



## CONFLICT & CLIMATE CHANGE

The feast of St. Francis on October 4<sup>th</sup> marked the end of the Season of Creation.



The J&P Commission celebrated this feast with a liturgy exploring and praying about the links between Conflict and Climate Change. Using the YCW See, Judge Act approach, short videos were used to find out about the experiences of people across the world. Climate Change is exacerbating situations where there is already weak governance or food insecurity and conflicts become more likely as a consequence. People were asked to reflect on these situations in the light of their faith and some quotes from *Laudato Si* and Luke's Gospel were used to lead people into a short period of silent reflection.

The final section of the liturgy was about taking action. Cardinal Cardijn's key insight in developing the 'See, Judge, Act' approach was to recognise that understanding situations in our world and relating them to our Faith is all very well - but it is worthless unless it leads to action to remedy unjust situations. This includes situations that harm our Common Home, the Earth.

At a global level, two examples were used through the use of video material. Fr Edwin Gariguez from the Philippines explained how he worked with local people to stop a Norwegian company from undertaking mining operations that would have had a devastating effect on the communities living in the area. Nemonte Nenquimo, from Ecuador, worked with her indigenous community and successfully stopped the Ecuadorian Government from selling of the land on which these communities live.



*Nemonte Nenquimo*

Climate Change is a global problem that needs action at a global level by politicians. Consequently, many people do not do anything because of a feeling of powerlessness.

Nemonte Nenquimo from Ecuador pointed out that it needs action by people across the globe if we are to truly achieve action to mitigate Climate Change effects. We may not be able to see the direct impact of our actions – but taken together with the actions of everyone else they all contribute towards building the momentum needed to make changes at the political level.



So, we wanted to both celebrate the actions already being taken in our Diocese and provide examples that other church communities could also practically take up. Michael Emly, from Our Lady of Kirkstall parish in Leeds, talked about the Creation Mass that they had organised and how they actively involved schoolchildren in such events. Sr Sheila Griffiths of the Holy Family of Bordeaux sisters talked about her involvement in the campaign to get the West Yorkshire Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels. Vince Borg from St John Mary Vianney parish in N Leeds talked about the work they



Vince Borg from St John Mary Vianney parish

had done with their local Churches Together group and the leaflet produced for parishioners across local churches to encourage everyone to take action for Climate Change. Maggie McSherry, from the parish of St Mary & St Michael in Settle, talked about a whole range of actions taken in their parish and their joint work with other churches in the Settle area.

With COP26 in Glasgow coming up at the beginning of November, and Pope Francis expected to speak at it, now is the time for Catholics to express their concerns for our planet by any means possible.

**Want to do more – but how to start?**

If you go to the online version of this article, you can download the documents mentioned by Vince Borg and adapt them for use in your community. Follow this link:

<https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/2021/10/05/05-oct-conflict-climate-change-liturgy/>

The *Laudato Si* Movement (which used to be called the *Global Catholic Climate Coalition*) has a very easy action that everyone could do. It is to sign a petition called the 'Healthy planet, healthy people' campaign. It is aimed at world leaders attending COP26. You can find the details at

<https://thecatholicpetition.org/>

**CAFOD**  
Just one world

CAFOD is at the forefront in campaigning for climate justice for the poorest countries. The impact that Climate Change is already having on these communities is devastating. Take a look and see if you could join in their Climate Crisis campaigns or donate to their Climate Crisis Appeal

<https://cafod.org.uk/Campaign/COP26-climate-summit>



## CHARITY, JUSTICE & PHILANTHROPY

The title of the Paul Vallely's latest book is '*Philanthropy from Aristotle to Zuckerberg*'. We were delighted to have Paul, well-known British writer on religion, ethics, Africa and development issues, lead a Zoom session about his book on October 6<sup>th</sup>. It turned out to be a fascinating sweep of the history of philanthropy and generated a number of questions and comments after Paul had finished speaking.



*Paul Vallely on our Zoom meeting*

He started out with the Graeco-Roman world and Aristotle. Aristotle argued that giving to the poor was about building the good character of the giver – rather than anything to do with improving the lot of the poor! Roman culture was much influenced by the Greeks and they took the same approach – and it was also often used to enhance the reputation of the giver. Paul used the term 'strategic philanthropy' to describe this kind of giving.

There was a completely different strand of philanthropy in Hebrew culture. In the Torah there is one word that covers both of what we understand as 'charity' and 'justice'. It is very much concerned with building the community for all - a process in which all have obligations. Paul termed this 'reciprocal philanthropy'.

As Christianity took root across the Roman world the reciprocal philanthropy approach became prevalent. For Basil (d.379CE) giving to the poor was a matter of justice and this way of thinking was still being codified 6 centuries later by Gratian.

The Renaissance, reformation and the rise of capitalism led to a swing back to strategic philanthropy. In Victorian times it became for many rich individuals 'scientific philanthropy' and was seen as a vehicle for social control. Andrew Carnegie, who was a believer in Herbert Spencer's 'Social Darwinism' (it was Spencer who coined the term 'survival of the fittest-not Darwin'). Carnegie's philanthropy focused on the social infrastructure of culture and arts – it was not about changing the lot of the poor.

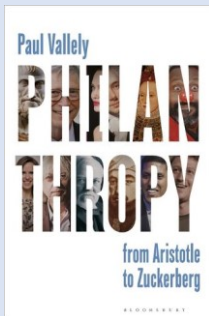
So it has continued to contemporary times. Now, there are many 'corporate' philanthropists – but it is very much strategic philanthropy – mainly corporate PR. One notable exception that Paul drew our attention to is Scott Mackenzie. She obtained a vast fortune as part of her divorce settlement from Jeff Bezos of Amazon. The system she has set up to implement her philanthropy involves deciding what issues to spend money on and then giving money to organisations where she feels there is strong leadership. It is much more closely aligned with the biblical tradition of giving.

There are still many questions (such as the accountability of rich people deciding where they will give their money). What Paul did in his talk was give us all the background to help better frame the debate about modern day philanthropy and the continuing role for both giving to charity and working for social justice.





NEWSLETTER October 2021



### Buy the Book!

The book is available from many good booksellers.

Online you can, of course, buy it from Amazon. But it is also available from a number of online booksellers. If you are not keen on Amazon then why not try one of these – such as <http://www.hive.co.uk/> . Hive supports local independent booksellers.

Missed the talk? – View it on our YouTube channel – use this link <https://youtu.be/9Rfead8h6lc>



There is still time to join us this evening for a webinar with Archbishop Stephen Cottrell on

### **‘How integral is Justice and Mercy to the work of the Church?’**

Please click on the link to register for free on EventBrite.

[How integral is Justice & Mercy to the Work of the Church? Tickets, Wed 20 Oct 2021 at 19:00 | Eventbrite](#)

If EventBrite is no longer available please email Helen on [jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk](mailto:jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk) for the Zoom link.





## **IN WORK POVERTY AND THE SVP**

*by John Battle*

Chair: Justice and Peace Commission.

Roy, in his forties, has spent long periods trying to get work as he has no recognised qualifications. The DWP signed him up to an employment agency to be available as a cleaner. He worked on a zero hours contract at irregular hours at the O2 Arena in Leeds until the Covid-19 lockdown. The O2 Arena closed and Roy got told there was no more work. The agency signed him off and he was not entitled to be furloughed on a supportive income. He was recently referred back to the agency to do some hours at the O2 Arena again as it prepares to reopen. His hours are few and irregular. He expected to be paid for them at the end of his first week back for to be told that he would be paid at the end of the month. His DWP payments stopped until he produced wage slips so he could not get Universal Credit. Desperate for money he took £40 from his partner's purse and as a result of the consequent row, their relationship has broken down. He wanted to get back to working he said "I try so hard, am willing to do anything' but working isn't paying the bills". Roy is one of thousands trying to get back into work after the Covid lockdown, after struggling for months to survive with the help of a local foodbank. He worries that failing to keep up with his rent, which is in arrears, will now mean his family lose their home.

Over 130,000 households in England were made homeless during the first year of the pandemic, despite the Government's ban on evictions. Our local parish SVP conference alone has helped four evicted families reestablish a home in the last six months.

The special contribution, that special 'charism' of the SVP is a quiet, understated rootedness, tuned into and in regular contact through its members with people, individuals

and families in real need. Our support and comment is fully derived from their lived, and suffering, experiences, shared with us as SVP members. That privileged 'access' puts us in a uniquely responsible position to act.

In 1984, I was appointed as the first director of the ecumenical charity Church Action on Poverty and our first published report was entitled "Low Pay; The Cause of Poverty". Today more than half the people living in poverty in Britain are in work, and for millions working 'flexibility' is a tool for generating their poverty. In the decades since 1984, the perceived stigma and shame around "welfare benefits" has not dissipated. Often inaccurate media reports of "the workshy", "scroungers" and "freeloaders" persist and the 'welfare state' is more than ever regarded as an unwanted prop for the lazy unemployed. It is not viewed as a support for the low and underpaid in work, even though it remains true that the majority of the poor in our society are actually working. Despite recent reforms, the introduction of 'universal credit' and the merging of benefits to streamline the claiming system, the welfare state is not a safety net for thousands in work, especially those in temporary, part time work, on zero hours contracts or self-employed. Moreover, most work is in the expanding service sector of the economy (especially retail and distribution) that has replaced manufacturing in recent times as basic employers. There are now more part time workers relative to full time than there used to be. Currently some 6 million people are claiming Universal Credit as a low income work top up or unemployment benefit. In 2008 the Labour Government relied on the introduction of tax credits as a permanent income boost in good times and as a life boat in bad. It supplemented the wages of those working part time until George Osborne axed it as part of his 'austerity cuts' to the social security budget. With the Covid



crisis the furlough scheme effectively replaced it but despite a sharp increase in take up during the pandemic as millions of jobs were lost and workers' hours reduced, the "Welfare at a Social Distance Project" recently spelt out that over 500,000 people actually entitled to Universal credit support do not claim it, not least because of the associated stigma.

Young people are the least likely group in our society to seek help despite being amongst the hardest hit during the pandemic. 24% of 18 -34 year olds are using 'buy now pay later' offers to pay their bills for food, a phone, energy and water costs, the internet and rents. They are piling up the most unsustainable debts.

Furthermore 2 million people earning less than £122 a week are not eligible for statutory sick pay. Those who most need sick pay are barred from receiving it because they are too poor! Two years ago the government promised "extending the protection to those earning less than the lower earnings limit"; it has yet to happen.

The Resolution Foundation think tank has also spelt out that the pandemic has shone a spotlight on the flaws and gaps in the current welfare system. Nearly a third of people earning between £10,000 and £20,000 per year have reported a decline in their finances during the pandemic according to research by Scottish Widows. They estimate that 14 million have suffered a hit to their income, affecting their ability to pay essential costs since March 2020. The number of people in debt soared from 1.7 million to 2.4 million between March 2020 and January 2021 according to the charity Step Change. Reduced social security, low wages, and high rents have left 2.4 million people living in destitution needing help with food, clothing, and hygiene products and studies have shown that low income families have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic

crisis with more than a third seeing their incomes squeezed as a result of higher fuel costs and food not least while at home under lock down. Self-isolation and home schooling put families under increased financial pressure as people lost wages and jobs.

Put simply, millions work but do not take home enough money for them and their families to live on and the pandemic has made things worse. Increasingly they are referred, even by the DWP to go to charity food banks rather than get support and entitlements from the state. Food bank use increased by 33% during the pandemic. The Trussell Trust reports distributing 2.5 million food parcels between April 2020 and March 2021 and this is only a fraction of total food aid given out by local authorities, schools and charities including the SVP.

Our own St Vincent's Centre in Leeds was quick off the mark at the start of the Covid crisis and distributed thousands of food parcels and meals, earning a reputation as one of the City's 'lifelines'. But as the Independent Food Aid Network puts it "Food banks cannot continue to take responsibility for the impact of insecure and inadequately paid employment". Yet when pressed to keep the £20 Universal Credit uplift, the Prime Minister simply reiterated the worn out refrain "Getting people into work is the best route out of poverty". But charity is not the solution to in work poverty

Next month we will hear from John Battle as to what we can all do to help alleviate poverty and very importantly what we can do to help end poverty in the UK.



## LEEDS PALESTINIAN FILM FESTIVAL 2021

For a third year, the Commission is sponsoring one of the films to be shown as part of the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival – which takes place during the last two weeks of November and into early December. Last year, of course, the festival was entirely online. However, we were able to have a panel discussion afterwards. We hope to do the same this year.

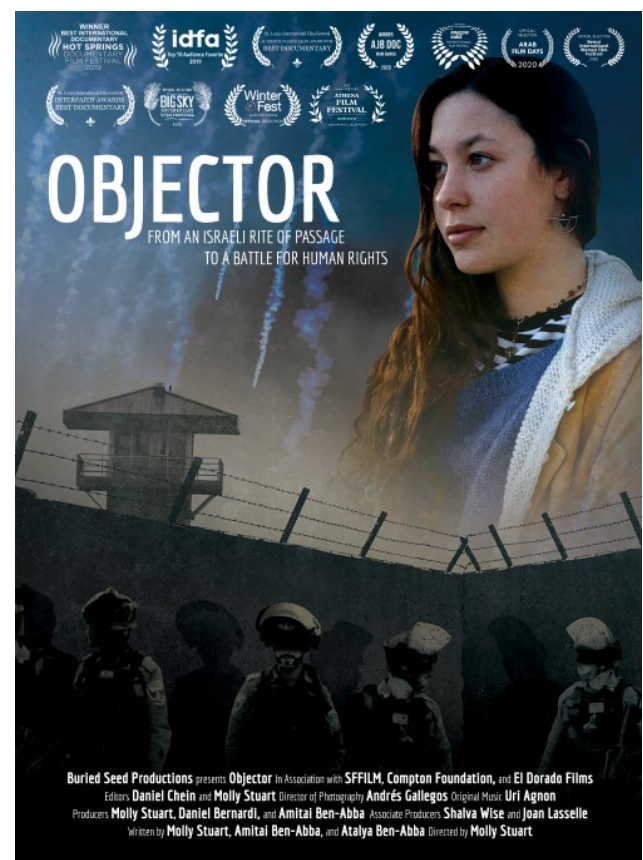
## Leeds Palestinian Film Festival

The Commission has peace and nonviolence as one of its priority areas for reflection and action. The Israel Palestine situation has been a strong interest for a number of years both within the Commission itself and for the Leeds Diocese Pax Christi group with whom we have partnered.

This year we are hoping to have an in-person presentation and we have booked Wheeler Hall at St Anne's cathedral for the evening of **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November**. We will show the film at 6:30pm – so why not think about coming along to this central Leeds venue and combining it with a meal out. It is still to be confirmed, but we are also hoping to have some stalls selling goods made in Palestine – so you could also do some Christmas shopping!

The film that we have chosen, with support from the Leeds Diocese Pax Christi group, is called '**Objector**'. Like all Israeli youth, Atalya is obligated to become a soldier. Unlike most, she questions the practices of her country's military, and becomes determined to challenge this rite of passage. Despite her family's political disagreements and personal

concerns, she refuses military duty and is imprisoned for her dissent. Her courage moves those around her to reconsider their own moral positions and personal power. **OBJECTOR** follows Atalya to prison and beyond, offering a unique window into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the perspective of a young woman who seeks truth and takes a stand for justice.



The film, directed by Molly Stuart, was released in 2019 and since then has garnered several awards at various film festivals across the world.

Please click on the link to register

<https://lpff2021-objector.eventbrite.co.uk/>





If you are not able to make it then it is well worth keeping an eye on the festival website for the full festival programme:

<https://leedsppff.org.uk/>





## EVENTS

 <b>Wed 20 Oct @7pm</b>	<b>How Integral is Justice &amp; Mercy to the Work of the Church?</b> We are delighted to have Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, lead us in an exploration of this. Please click to register on Eventbrite through the J&P Leeds website <a href="http://www.leedsjp.org.uk">Diocese of Leeds: Justice and Peace Commission (leedsjp.org.uk)</a>
 <b>Wed 27<sup>th</sup> Oct 6.30 -7.30pm</b>	<b>Racist &amp; Colonial Roots of the Fossil Fuel Industry – OU Public Lecture (online)</b> A public lecture and discussion organised by the Open University with one of the world's leading climate change and political economy academics, Andreas Malm. Andreas will be talking about the key themes from his book <i>White Skin, Black Fuel</i> , exploring the racist and colonial roots of the fossil fuel industry and the legacy of these into present day reactionary and fascist responses to climate change. He will also cast a critical eye on progressive campaigns and movements seeking to combat climate change, asking whether their strategies match the self-professed urgency of the situation.
 <b>Sat 6<sup>th</sup> Nov from 11am</b>	<b>COP26: Global Day of Action for the Climate 2021</b> London and Glasgow CAFOD will be joining millions of people across the world who will be out marching for climate justice for the Global Day of Action for the Climate. <b>Join the global day of action on Saturday 6 November to make sure that our call for climate action is not ignored.</b> <a href="https://www.cafod.org.uk/global-day-of-action-for-the-climate-2021">Global Day of Action for the climate 2021   CAFOD</a>
 <b>Fri 26 Nov @6.30pm</b>	<b>Film Showing: Objector – as part of Leeds Palestinian Film Festival</b> <i>6:30pm Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral – free, but donations welcome</i> See the article inside giving more details – The film lasts about an hour and there will be time for discussion afterwards- and we are hoping to have Palestinian goods for sale. Register to ensure you have a reserved place: <a href="https://lpff2021-objector.eventbrite.co.uk/">https://lpff2021-objector.eventbrite.co.uk/</a>

***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.***