, please contact [jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk](mailto:jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk) for more information!

The next 3 months will see the existing project come to an end. However, we are in discussion with the Porticus Trust (who have funded the existing project) and are hopeful that they will be interested to fund a follow-on project.

## REFLECTION

*How many resources are spent on weaponry, especially nuclear weapons, that could be used for more significant priorities such as ensuring the safety of individuals, the promotion of peace and integral human development, the fight against poverty, and the provision of health care.*

*What a courageous decision it would be to establish a Global Fund with the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, in order to permanently eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of the poorest countries.*

*There is... a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter.*

*Everything is interconnected and genuine care*



*for our own lives and our relationship with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others.*

**Selected quotes from his Holiness, Pope Francis, for the celebration of the 54th World Day of Peace**



## **THE POPE'S MESSAGE FOR PEACE SUNDAY 2021**

*Part of a reflection for Peace Sunday by Sr  
Teresa Wamüyü Wachira (IBVM)  
Co-President of Pax Christi International*

In his earlier reflections on the World Days of Peace, and in the two Encyclicals 'Laudato Si' and 'Fratelli Tutti', Pope Francis intertwines love and care of the environment and of humanity (called to be each other's keeper). In his 2021 World Day of Peace message 'A culture of care as a path to peace', the Pope



echoes this when he invites us once more to commit ourselves to care and compassion, by promoting each person's dignity, being in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable and working towards the common good and concern for the protection of creation. This has been an ongoing invitation for all of us due to the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change reality. Similarly, this global experience has kept us focused on the fact that we are all interconnected irrespective of our gender, creed, race, different affiliations, socio-economic and political status.

Furthermore, the Pope calls us to live and work for what really matters that is "the value and dignity of every person, ... solidarity for the common good, and ... relief to those suffering from poverty, disease, slavery, armed conflicts, and discrimination."

Pope Francis further challenges us to "become a prophetic witness of a culture of care, working to overcome the many existing social inequalities" and cautions that this "can only come about through a widespread and meaningful involvement on the part of women, in the family and in every social, political and institutional sphere." This is food for thought for all of us as we usher in the New Year 2021.






The initial questions we may need to ask ourselves are: What will be different in 2021 in the way we engage with each other (women and men, youth and children), our communities, our neighbours, and the global world? What do we need to do to open our hearts, our homes and our borders to the "vulnerable" that reach out to us each day, challenging us to act in response to their cry of vulnerability? How can our hearts be converted, and our ways of thinking changed, in order to work for true peace in solidarity with one another and our Mother earth?

Let us embrace his call to take the compass in hand and "become a prophetic witness of the culture of care". In order to do this, it is important to recap his insights and concerns, contained in both his Encyclicals and World Day of Peace messages, where he has invited us to respect and protect both the human persons and environment, thus setting the compass in the right direction.

The invitation for all of us in 2021 is to renew our commitment once more to advocate, defend and promote the fundamental human rights of each person, heal the broken hearted, restore sight to those who suffer different forms of blindness and injustices, to set prisoners free from the different chains of exclusion, lukewarmness, insecurity, racism, xenophobia, and to responsibly 'till' and be custodians of our Mother Earth.



**EVENTS**

 <b>Anytime!</b>	<p><b>Fratelli Tutti and the work of CSAN and CAFOD</b></p> <p>This webinar is available on the CAFOD website to be viewed. The speakers are Dr Anna Rowlands of Durham University, Dr Phil McCarhy, CEO of CSAN and Neil Thorne, Director of Advocacy, Communications and Education at CAFOD</p> <p><a href="https://www.bigmarker.com/cafod/CSAN-Fratelli-Tutti">https://www.bigmarker.com/cafod/CSAN-Fratelli-Tutti</a></p>
 <b>Anytime!</b>	<p><b>J&amp;P Panel Discussion about Israel Palestine from the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival</b></p> <p>Although centred around the film we sponsored (Jews Step Forward), this discussion provides good background information about how the political situation might play out in 2021 and beyond. Just click the link:</p> <p><a href="https://youtu.be/tUGSq1dSEWw">https://youtu.be/tUGSq1dSEWw</a></p>
 <b>Sun 17 Jan 2021 @4pm</b>	<p><b>Pathways to Peace for Earthlings</b>  <i>A Liturgy for Peace Sunday organised by the J&amp;P Commission</i></p> <p>For peace to flourish we need to create not only a culture of care towards one another but towards our common home – the Earth. Only by viewing ourselves as earthlings – one living species among so many that must coexist on this planet – will we be able to achieve that goal. Register now via our Eventbrite page so we can send you the link:</p> <p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/peacesundayyorkshire">tinyurl.com/peacesundayyorkshire</a></p>
 <b>Thu 28 Jan 7pm-8pm</b>	<p><b>Wellbeing for Future Generations: building a more peaceful world – Youth and Student CND event</b></p> <p>Introduction and chairing by Caroline Lucas MP. With guest speakers Jane Davidson, Pro Vice-Chancellor Emeritus, University of Wales Trinity Saint David; Alexandra Phillips, Campaign Manager, The Big Issue; and Ellie Kinney, Co-convenor, Youth and Student CND.</p> <p>More details and registration: <a href="https://cnduk.org/events/wellbeing-for-future-generations-building-a-more-peaceful-world-youth-and-student-cnd-event/">https://cnduk.org/events/wellbeing-for-future-generations-building-a-more-peaceful-world-youth-and-student-cnd-event/</a></p>
 <b>Sun 21 Feb 2021 All Day</b>	<p><b>Church Action On Poverty Sunday – New Wine Skins</b></p> <p>Join churches around the UK in prayer, giving and action this Church Action on Poverty Sunday. Share a vision for a society founded on compassion and justice, where all people are able to exercise dignity, agency and power.</p> <p>Use their free resources to reflect and pray for change, and raise funds to enable more people to speak truth to power.</p> <p>More info at <a href="http://Church Action on Poverty Sunday - Church Action on Poverty (church-poverty.org.uk)">Church Action on Poverty Sunday - Church Action on Poverty (church-poverty.org.uk)</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.**