



CONGRATULATIONS TO SIR JOHN BATTLE



In the New Year's Honour's List, our Chair, John Battle, was made a knight.

He was given this honour in recognition of both his public and political service over the past four decades.

Since retiring from Parliament in 2010, John has been tireless in his efforts to support local communities, especially in west Leeds, where he lives with his wife Mary. John had a pivotal role in the creation of the Bramley Baths social enterprise – which turned around a local swimming pool from being a financial burden on Leeds City Council into a resource that pays its way and is used across the West Leeds community. He has also been key in the Leeds Debt Forum.

John is also a vice-chair of Leeds Citizens – part of Citizens Organising in the UK – and has been heavily involved since its inauguration. In the years prior to that he was instrumental in building a community of people who could make it happen in the first place.

He has been a strong advocate for the SVP at both local and national level.

From the many social media comments received the general reaction has been 'well-deserved' – something which other members of the Commission wholeheartedly endorse!

THE TIME FOR RENEWAL

By Sir John Battle, Commission Chair

Pope Francis wrote of the impact of the Covid pandemic in his encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti':

"Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing or to refine existing systems and regulations is denying reality".

The Covid pandemic has ravaged families and communities and hollowed out many supportive institutions and organisations including many of our Church parishes. Nor is the impact just on underused offices and declining service sector economies in town and city centres. Some, with resources, have actually managed to save and increase their wealth and look to 'return to normal'.

For many, however, Covid has deepened divisions, increased inequalities - hitting the poorest, and the young (children and young people) hardest. Many older people have suffered too, not least from enforced isolation and family loss and grief. Others are experiencing continuing debilitating illness.



There has been an increase in poverty. Not all workers were "furloughed". Many in part time and temporary work lost their job and thousands of self-employed lost their incomes.



14% of adults are estimated to have experienced a "significant improvement" in their finances.

1.4 million adults are left "seriously financially vulnerable".

14.2 million now have serious debt problems.

5.1 million are now dependent on food bank support to feed themselves and their families regularly.

The £20 reduction in Universal Credit has undercut support for those in work low pay.

conversion, a turning to the Gospel and to the margins for a renewal of the "outward facing Church" he outlined in 'Evangelium Gaudium'.



What, therefore, are the questions that we should now be addressing as Church as a whole, as parishes and specifically as the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission?

Moreover, as social scientist Rebecca Solnit reminds us, "*Ordinary life before the pandemic was already a catastrophe of desperation and exclusion for too many*".

The two decades of this century have been characterised by key global events. Following the 2008 financial crisis and the consequent economic 'austerity' measures, political 'populism' emerged in several countries as a reaction. At the same time, the climate crisis began increasingly to be taken seriously.

Now, Covid has struck making a political, economic and social impact locally and globally. Coincidentally, Pope Francis (and some Dioceses in our Church) has initiated a Synodal Process. In his letter to the Church in Germany Pope Francis refers to the challenging crisis of our times: "*We all realise that we are not merely living in a time of change but at a change of epochs, which throws up new and old questions in the face of which a discussion is justified and necessary*".

Pope Francis sees the current transformations and in particular the crises in the Church as a "Kairos" for fundamental

How can we become a 'New Church for New Times'?

How do we address:

- the new realities of the breakdown of any 'Common Good' narrative,
- rampant promotion of 'individualism' and self-defining 'identities',
- a global economy of profit maximization and monopoly,
- increasing wealth and poverty inequalities,
- political withdrawals in to populism and nationalism,
- rejections of international cooperation and human rights,
- continuing conflicts and
- a planetary climate crisis and
- a shift from the projects of democracy to autocracies.



How can the Church become a realization of "caring for the poor" – blending seamlessly with "caring for the earth" – in practice? Is it a time for a new Church of 'prophets';

- who courageously discern and name the 'new sins'?
- who challenge the structures of sin and injustice and champion mercy?
- who insist from the church's work as a "field hospital" that causes must go examined and tackled?
- who work to hold together -joined as two hand - in 'prayer and action', in liturgy and worship, presenting struggle and celebration, grief and hope?

The most neglected 'tool' of Catholic Social learning is "PARTICIPATION" which implies building up relational practices through 'deep listening' to develop new leadership through genuinely engaging 'empowerment'.

A Justice and Peace Commission emerging from the Vatican 11 foundational documents "Gaudium et Spes" and "On the Laity" must now address these questions. Not a charitable service provider itself, its charism is to prophetically raise deeper questions of primary causes; to not lose sight of offering 'utopian', 'Kingdom' alternatives, offering them as challenges to new lay leadership – not least side-lined young people.

Revealing the reality behind blurring ideologies needs communicating through 'relational imagery'. As Walter Brueggemann said, we need to be "making clear that lived life in the world is in fact complex, fluid and filled with risk". In other words, its prophetic role is not just to present researched social economic and cultural analysis, or present facts, but inspire and

commit to the Spirit's support to release the potential of the laity in the Church as a whole - as shapers of "a new earth and a new heaven" in our times.

WORK OPPORTUNITY WITH THE J&P COMMISSION



Are you passionate about social justice, well-organised and looking for paid work?

We need someone to lead our successful SPARK Social justice project for younger adults and who can help the Commission reach new audiences and raise awareness of our work by enhancing and developing its presence and visibility.

We have about £18,000 available to pay an individual or organisation to provide various services on a self-employed basis. This works out at about 3 days' work per week. Closing date is 13 Feb 2022

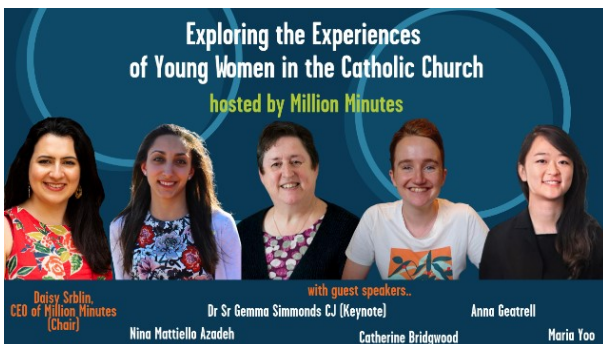
See our website for full details



MILLION MINUTES' WEBINAR EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: JOURNEYS AWAY FROM 'DUMBLEDORE'

By Daisy Srblin, CEO of 'Million Minutes'

As a Catholic youth social action charity, at Million Minutes we often talk about 'peripheries' of the Church and of society – where they are, what makes them peripheral, who's in them, how do 'we' get 'there', how can the Church minister work them, and so on. And in the last 18 months in post as CEO, it has felt increasingly clear to me that for the Catholic Church, and for society, the experiences of women are often treated as 'peripheral'.



That's why last month we hosted a webinar exploring the experiences of young women in the Catholic Church, with Dr Sr Gemma Simmonds CJ, Anna Geatrell, Nina Mattiello Azadeh, Maria Yoo and Catherine Bridgwood. Our panel of excellent women, many of whom spoke from personal experience, focused on the experiences of lay women in the Church. The event was very popular with almost 100 attendees on the night, including representatives from women religious orders.

Our speakers came from different backgrounds and we saw the diversity of women's lived experiences shaped as they are by so many factors. Together we celebrated a space where women's voices were championed, highlighted and prioritised. For some it was a moving experience, given how unusual it is to have a Catholic space where women took centre stage, rather than being an addendum. Our speakers took an honest, loving and hopeful look at the realities young lay women face, where the Church could better accompany them, and how we can journey there together, what intersectionality might teach us, and what more the Church can do to positively include young women.

Sr Gemma kicked us off with a fascinating exploration of the ways in which certain interpretations of scripture in specific historical contexts have been used to marginalize women, and how reframing such interpretations can shift the way we see women as a result of theological history. Sr Gemma reminded us that questions around women's roles within the Church are not new, and that certain emphases and interpretations have had profound and detrimental implications on the role of women in society and in the Church. In a particularly amusing moment, Sr Gemma reminded us that wearing 'mixed fibres' is considered sinful in scripture, to remind us of the ways in which teachings have been specially selected and interpreted.

Nina Mattiello Azadeh, a young woman and a member of our Board of Trustees, explored the experiences of two Biblical women, Mary Magdalene and Mary, Mother of God, and compared and contrasted the ways in which contemporary society treated them and reacted to them. She also explored what



media and societal reactions to the murders of Sarah Everard, Bibaa Henry, Nicole Smallman and Sabina Nessa tell us about the ways young women's lives are valued, or not, and asked us to consider the extent to which the Catholic Church has shown leadership in this space.

Catherine Bridgwood, 24, unpacked her previously held belief of God as a 'Dumbledore' figure, a kindly, wise person, but ultimately an old white man, and talked to us about her journey in recognising God as in the margins. She said *'my image of God was of a Dumbledore-type character. Old white man, long beard, a wise and loving father-type figure. But He's a He... and if I am made in the image and likeness of God, where do I fit into all this?'* Catherine reflected on her own professional experiences working with marginalized women in Birmingham and challenged us to 're-centre' the Church in such 'margins', where the best of the Church is truly in action.

Finally, Maria Yoo explored the role of intersectionality, and the ways in which her sexuality, racial identity as Korean-British, class and immigrant status have all shaped her experiences of being a woman in the Church, pushing her to the outskirts of belonging in the Church and in society. She challenged us to consider how a practicing Catholic like herself, in a same-sex relationship, might not be welcome to have her child baptized, or to bring her partner to Church. Maria also explored the ways in which she has had to remind herself that she too belongs in the Church, and is also a child of God, and the ways in which she too has experienced God's love on the 'margins'.

The Q&A was similarly illuminating, unpacking a lot of important subjects, including that of the 'feminine genius' and just how helpful (or not) such a concept is when thinking of women in the Church and in society. We also talked of the lack of inclusive language in mass (why do we say 'brothers and sisters' as opposed to 'sisters and brothers', to take one small example), and touched on what is left for women who are not called to the vocation of motherhood, and what spaces they have in the Church to share their gifts. We reminded one another that the majority of those who keep the Church going, from administration, catechism, teaching, cleaning and so much more, are women, and that it is women who predominantly worship in Churches and bring the next generation of children to Church.

Pope Francis has frequently commented on the role of women within the Church and how crucial it is for communities to acknowledge the experiences of each person. In his own words, *'...some young women feel that there is a lack of leading female role models within the Church and they too wish to give their intellectual and professional gifts to the Church.'* (*Christus Vivit*, 245).

Find out more about Million Minutes here: <https://millionminutes.org/>

Or contact: info@millionminutes.org

Find the FREE webinar recording on YouTube here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAU6jYIIUQ&feature=emb_title

The evening reminded us all that the Church needs to find a way to include, celebrate and advance these young women in the Church, if we wish to keep the richness, the diversity of experiences they bring, to recognise, love



and value a community which represents over half of God's people on earth. This webinar, though not providing all the answers, asked important questions in grappling with that challenge.

For more online content, visit the SPARK Social Justice YouTube Channel:

[SPARKSocialJustice - YouTube](#)



Recent videos cover Extinction Rebellion and protest techniques; being Catholic and LGBTQ+; and the impact of the pandemic on young adults.

NATIONALITY AND BORDERS BILL

By Matthew Maslen

This month, the Nationality and Borders Bill is going through the House of Lords, after passing through the House of Commons at the end 2021.

As the CSAN Statement from December summarises, the Bill would: *“overhaul our asylum system to make it much more difficult to seek asylum in the UK.”* It is a weak attempt by our government to sell as beneficial immigration policies which will simply undermine, vilify and attack.

While MPs in the House of Common have passed it, the Bill's new proposals have faced a severe backlash from groups up and down the country.

One response is the 'Yorkshire and the Humber joint statement on welcoming refugees' which spells out the region's *“spirit of care and solidarity”* for refugees and concern over the implications of the Nationality and Borders Bill. After originally being developed by the Upper Wharfedale Refugee Support Group, the statement spread across the region.

John Battle, the Chair of the Commission, is one of over 100 political leaders, community groups, businesses, organisations, and faith groups to have signed the statement.

And in Settle, after being approached by Paul Kelly on behalf of his Parish's LiveSimply Group, Fr Frank Smith signed the statement on behalf of both his Parishes: St Mary and St Michael, Settle, and St Boniface, Bentham.

Paul Kelly, who is also Project Lead of the 'Refugee ReSETTLEMENT Group' told us why the St Mary and St Michael LiveSimply Group felt so drawn to sign:

“Our parish started the first refugee Community Sponsorship group in the diocese so we have a first-hand knowledge of being totally responsible for welcoming and settling a family who were horrifically displaced from their homes in Syria. From this experience we strongly feel the intention of The Nationality and Borders Bill 2021 runs completely contrary to basic Catholic understanding of love and care for my neighbour.

The Bill will clearly make it much more difficult to seek asylum in the UK, create a two-tier system which discriminates against refugees depending on their method of entry to the country, and does nothing to establish more safe routes to requesting asylum.

Supporting the Syrian family here in Settle has been a significant local action towards



our being a LiveSimply parish and has taught us so much about the practicalities of resettlement and welcome, and a wonderful bonus has been the extended connections made across the group in our local community. But for us LiveSimply is also about working to change bad structures and practices over which we have no direct control.

So, calling on the UK Government through the Yorkshire and Humber statement to withdraw these cruel and divisive proposals, and instead to protect people fleeing war and persecution, is one way we can try to influence the wider scene and stand publicly as a parish for what we believe is right and just."



Back in summer 2021, the Commission wrote to the Home Secretary to express our concern over the new Immigration Plan. The letter called out the government's plan for being "unfair and arbitrary", particularly on 4 major points:

1. The proposed treating of Asylum Seekers who arrive outside government resettlement schemes as illegal migrants.
2. The proposed housing of Asylum Seekers in camps or barracks separate from the community.
3. The proposal that only predetermined reports and evidence should be used by agreed parties to speed up court cases.

4. The proposal to immediately deem not credible anyone not disclosing all the facts of their case.

The letter ultimately concluded that: "These proposals demonise and stigmatise vulnerable people, appear to be motivated by a lack of compassion and generosity, and are contrary to Catholic social teaching. We therefore urge you to abandon them."

The Commission is far from the only faith organisation to have responded to the Bill. The SVP and the Jesuit Refugee Service have worked together to release a campaign toolkit. It highlights the 8 key issues of the bill as well as 4 ways to advocate for refugees.

The proposals in the Nationality and Borders Bill will make those seeking safety in the UK more vulnerable, and will simply deny it to the majority of refugees.

The Commission's full letter to the Home Secretary can be found on Page 6 of the June 2021 newsletter:

<https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2021-06-Newsletter-FINAL.pdf>

SVP toolkit:

<https://www.svp.org.uk/nationality-and-borders-bill-campaign-toolkit>

Amnesty International #BordersBill Fact Checker:

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/nationality-borders-bill-truth-behind-claims>

The Immigration Plan violates the Gospel Values of Justice and Peace which we strive for. As Catholics, we are called to welcome the stranger, and so we cannot support the Nationality and Borders Bill.



YOUNG PEOPLE, CHURCH, SPIRITUALITY AND BECOMING LEADERS

Dr Ann Marie Mealey,



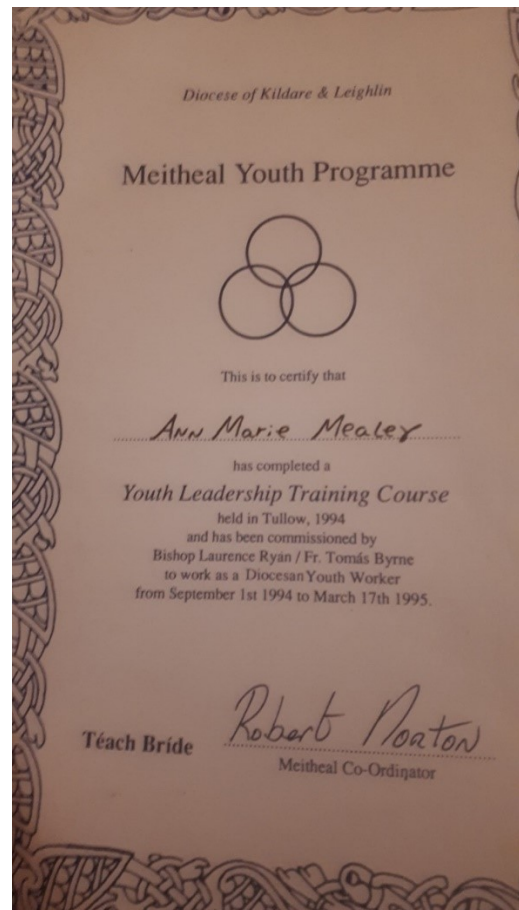
*Associate Dean (Teaching
Enhancement) Global
Banking School*

And member of the J&P Commission

My first experience of leadership was when I was 15. I was selected as part of a team of 10 girls to do a leadership programme called 'Meitheal'. The programme was run (as still does to this day) by Kildare and Leighlin Diocese in Ireland and has the full support of the bishops and school principals of the local secondary schools. The Meitheal Programme trains young people how to listen to others in their environment and act responsibly to effectuate change in their schools. It is pastorally focused and should provide students with the reassurance that school leaders are listening to the needs of the student body and that those girls who were in the more senior years at the schools could provide support and advice to the junior girls who had just started in the school which was run by the Mercy Sisters.

I learned so much on the week-long residential including how to listen to others without interrupting, judging or feeling annoyed if I didn't like and/or agree with what they were saying. I also learned about the importance of being part of the team of people who genuinely respected each other and knew what each other's gift really was. We lived together, ate together and trained together for a week with the leaders of the Meitheal team who were committed volunteers with professional careers. These individuals were so inspirational because

they were successful in their careers and yet humble enough to take a week out of their own personal holiday allowance to train young people like myself in the skills needed for leadership and the values around respecting others which was considered vital to the programme. Inspired by the parable of the talents, a key concept that we heard about all week long was the need to 'find the gold' within ourselves and to also see it within others.



I had never even thought about there being 'gold' inside of me before, and although I always had a strong belief in God and always felt called to pray when I felt alone, worried, upset or anxious, I hadn't really ever considered myself as gold. What an emotional time it was at the end of the week when we were all signing each other's



training folders telling each other how brilliant we were and reminding each other that we were gold, special, unique and absolutely brilliant!

Years later I went on to study Theology, obtained a Ph.D in moral theology and published various books and articles in my field of study. It was very clear to me from quite early on in my studies that the Church was always struggling to engage young people fully in what its key messages were. I always found myself telling my students over and over again that the Church is founded on the key message of love found in the Gospel and not primarily on whatever difficult parts of the teachings they knew most about and couldn't accept.

But of course sitting down to really engage with that message requires time, and perhaps even a deep and painful reflection on one's life that many of us might like to avoid. *Laudato Si'* talks about the 'cult of celebrity' which dominates much of the lives of our young people today. Everyone must look beautiful, be acceptable on Instagram, be liked by everyone (or as many as possible at least), be driving the best car and earning the best money as the director of a top class company.

The journey into faith and Christian spirituality, however, is much more engaged and involved than all of this. The call to be a disciple of Christ may well lead to a brilliant job and a nice car but this should not come about at the cost of another person's opportunity, dignity or circumstances. It should be earned through a genuine commitment to excellence in all things, combined with an understanding of what it means to be a good person with a set of

virtues that work together for love and for justice.

To say one has a faith and is a leader is a conversation, in my view, which must begin at the place where that person feels invited by God into a relationship, a friendship, a conversation. This conversation with God asks us to see ourselves as 'gold', as 'imago dei', totally and perfectly in his image yet broken and in need of constant healing and support along the journey of life.

Far too often we use our power and indeed our understanding of Church teachings as a way to show how much we know in comparison to others, or as a means of taking sides on a particular agenda. For me, though, the main question is not what side we are on so much as what aspect of God's calling is he telling us to live out? We need to ask ourselves constantly, 'what is God putting inside of me personally that is 'gold' and how am I going to use that to grow in his image myself and to allow others to do the same?' This requires deep contemplation and reflection. As Timothy Radcliffe puts it, *'[t]he gaze of Jesus is challenging, but not because our every sin is noted down.'* (p. 128) It's because whether we like ourselves or not, the gaze of Jesus is always one of love. I remember a student at Leeds Trinity who used to call me 'The Queen' of Theology (a term which I couldn't accept at all) because she really believed that whenever she was feeling overwhelmed about her studies, I could fix it! I never felt that way about myself but she did about me. This is how it works in our relationship with God. *'God delights in our being, our goodness, even if it is sometimes concealed. He sees the saint that each of us is called to be with his grace.'* (p.128). Young people often greet each other with 'love ya babes!' Well, God's greeting for



us is even more affectionate than this! God's greeting is one of excitement and pure joy with arms wide open to hug us in the most loving way imaginable. As Pope Francis wrote: *'Appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love'* (*Evangelii Gaudium*, paragraph 284 Apostolic Exhortation, 24 November 2013).

Vincent MacNamara puts it well when he says that this kind of relational approach to the moral life was not always the key focus in the Catholic tradition. *'The earlier moral teaching of command and prohibition in Catholicism did not look like that. It was impersonal, it did not bother to explain itself, it was experienced as a cold legalism. So that it is worth reminding ourselves that the whole of the moral enterprise is about the well-being of ourselves and others'* (MacNamara, 2010, p. 141).

As people of faith, therefore, before we begin wondering exactly what to do about a particular situation, in my view, we need to think firstly how am I feeling about being God's friend? And how am I feeling about other people who are also God's friends? It is at this point, theologically speaking, that we begin to learn how spirituality is at the heart of the quest for truth. We need to ask ourselves as God's friends, what virtues do I need to demonstrate through my actions that I am in fact his friend, and I will be continuously trying to shape my personality in such a way that this will become my vocation and my primary stance in the world?

In my view, to bring young people back into the Church more fully, we need to remember the riches of the spiritual life. Most young people that I meet tell me with great pride that they are 'spiritual but not religious'. In

most cases, I think this is their way of saying that they wish to stay connected with the more poetic side of the search for wholeness and fulfilment without having to deal with the perhaps heavier questions of dogma, morality or the study of the scriptures for instance. We are often happy to leave that task to the few theologians who are left in the country today as 'that is for them to sort out', not me!

However, within this perspective, I feel there is nevertheless still a profound paradox. How can we ever know that our spirituality is healthy and truly life-giving if it is not tried and tested in relation to moral expectations, how we treat other people and the virtues we hold? Is it not rather selfish to focus merely on what we want to take as nourishment for our own well-being alone without any consideration of the impact that might have on others? How can we really say we are happy if we ignore that cry of the poor, or the call from a friend who is in need, or a colleague who is feeling worthless, or a loved one who has just had a breakdown? Is having our candles lighting for ourselves and engaging in holistic spiritual practices that aim at healing oneself and transforming how we see ourselves enough when others also need our help? This is where morality meets spirituality and the conversation begins in my view. Being a friend of God does mean that we are 'gold' and that when we pray we are receiving comfort and healing but this affair is not just private because God has other friends too. And why would we want to take from them when what God has given us is unique to us?

When I was leaving a 16 year lecturing post at Leeds Trinity University in July 2021, I did not have a leaving party. Instead, I was offered the opportunity to have a Mass said



for me and my intentions by the Chaplaincy Team. They told me I could invite a few close friends. I was relieved to hear that I was only allowed a 'few close friends' because I knew I would be emotional and I really felt I had to choose wisely those colleagues and professional contacts that would understand vulnerability – and me! When we are faced with real change and the prospect of the unknown in our lives, we have to admit that we are vulnerable and we may not wish others to see this.



Leeds Trinity
University

Having been awake all night the night before the Mass wondering whether or not I would be able to read out my leaving speech, I decided to just keep the speech in my bag during the Mass and see how I felt at the end. If I felt too emotional, no one would ever know what I had wanted to say, but if I was able and strong enough they would hopefully learn something from my key messages following such a long time as a tutor in moral theology.

Reading the speech 6 months later, I now realise that my message is exactly the same as it was when I was 15 and being trained to be a Meitheal leader in the Diocese. Here is an extract from the speech:

'Through Leeds Citizens, I learned to listen more. Through CAFOD and Justice and Peace, I was challenged to take the Theology out of the ivory tower and bring to bare on ordinary people's lives and lived experiences.'

There is still much to do on all of this in the Church, and I'm relying on my past pupils now to help us to do it. I am very proud of the people that you have become, and I'm excited about what the future hold for you. But if I had one piece of advice to give you it would be: please don't take as long as I did to feel comfortable in your own skin and to shine when the situation requires it. Take inspiration from the people around you – even the ones here today.

We have a former MP and his loving wife (Mary), a Director of Catholic Life, a parish priest saying the Mass, and two Leeds Trinity Chaplains (both past and present). All of these individuals have taught me something professionally but, perhaps more importantly, they all taught something about myself: 'Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain.' (Leaving Mass Speech, Leeds Trinity University, July 2021)

I concluded my speech by noting the text 1 Timothy 4.14 as my parting message to the LTU community: *'Neglect not the gift that is in thee.'*

As places of learning, universities and schools should help students to discern who they are and what their gifts are. This might come through the form of career guidance or at times personal tutoring but in my view it should go deeper. We should feel able to say to students and people we work with what we think is fantastic about them! I am always inspired by young people who tell each other so freely that they love so and so, or that so and so is a 'pure legend'. For God, we are all 'pure legends' but we fail as a young community to see that THIS is the key message of the religious tradition.



Getting back to leadership then, I think we all could admit that we know someone in leadership who we really believed was a 'true legend!' But have we ever asked ourselves what exactly was it about that person that made them have such an impact on you? What is their character all about? What did they DO that made them so brilliant? Rarely still do we ever take the time to ask the person who we are admiring so much what they had to go through to be such a legend in leadership. From my own experience of those who have led me well and those who have not, the key difference was their behavior, how they treated me and how they made me feel about myself and about my work and potential. I respected those who respected me.

So, all in all, therefore, we keep coming back to the fact that friends of God are people who are 'legends' in the eyes of the one who loves them first and who loves them the most. Once we accept this relationship with God, we are accepting to be molded into his ways, and into a set of virtues that are borne out of the spiritual. God is the potter and we are the clay.

This dialogue and activity of God in our lives is not an easy one because often when one might want to be kind, one might realize that is in fact justice and a tough decision that is required. Good leadership therefore requires diligence, study, sacrifice and a willingness to support others, to let others shine without being jealous or spiteful and to always be open to learning more and being told that you 'got it wrong'. In short, it requires the virtues.

It is this kind of training that is currently being offered at Notre Dame Sixth Form College through their 'Stella Maris' young

leadership awards. These awards encourage all students in the school to be the best that they can be (as they are all precious in the eyes of the school's Catholic leadership team) and to find ways of being a good virtuous person throughout the year. Some students undertake charity work, helping the poor, cleaning up the school premises, helping other students who are finding life difficult, leading on school projects linked to care for the environment and many more. Each student collects points and recommendation for their work from their teachers and these are assessed at the end of the year to determine whether a gold, silver or bronze leadership award can be given out. I was asked to be a judge on two occasions, and to deliver a speech at the last Awards Day in July.



On that day, I reminded staff and students of the text of *Fratelli Tutti* (paragraph 18) which speaks of a 'throw-away' world. For Pope Francis, in such a culture, '*persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled "not yet useful" ... or "no longer needed"*' (FT, paragraph 18).

This throwing away of persons damages society, organizations, families and people. It can take the form of bullying, jealousy, racism, ridicule, or disrespectful actions, for example. And if it is seen to be done in the name of progress or to advance an agenda (either individual or collective), then it is seen as acceptable.



In virtuous leadership, however, persons matter a great deal. Their dignity is of paramount significance and that is the lens through which the eyes of the faith or spiritual leader are drawn and moulded in order to see the world differently, to challenge the status quo, to exercise strong judgement around people's dignity and to use their power for the liberation of others rather than the continuation of their oppression. Put simply, it encourages us to have the courage to *'imagine, recognize in literary accounts, project oneself into, and transform'* (Junker- Kenny, 2019 p. 70) our moral thinking so that subsequently the ways in which people currently view how organizations should be run and how people should be led and guided.

So, for any young person out there who wants the glamour of being a director, a school principal or a leader in any kind of organization, try to ask yourself 'what kind of leader do I want to be?' Begin with the question: 'what are my values as a person? And then asking, 'are those the right kind of values to have in order to occupy a leadership position?'

These are tough questions and there is no short-cut to doing the reflection concerning who we want to be as leaders of the future. And of course if we were to be totally honest we don't really like to have to say to ourselves: 'am I of "the cult of celebrity" school' of leadership rather than the "friend of God school of leadership?" This is understandable as the latter involves sacrifice, doing the right thing, going to the depths of our conscience, to the 'secret core' and 'sanctuary' that *Gaudium et Spes* spoke about in paragraph 16 at the Second Vatican Council. It is in that sanctuary where we are

alone with ourselves and God that we can truly make a choice about who we want to be as a leader in front of the one who truly loves us. As the much-respected and loved moral theologian Kevin Kelly wrote that we must always continue *'[b]eing a cry for a more fully human life [because] it is God's voice calling us into the future, inviting us to take up the challenge to continue creating a more human world'* (Kelly, 1999, p. 153).

How we do this requires engagement with activities that help us to develop our leadership qualities and to understand what our predecessors have taught us. A very creative example is cited by Mary Judith Reiss in an article entitled 'After Five Centuries of Mixings, Who Are We? Walking with Our Dark Grandmother's Feet'. In this text, she talks about how a women's network in Latin America would get together to share experiences of the holy in their lives and what they had learned from this. She says, *'[d]uring a recent ritual to honor our many unknown ancestors, we were asked to "walk back" through history by imagining ourselves first walking in our mother's feet, then in our grandmother's, great-grandmother's, and so on, back through the generations. We were each to see in her own landscape, going back in time 500, 600, even 1,000 years ago'* (Mary Judith Reiss, 1996, p. 51). This 'going back' to reflect on what we have learned or can learn through the lens of others is really important in leadership as it helps us to receive the wisdom of the past and to ensure that we change our approach so that the sins of the previous generation are not perpetuated but used as vehicle for change and positive future development. Furthermore, as I argue in my first book, we need to engage in spiritual practices that attune us to what a relationship with God is all about. *'[...] [E]ngagement with the spiritual practices of*



meditation, worship, fasting and praying with the Scriptures, to name but a few, ... are akin to personal training. They are training for the mind and the heart in the ways of Jesus and in the ways of goodness' (Mealey, 2009, p. 106).

At present, Leeds Citizens is offering such an opportunity for 'personal training' in authentic leadership for free in the community. Free master classes for young people across the city of Leeds are being offered by this organization in the hope that the future generation of leaders can begin to reflect on who they might want to be as leaders of the future. These sessions allow young people to come along to listen to established, eminent leaders from different walks of life to talk openly about what they think good leadership looks like and what key insights they would like to pass on to the next generation. The approach is a supportive, 'around the fire-side' style talk with an expert where young people can freely and respectfully ask questions about leadership from someone who is successful in their career and has done it with grace, dedication, sacrifice and kindness. The hope is that we can find a way to create the leaders of the future who can hopefully (with the help of the wisdom offered by the experts) avoid perpetuating the same mistakes that we see made by leaders over and over again.

Finally, it is perhaps fitting to conclude with the prayer that is found at the closing section of Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* entitled a 'prayer to the Creator' in order to help the reader of this piece to begin to enter into the 'secret core' and 'sanctuary' of leadership:

Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in
dignity:

pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed
encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence
and war.
May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common
projects,
and shared dreams. Amen.

Here's to God's leadership 'legends' of the future!

AM Mealey, Horsforth, 07/01/2022.

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- This paper is available as an individual download – See the 'Views' section of our website***



RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE LEEDS DIOCESE

By John Duffy, Commission member

When the Justice and Peace Commission came to look at issues of racial justice, we realised that we need to do more than support Racial Justice Sunday. We had learned from the Catholic association for Racial Justice (CARJ – www.carj.org.uk) that some Black Catholics often encountered the same problems within the Church as in society, and we decided that we ought to start by listening to the experience of Black Catholics in the Leeds diocese.

We made contact with CARJ, who advised us that we should listen to the voices of minority groups and encourage them to become involved in Justice and Peace activity. This should help us to organise training and support, recognising that this is a journey for all of us, and we are interdependent - we all need to listen carefully and with respect to a wide range of experiences and perspectives.

Our aim is to ensure that in our Church everyone is *safe, seen, heard and respected*.

So, in partnership with Leeds Citizens (www.citizensuk.org/chapters/leeds/) - an alliance formed of faith, education and community organisations, working for the common good - we are inviting Black and Minority Ethnic Catholics to share their experiences and views in a 6 months project, meeting virtually, to present their findings to the J&P Commission in the summer.

If you are interested in finding out more or taking part please get in touch by emailing:
jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk

CAFOD LEEDS VOLUNTEERS WANTED



CAFOD Leeds are looking for volunteers in a range of roles to help them tackle world poverty and the climate crisis.






You can help CAFOD: in the office, helping with admin and correspondence; in your Parish, organising collections and sharing campaigns; in Diocesan schools, leading assemblies and workshops; in communications, gathering stories about the inspiring work our volunteers do around the Diocese; and as an MP Correspondent, ensuring our MPs hear the voices of those in our global family who need support.

All these roles can be flexible to your interests and skills, and can be done remotely from wherever you are.

If you're interested in getting involved
phone: 07748514641, or email:
leeds@cafod.org.uk



Events

 Wed 16 Feb	<p>Criminal Justice Workshop – Violence <i>Online or in-person at St John Fisher Catholic Voluntary Academy Dewsbury, 6pm – 8pm</i> How we can break cycles of violence and address underlying issues. See Eventbrite: Criminal Justice Workshop - Violence Tickets, Wed 16 Feb 2022 at 18:00 Eventbrite</p>
 Sun 20 Feb	<p>Working for Peace in the Middle East – CND online conference <i>Online, 1pm – 4:30pm</i> Join CND and guest speakers to discuss the current situation in the Middle East and how we can best campaign for peace in the region. Will the Middle East ever be nuclear-free? And what is the UK’s role in the region? Register Here: Webinar Registration - Zoom</p>
 Sun 27 Feb	<p>Church Action on Poverty Sunday Join with other churches across the UK in giving, action and prayer. Celebrate the transformational possibilities of people coming together to reclaim their dignity, agency and power. See the CAP website for more details https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/</p>
 Ongoing	<p>HOOR LEEDS Want to help those in need but don't know how to? Don't have much time to offer? During this challenging time, you can still get creative with a fundraiser for St Vincent's Centre, Leeds. Their “Hour Leeds” campaign is an incentive for people to do something for one hour for the centre. This could be doing something on your lunch break at work or going for an hour long sponsored walk. Don't think you have the time for that? You could also donate an hour's wage to the St Vincent's Support Centre - even a little bit makes a huge difference. The St Vincents’ Centre in Leeds is advertising this – but you could just as easily do it for the SVP Centre in Bradford.</p>
 Wed 16 Mar	<p>Criminal Justice Workshop – Call to Action <i>Online or in-person at All Saints Catholic College Huddersfield, 6pm – 8pm</i> How you can take positive action in your community, parish or school. https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/sunday/</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.