



THE EVOLUTION OF LOVE

by Marg Siberry, Commission member

Each year the Justice and Peace Commission facilitates two away-days to provide an opportunity to reflect more deeply on one of our key priorities. On Saturday October 19th we wanted to focus on Climate Change as an urgent priority. Our hope on these days is to develop the theology underpinning the issue as well as providing an opportunity to deepen spirituality through creative prayer and shared reflection.

The late Fr Daniel O'Leary, when he was Episcopal Vicar for Formation in Leeds Diocese, used his experience as a writer and teacher to introduce a creation-centred approach to spirituality. He encouraged us to embrace new developments in science and cosmology to gain a new understanding of the role of each person in the evolving story of God's creation.

After his death, The 'Begin with the Heart Group', has tried to continue this teaching and they agreed to facilitate the away-day. The parish of Ss John Fisher and Thomas in Burley-in-Wharfedale was chosen as the venue because they have a very active parish LiveSimply group which gave an opportunity to share experience of how parishes can become more aware and active around the issue of Climate Change.

Starting Point - Insights from Church Fathers and Modern Prophets

More than 700 years ago St Thomas Aquinas stated, 'If we get creation wrong we get God wrong', a good starting point to think more deeply about our image of God and our



understanding of creation. St Augustine argued that there are two books that reveal the nature of God – the Book of Scripture and the Book of Nature and that if we want to understand how God reveals Godself we need to hold these two sources together.

The story of the evolution and the revelation of God's love through the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures are not in conflict with one another but are recognised as complementing each other and therefore enable us to grow in understanding God's presence in our world and in our lives.

Renowned Jesuit theologian and eminent scientist Teilhard de Chardin developed a profound understanding of this truth through his work as a palaeontologist and through his study of scripture and theology. It was his belief that evolution is nothing other than the evolution of God's love expressed in the material world of creation and in us.

The late Fr Thomas Berry, Passionist priest and scientist, said that in the last several decades a new story has emerged, a new cosmology that brings matters of science and matters of faith into a space where they not only complement each other but where the 'new universe story' deepens spirituality and energises faith.



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Ironically, in modern times it is scientists, especially physicists and cosmologists, who are telling us the story of how all life is

connected in a fundamental way – a story that the world's mystics have been telling for centuries.

Love is the most universal, the most tremendous and the most mysterious of the cosmic forces.

The day will come when, after harnessing space, winds, the tide and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, humanity will have discovered fire.

Teilhard de Chardin



The Evolution of Love and The Evolution of Humanity

Andrew Thomson from the 'Begin with the Heart' group spent the morning using striking images and quotes to explore the latest scientific understanding of the evolution of the universe and its implications for our understanding of God and of our own place as humans within this evolving story. The human person is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself.

We are the latest expression of God's creation and we have a unique role in ensuring God's complex and beautiful creation flourishes. Creation-centred spirituality invites us to recognize our role within the ongoing evolution of the universe and to be excited by the potential we carry.

Daniel O'Leary wrote that

'We are called to see all of evolution and cosmic energy, from the first star to the final ending, as the work of the Holy Spirit.'

And in Laudato Si Pope Francis said,

'The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures.'

The afternoon provided an opportunity for shared reflection, prayer and liturgy and closed with another quote from Teilhard:

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Teilhard de Chardin



MAYORS FOR PEACE CONFERENCE

by Sean Morris, Commission member

Earlier this week I helped a colleague in organising the Executive Conference of Mayors for Peace held in Manchester. The conference is held every two years with Manchester hosting as a Vice President.



On Sunday there was a walk of the Manchester Peace Trail. Manchester is a famous city with a long history. It was the world's first industrial city, where many people came to work in the new cotton mills and factories in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is also famous for people taking a leading role in the struggle against injustice and for peace, for the good of Manchester and the wider world. The Manchester City Centre Peace Trail highlights some of their stories. To discover the amazing people and incredible events, celebrated in the streets of Manchester, see the [Manchester Peace Trail Website](http://www.manchesterpeacetrail.org.uk).

On Monday the opening commemoration event took place at the Manchester Arena Glade of Light memorial. The names of the 22 who died were read out by the Dean of Manchester Cathedral and poems by Lemn Sissay and Tony Walsh were read out by the Lord Mayor of Manchester and Councillor Erinma Bell. The Mayors of Manchester, Hiroshima and Nagasaki laid flowers and a minute's silence was held. The conference discussed the Mayors for Peace PX Vision, peace education, the upcoming Nobel Peace Prize ceremony with

Nidon Hidankyo, and preparing for the 80th anniversary of the atomic weapon attacks in 2025.



There was also a European Chapter and a UK & Ireland Chapter meeting. At the UK & Ireland meeting, Mayor Matsui outlined the PX Vision and a recent visit to Dublin where he spoke to both houses of the Irish Parliament, to a meeting at which 16 new Irish Mayors signed to join Mayors for Peace and he met President Higgins. Mayor Matsui also met pupils from Chorlton High School who have a ginkgo tree and they talked to him about it. Manchester now has school links with both Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



Manchester Museum, who have a Hiroshima exhibit of melted glass and paper cranes, was visited by the delegates. Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum has provided new panels on peace cranes which were unveiled at Manchester Museum.

Finally, a trip to Old Trafford where Mayor Matsui met Manchester United officials. Talks were held to create peace links between the club and Hiroshima's J League club, Sanfrecce Hiroshima.



UK POVERTY AND THE REAL LIVING WAGE

By Joe Burns, Commission Member

This was the title of the National Justice & Peace Network (NJPN) Open Networking Day held on Saturday 16 November 2024. The Leeds J&P Commission hosted this event on behalf of NJPN.



Sara Bryson speaking at Wheeler Hall

The event opened with a presentation from Sara Bryson, Assistant Director (North) for Citizens UK. Sara spoke passionately and eloquently about the disgrace of 4 million children in the UK growing up in families that are experiencing poverty. In a couple of slides she provided some key statistics that really brought home the severity of the situation across the country, and particularly related them to the Newcastle upon Tyne area, where she lives. One of the key facts is that

70% of people experiencing poverty are in a household where at least one person is working.

The brutal reality for many people is that being in low paid, insecure work means that they are constantly having to think about how they juggle their money to make ends meet week in and week out. Often, it is food or meals that are missed (especially by parents). If you are on a zero hours contract then it is not possible to plan ahead further than the next week – as you do not know how much work you might have. The current Government has plans to improve rights around these types of working arrangements and they cannot come too soon.



However, low pay is still a real issue. Despite low pay being renamed by the previous government as the 'Living Wage' (from the 'minimum wage') it is not sufficient to live a dignified life in the way that God intended. That is why the Living Wage Foundation developed the concept of the 'Real Living Wage' – which is based on what employees and their families need to live. Sara went on to describe how, through the Citizens Organising Movement in the North east, they have been campaigning to get businesses and organisations across the region to pay the Real Living wage. It has clearly been a difficult task with employers of all shades having all



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sorts of excuses for not paying it. But they persevered and now have a number of key employers who have been accredited by the Real Living Wage Foundation. Nationally, over 15,000 employers are now accredited.

The Real Living Wage is not a panacea (amending the two child limit for child benefit introduced by Iain Duncan-Smith was something else that really came through strongly in Sara's talk as a simple measure that would have a large impact). However, it would make a real difference to a large number of people living in poverty. This is something that we in West Yorkshire could join in with – West Yorkshire Citizens has already been campaigning on this issue.

WAS JESUS A SUPPORTER OF A REAL LIVING WAGE?

The National Justice & Peace Network day at Leeds Cathedral about UK poverty and the Real Living Wage reminded me of something I wrote during the pandemic in relation to the idea of a Universal Basic Income – but I think the same idea applies to the Real Living Wage. They are both about ensuring that people have enough money to live with the dignity with which God has endowed them.



The Gospel parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matt 20:1-16) is a relevant one. The

vineyard owner goes early in the morning to the marketplace to hire day labourers – or, in our terms, zero contract hours workers. He offers them one denarius a day (which is what Roman soldiers were paid for a day – and the people listening would know that this was a generous amount to be paid). He does the same thing at various points in the day – including when there was only a short time available to work. **He pays them all the same amount!** As someone brought up with the importance of trade unions this parable seemed a bit of a mystery - I got stuck on the seeming injustice of paying those who have been working since daybreak the same amount as those who have only been working an hour or two. How can it be right to pay these feckless people who have only done an hour or two's work the same amount as those who started at the crack of dawn?



I have come to realise that we have to see it through the eyes of the people of the time. Who are these people hanging around in the late afternoon and still available for work? Clearly, they are the people who no one wants to hire – those who are old, or with some form of infirmity that means they will not be able to work as productively as those



hired early in the morning.

But why pay these latter the same amount?

I've seen various suggestions as to how much they were all paid- but most scholars seem agreed that the daily amount was enough to feed not just yourself but probably your dependents as well. In other words, the vineyard owner does not offer the minimum wage but a real living wage – or you could even term it a 'family wage' (or 'household wage').

Find out more by going to the Real Living Wage Foundation website

<https://livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage>

To find out more about what Citizens UK are doing about this issue use this link:

<https://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/the-campaign-for-a-real-living-wage/>

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JUBILEE YEAR 2025: PILGRIMS OF THE HOPE THAT DOES NOT FADE

By Christine Allen, CAFOD

Christmas Eve is the beginning of the Church's Jubilee year. The theme is Pilgrims of Hope. Hope defines CAFOD's mission because we witness hope through the communities we serve, in solidarity with those experiencing oppression, injustice and environmental degradation.

In the Old Testament, a 'Jubilee' meant a radical reset every 50th year. Based on God's promise, land and property was returned to the original owner or their descendants, debts cancelled, and enslaved people freed.

Jubilees happen every 25 years. In Jubilee Year 2000, thousands campaigned for debt relief, securing \$130 billion+ of debt cancellation for developing countries to spend on health and education instead of paying crippling interest bills. However, 3.3 billion people live in countries that still need to spend more on debt repayments than health or education. Nowadays much debt is owed to private banks rather than other governments and so we must now lobby the lenders to ease the burden on developing countries to bring hope to many.

Yet there is always reason to hope. A couple of years ago I visited Marsabit in Kenya, which was suffering from the worst drought for many years. Thousands of livestock had died, and pastoralists had been forced to travel for miles to find food for their animals, which meant that only women and children remained in communities.

We were supporting Caritas Marsabit in emergency food distribution. I went with their resilience officer, Bante, to see a huge



water collection site. He had worked with this particular community to fix it up – clearing channels, fixing the cracks with concrete, mending the iron bars to stop animals and children falling in. There was no sign of rain, though, and there was laughter because some people in the community felt it was all a waste of time.



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For another few months it seemed those people were right. Then the rains came, and the facility was filled to the top. While in most places the land had been baked so dry that the water ran off, and created flooding, this community had the water they needed to recover.



We have witnessed amazing strides to tackle poverty over the past 100 years, yet many more continue to suffer from the oppression of poverty, displacement, conflict and lack essential needs. Thankfully, our Catholic family continues to bring hope, despite harder times here in the UK, they join fundraisers, campaigns and most importantly, pray together for a better world for all. Throughout this holy year we are supporting parish communities to become pilgrims of hope. Offering a free [CAFOD Jubilee Reflection guide](#) on different themes of Jubilee within Luke 4:16-21, to help parishes to prepare for the Jubilee year, suitable for individual or group use. A [Jubilee Guide 'taster'](#) webinar on 4th December and [Introduction to Jubilee Year](#) on 18th January are open to all.

ALMOST 10 YEARS SINCE *LAUDATO SI* – WHAT HAS CHANGED?

This is the title of the final Autumn Zoom meeting organised by the Northern Dioceses' Environment Group.



Northern Dioceses' Environment Group

In June 2025 it will be the tenth anniversary of the publication of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si*. This lunchtime Zoom, organised by NDEG, provides an opportunity to hear from some key players in bringing about change and the opportunity to share and hear about what parishes and dioceses across the North of England have been doing since 2015.



There will be short inputs from **Dr Emma Gardner, Director of the Laudato Si Centre at Wardley Hall, Salford Diocese** and from **John Woodhouse, Co-ordinator for Laudato Si animators** with the opportunity to ask questions.

**Wednesday 27 November
12:00 – 13:30**






Use this link to register via Eventbrite and be sent the link to join the zoom meeting:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/almost-ten-years-since-laudato-si-what-has-changed-tickets-1079526836829?aff=oddtcreator>



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EVENTS

 Fri 22 Nov	<p>From the Heart of the World: Voices of Indigenous People <i>Main Auditorium, Leeds Trinity University, Horsforth 6:30pm – 8:30pm</i> LTU in partnership with CAFOD are providing this opportunity to hear firsthand about the lives of indigenous people in Colombia. Everyone is welcome to this open event at Leeds Trinity University. Light refreshments will be served beforehand. ALL Welcome – just turn up! If you cannot make this date they will also be talking at and after the 10:30 mass on Sunday 25th at St Benedict's Church in Garforth – and there may be food available!</p>
 Sat 23 Nov	<p>Film Presentation: Where Olive Trees Weep – Last few tickets available! <i>Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral, 6pm – 9pm</i> SPARK Social Justice is sponsoring this film which will be shown as part of the 2024 Leeds Palestinian Film Festival. It tells the stories of the people that the filmmakers met on a journey through the West Bank in 2022. Follow the link to purchase tickets (£5 each) https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/film-presentation-where-olive-trees-weep-tickets-1034998637787</p>
 Wed 27 Nov	<p>Almost 10 years since <i>Laudato Si</i> – What has changed? A lunchtime Zoom meeting organised by the Northern Dioceses' Environment Group. Some short inputs from key people involved and the opportunity to share and hear about what has been happening in dioceses across the North of England. Use this link to register and obtain the Zoom link: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/almost-ten-years-since-laudato-si-what-has-changed-tickets-1079526836829?aff=oddttdcreator</p>
 Sat 30 Nov	<p>LeedsPalestinian Film Festival : Red Carpet in Gaza <i>Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral, St Anne's Street Leeds LS2 8EE 2pm/2:30pm start</i> J&P are part-sponsoring this event. Highlights from two film festivals held defiantly in Gaza among the tents and rubble. Use the link to for more information and to book tickets https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/red-carpet-in-gaza-tickets-1037997708087</p>
 Tue 10 Dec	<p>Dr. Carolyn Jackson-Brown in Conversation with Leigh Purves <i>Bramall Rock Void, Leeds Playhouse, Playhouse Square Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7UP</i> This free event is part of a series about social justice organised by Leeds Trinity university. In this one Caroline and Leigh discuss the cultural shifts in the perception of women and Paralympians in sport. https://www.leedsplayhouse.org.uk/event/dr-carolyn-jackson-brown-in-conversation-with-leigh-purves/</p>

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