



ADVOCACY, FAITH AND JUSTICE

By John Battle Commission Chair

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute”

Proverbs 31:8

A “Discussion Paper for the Decade of Evangelisation: From Charity to Empowerment”, published by the Catholic Bishops Conference in 1992, set out a relationship between ‘Welfare Charity’- ‘Advocacy’ - and ‘Empowerment’.

Welfare charity is social provision for the immediate relief of poverty.

Empowerment gives priority to enabling the poor themselves to be shapers of their own destiny, running their own communities and local economies.

Advocacy attempts to understand the causes of poverty and to work on behalf of the poor and voiceless to tackle them. It leads naturally to getting engaged in the struggle for justice but does not displace welfare action or pre-empt empowerment.

The regular work of the SVP and parish groups, not least during the Covid crisis, providing food banks and visits was the hallmark of the Catholic welfare contribution. Church Action on poverty (and CAFOD projects internationally) have for the past decade worked with local communities on empowerment strategies.

And while there is not a direct sequence or linear progression in time from welfare action to empowerment, focus on these two themes has tended to squeeze out any practical understanding and development of Catholic “Advocacy” practices.



The Advocate (Paraclete?)





In our UK context, still suffering from the original sin of austerity and a short-termist negative political culture, the question is increasingly that of: how can Advocacy be part of the Church's mission? In a political culture of "fear-politics" and manipulation of information in which truth is sacrificed to expediency, how can the practices of Advocacy make any difference? In an increasingly divided and polarising society in which the poor pay the highest price, how can Advocacy be effective against power lobbying which dominates political decision making around laws and budgets?

Moreover, recent repression of protest (under new public order laws), anti-trade union laws; and the suppression of voting rights is turning people into passive citizens. A "leave it to us" approach to governing inevitably leads to resignation, a sense that "nothing we do can make any difference". This council of despair undermines any positive role for Advocacy.

Pope Benedict in "Caritas in Veritate" (para 21) writes that these times

"oblige us to replan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones... to shape a new vision of the future"

We could start by reclaiming a deeper understanding of Advocacy and its relation to the Church's mission, rather than leaving it to be misunderstood and disparaged as corrupting political lobbying of parliament and Whitehall.

St Oscar Romero said:

"When the Church hears the cry of the oppressed it cannot but denounce the

social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises".

In other words, for us, there needs to be a theological and popular shift from the necessary charitable action of Pope Francis' Church as "field hospital" - on the battlefield healing wounds - to challenging the causes of poverty and oppression.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it:

"There comes a point when we need to stop pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they are falling in".

Moreover, this has also been part of the approach of Catholic social teaching. In "Populo Progressio" Pope Paul VI wrote:

"the individual who is animated by true charity labours skilfully to discover the causes of misery, to find the means to combat it, to overcome it resolutely".

More recently Pope Benedict XVI in "Caritas in veritate" spelt out in detail the need for

"further and deeper reflection on the meaning of the economy and its goals"

(para32)

and in "Fratelli Tutti" (2020) Pope Francis writes:

"the Church has a role over and above her charitable and educational activities"

insisting that the Church

"cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the building of a better world",

continuing, it is true, that religious ministers must not engage in the party politics that are the proper domain of the laity, *"but neither*



can they renounce the political dimension of life itself” (para 276).

Pope Francis notes in “Fratelli Tutti”:

“Today in many countries, hyperbole, extremism, and polarisation have become political tool. Employing a strategy of ridicule suspicion and relentless criticism in a variety of ways denies the right of others to exist or to have an opinion. Their share of the truth and their values are rejected and as a result the life of society is impoverished and subjected to the hubris of the powerful. Political life no longer has to do with healthy debates about long term plans to improve people's lives and to advance the common good but only with slick marketing techniques primarily aimed at discrediting others. In this craven exchange of charges and counter charge, debate degenerates into a permanent state of disagreement and confrontation. Amid the fray of conflicting interests, where victory consists in eliminating one's opponents, how is it possible to raise our sights to recognise our neighbours or to help those who have fallen along the way?”

(Para 15-16).

Fr Austin Smith CP warned us that in these circumstances:

“believing in being all things to all men and women is rooted in a theology that never splashed down in the real ocean of human suffering “

Again, Pope Francis addressing the Bahrain Forum for East-West Dialogue for Human Coexistence (Nov 2022) said:

“A true love for the Divine creator means acting on behalf of his children

who are neglected by the powerful, acting for the poor, the unborn, the elder, the infirm...If believers don't take the side of the voiceless who will? It is our duty to encourage and assist our human family, interdependent yet disconnected to sail the sea together”.

In other words, we need a Church that takes risks and not a version of softly whispered “lobbying”.

The word “Advocacy” is rooted in the Latin “ad vocare”, to call towards, meaning to plead the cause of a person, not least in a court of justice. It means to intercede, to speak up for another. Advocacy, moreover, is rooted in Scripture. In the Old and New Testaments, God urges us to plead another's cause, invites advocates to speak boldly, whether or not they are qualified (cf. Exodus 4:13, Esther 1:10, Nehemiah, Nathan and Paul's letter to Philemon). John's Gospel frequently references the “Advocate” and the “Paraclete” as a helper or counsellor alongside us. The First Letter of John references the Holy Spirit especially, as well as Father and Son – all as the “Advocate” in our support. In medieval times an “advocate” was a personal patron saint. The theological resonances of the word remain to be explored.

But as “advocacy” should not simply mean “lobbying” (increasingly a professional occupation), nor be limited to sending emails to MPs, the practical question opens up of how we as the Church should “speak truth to power”?

How do we effectively challenge unjust laws and unfair budgets?

How can the Church be a catalyst for change?

How do we identify and truthfully name the scope and scale of the challenge?



NEWSLETTER October 2023

SPEAKING

TRUTH

to

POWER

Firstly—Deep Listening (Synodal?)
Finding / Developing A ‘Voice’ – Whose?
Words – from where and who?
Where to speak? - Communication

What is Truth?— said Pilate
Gospel Truth
Truth from the tradition of the Church Fathers & Mothers, saints, encyclicals
Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes, Caritas in Veritate, Laudato Si, Fratelli Tutti

Power Analysis – Do it!
Subsidiarity – finding the appropriate levels of power

Advocacy as the ‘Voice of the Voiceless’

The Role of the J&P Commission— our **Co-mission**

Deep listening is the key that must precede speaking (akin to the synodal process), but how do we develop a voice for the voiceless? Who speaks to whom, and with what words? How do we communicate the **truth** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our context? How do we confront power and analyse it truthfully to take on dominating narratives? Dare we refuse to be cowed by conflicts and controversies which perpetuate deliberate confusion and fear?

In 1965, a friend and adviser of Pope Paul VI, Jean Guitton, suggested that the “aggiornamento” of Vatican II needed to be fused with a process of “approfondimento continuo”, which translates as “constant deepening”.

Developing a theological praxis of “advocacy” moves us towards that deeper encounter between “the world” – especially those suffering and written off – and Christ of the Gospel.

This reflection was given at an extended J&P Commission meeting on 09 September 2023.

If you wish to download a copy of this reflection then take a look at the online version of this article on our website and you will find a button that will let you download it in PDF format.



NEW PREMISES FOR THE PEACE MUSEUM

By Liz Firth, Peace Museum Trustee

The Peace Museum, currently based in Bradford City Centre, has announced it is to relocate to new premises at Salts Mill in Saltaire. The move is made possible due to a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of

£245,651 for an exciting heritage project, 'IMAGINE: Creating The Peace Museum of the Future'. The project will create brand new public exhibition and engagement spaces at Salts Mill in Saltaire.

The museum is aiming to reopen to the public in summer 2024. Supported through The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project will focus on creating engaging and accessible exhibitions and developing a dedicated learning space in its new home. Opening in these new premises will create many more opportunities for visitors, researchers, and community groups to explore the diverse range of stories told by the museum's collection.



The Peace Museum is the only museum in the UK dedicated to peace and holds a unique collection of international importance. With Salts Mill being a key Bradford landmark and located in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Saltaire, The Peace Museum team is confident that opening at this venue will allow a larger number of people to freely access peace history for the foreseeable future.

Commenting on the award, Clive Barrett, Chair of Trustees at The Peace Museum, said: *"This project will be transformational for The Peace Museum. We're delighted to have received this support thanks to National Lottery players, and so excited to have the opportunity to make the history of peace accessible to everybody. This is particularly exciting in light of Bradford receiving City of Culture for 2025, as we'll be able to welcome visitors from all over the world to our brand-new museum in the heart of the district."*

Shanaz Gulzar, Creative Director of Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture, said: "It's a joy to see Bradford's cultural sector preparing for our landmark year as UK City of Culture. Bradford is a city of peace and we're so excited that The Peace Museum is opening again, increasing access to their incredible collection. This is a huge opportunity to celebrate and share our district's diverse history of social reform – with our communities and with visitors from around the world, in the year 2025 and beyond."

The Peace Museum explores the history and the often-untold stories of peace, peacemakers, social reform, and peace movements. The museum opened to the public in 1998 and is celebrating its 25th birthday in 2023. It is unique in that it is the only accredited museum of its kind in the UK, and it is a member of the International Network of Museums for Peace, which connections across the globe.

For more information visit <https://thepeacemuseum.org.uk/>

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TREES FOR LIFE, REMEMBRANCE AND PEACE

By Sean Morris, Commission Member



At a talk to Leeds Pax Christi, new Commission member Sean Morris talked about a project he had been involved in for over a decade – bringing ginkgo tree seeds from Hiroshima to promote peace across the UK and Ireland.

Hiroshima is obviously known for being almost destroyed by the first of nuclear weapons on a city on the morning of August 6, 1945. For some time after, the people who survived, the 'hibakusha' were not certain if they should rebuild their devastated city. In spring 1946, a few remaining charred ginkgo trees started to grow buds and this sight of life delighted all who saw it, giving them faith that the city could grow again. Within a few months, Hiroshima held its first commemoration of the bombing and start the solemn reconstruction of the city.

Today, Hiroshima is a thriving city of over 1 million people, with a beautiful peace memorial park in the centre of the city. In 1982, the Mayor of Hiroshima, after taking part in a demonstration of a million people in New York prior to a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference at the United Nations, launched the Mayors for Peace organisation. This group is now made up of over 8,200 towns and cities in 166 countries and continues to be led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There are many ways the Mayors for Peace seeks to promote the call for a world free for nuclear weapons, with one of the most effective the peace promotion and symbolism of its ginkgo seeds project. Working with the group Green Legacy Hiroshima, seeds from the trees that survived the atomic bombing have been harvested now for some time, and they are sent to towns and cities around the world to promote peace. In a world now aware of the devastating potential impacts of climate

change, the ginkgo seeds are also a powerful message of the importance of nature to survive man-made disaster.

Sean worked for Leeds City Council's Peace and Emergency Planning Unit from 1997 to 2008, and a core highlight of his time in Leeds was in 2003, when the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki visited Leeds to give the annual Olof Palme Memorial Peace Lecture. They also planted a ginkgo tree and unveiled a plaque that remembered the 23 million civilians that had been killed in conflicts since 1945. The site in Park Square in the city centre now includes other memorial trees commemorating the Solidarity movement in Poland, the Halabja massacre in Kurdish Iraq, Leeds as a Peace Messenger City, and a memorial tree to Leeds supporting the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Each August 9th Leeds City Council and Leeds CND host an annual commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the ginkgo tree.

In 2008, Sean moved on to Manchester City Council, who are a Vice President of Mayors for Peace. Working closely with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in 2014 Manchester received 14 ginkgo tree seeds from Hiroshima harvested off the mother tree that survived the bomb. They have been nurtured by the National Trust at its Dunham Massey estate. Working with environmental policy colleagues, 'Project G' was created to tell the story of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to Manchester schools, setting up a writing and art project, where the children learnt about the atomic bombing. The artwork and poetry was so impressive that it was exhibited in Manchester Museum. The participating schools met the Mayor of Hiroshima and Lord Mayor of Manchester in November 2017 in the Rutherford Institute, Manchester University, where the atom was split by Ernest Rutherford.



The project connected with the peace education that has taken place after the terrible terrorist attack on Manchester, which injured and killed so many children. 6 Manchester schools, Manchester University, Manchester Metropolitan University and Manchester Children’s Hospital all have gingko trees. Many have been unveiled by Hiroshima ‘hibakusha’ and their ancestors, who have promoted the message of peace. Two trees are also now in the new Manchester Peace Garden in Lincoln Square, and the last tree has just been planted at Heaton Park.

Seeds have now been sent across the UK and Ireland from as far north as the Shetland Islands to as far south as Cornwall and Cork. They have become great symbols of peace and solidarity.

We are keen to work with towns and cities across the Leeds Diocese to develop these projects, but we can also work with Green Legacy Hiroshima to bring such trees to churches around the diocese, particularly those promoting justice, peace and the need to work to mitigate climate change. We are going to see if we can bring new seeds to Yorkshire and work with Councils that have seeds like Hebden Royd Town Council in Calderdale. And we want to link the story of Hiroshima with the need to raise concerns about climate change as well. Further work will take place and we encourage you to join with us by getting in touch.

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A SPIRITUALITY OF JUSTICE DAY OF SHARED REFLECTION

SATURDAY October 28, 2023 @10:45 - 4:45pm

GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH CENTRE, NEW ROAD MYTHOLMROYD



Join us for a day to step away from the concerns of

everyday life and reflect on how we can live a life of nonviolence in the way Jesus related to other people. To do this, we need to re-look at the Gospels, see them in a fresh light, and reflect on what this might mean for how we live out our own lives today.

This Autumn Day of Reflection is organised by the J&P Commission, in partnership with the Leeds Diocese Pax Christi Group. Guiding us will be Sr Bernie Roche.

The day will include some short talks to stimulate our thinking, the opportunity to share thoughts with others and time set aside for private reflection.

There is no charge to attend (though there will be a voluntary collection taken). We ask everyone to bring some food to share with others at lunchtime. Please only bring food that does not require further preparation or cooking. If you have special dietary requirements then you may not be able to do this, of course.





The Good Shepherd Centre makes for an excellent location. The centre itself is well-equipped. If the weather is good then there is the opportunity to walk in silence in the park area adjacent to the centre, or along the canal. For those with limited mobility (or in the case of bad weather) the church attached to the centre and will be available for private reflection.

Use this link for more details and contact us if you’d like to attend

<https://www.leedsjp.org.uk/event/the-nonviolent-jesus-in-a-violent-world/>



EVENTS

 Tue 24th Oct	<p>Hospitality & Sanctuary for all: the 2023 Hook Lecture <i>Leeds Minster, 2-6 Kirkgate, Leeds LS2 7DJ @ 7pm to 9pm</i> Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, former President of the British Methodist Conference, and Founder of the City of Sanctuary network and movement will give this year's lecture. For more information and to book a place see the Leeds Church Institute website: https://lcileeds.org/events/</p>
 Weds 25th Oct	<p>2023 Olof Palme Peace Lecture 'Our Objects are Peace, A Culture of Peace is Our Object – How the Peace Museum holds the Past and Releases the Future' <i>Bury Theatre, Royal Armouries Museum Leeds @7:30pm – 9pm</i> FREE lecture by Clive Barrett, Chair of Trustees of Bradford Peace Museum.</p>
 Sat 28th Oct	<p>The Nonviolence of Jesus in a Violent World <i>Good Shepherd Centre @10:45am – 4:45pm</i> Autumn day of reflection on how we can live a life of nonviolence in the way that Jesus related to other people. Guided in a reading of scripture and reflection by Sr Bernie Roche. Register here:</p>
 Mon 6th Nov	<p>Hope as Encounter: Is Gaudium es Spes Burned out with its Joy and Hope? <i>Online @ 7pm – 8:30pm</i> Lecture given by Sir John Battle. To book contact Dr Ann Marie Mealey:</p>
<p><i>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.</i></p>	