



POPE FRANCIS RIP

By John Battle, Commission Chair

I watched the very frail Pope Francis on Easter Sunday on the BBC, moving through the crowds, still reaching out, greeting, touching and blessing in his farewell journey among the people. Now we have had his Requiem, may he now rest in peace with God.

While we await the Conclave and the announcement of his successor, what can we learn from his legacy?



Now is not a time to be seduced into simplistic binaries such as contrasting Pope Francis “the radical” with Pope Benedict the “administrative guard”. In terms of the long tradition of Catholic social teaching there is real integral continuity between Pope Benedict's key social encyclicals, especially “Deus Caritas Est” “Spe Salvi” and “Caritas in Veritate” and those of Pope Francis that followed.

Both had far sighted insights into the challenges of our times; Benedict particularly into the new developing technologies and Francis into the emerging globalised church in a context of global capitalism, poverty and environmental crisis.

Significantly, as a result of his leadership, the Catholic Church leadership will continue in future to be globalised and more truly universal along with the new challenges that brings.

Moreover, Pope Francis realised that “power is now anonymised” in our world - beyond the reach of personal and historical responsibilities.



I recall a Jewish professor of politics ringing me in 2014 to tell me that I must get hold of Pope Francis's first book in English “[The Church of Mercy](#)” because it contains the deepest insights to what “leadership” should be about; namely

“walking with our people...sometimes in front, sometimes behind and sometimes in the middle: in front in order to guide the community; in the middle in order to encourage and support; and at the back in order to keep it united and so that no one lags too far behind, to keep them united” (p85).

Pope Francis as the cliché goes “walked the walk”. Words were matched by personal actions. Cardinal Nichols has said that the legacy he leaves us “is one we must seek to carry forward and strengthen”.



For our **Leeds Diocese Justice and Peace Commission** especially, Pope Francis has left us two key workbooks; his encyclical letters "Laudato Si" and "Fratelli Tutti".

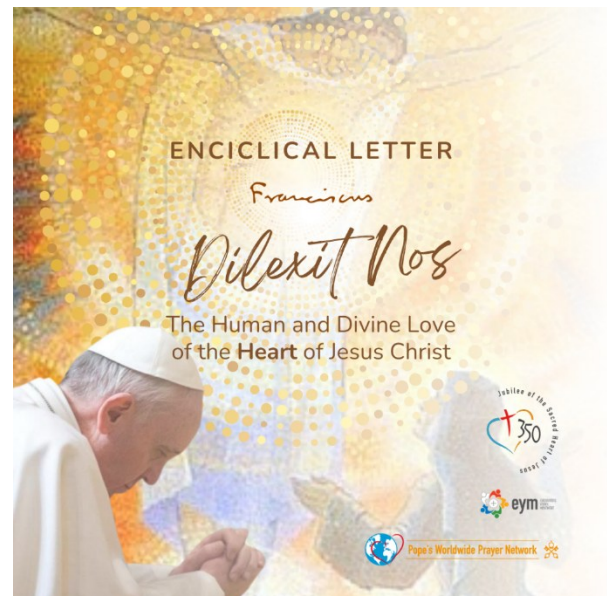
"**Laudato Si**" spells out the need now, as people on this precious planet, to hold together "care for the earth and care for the poor" with joined hands and in practical actions to foster our common home.

"**Fratelli Tutti**" urges us all as brothers and sisters, to value and develop "encountering others" each as a special person, to learn to become real listeners and be personally attentive as Pope Francis himself was, ensuring that challenging structures and causes never comes at the expense of personal face to face interaction. His watchword for the Church in our times was to be a "church for the poor" and to lead by being a "field hospital" - mobile and active among the people, binding the wounds in practical service especially to the poor, the homeless, refugees and victims of violence and war.

He stressed that deep prayer, reflection and discernment and practical actions for justice and peace must be fused together. The environmental challenges also require "personal ecological conversion" – which is just another way of saying that we need to take seriously our responsibility for each person and for the material of the earth simultaneously.

And in his last (and still overlooked) letter, "**Dilexit Nos: On the Human and Divine Love of Jesus**", he leaves us with an encyclical which, though at first sight seems to be in the tradition of nineteenth century spirituality, is presented explicitly "to help us see that the

teachings of the two social encyclicals Laudato Si and Fratelli Tutti is not unrelated to our encounter with the love of Jesus Christ. For it is by drinking of that same love that we become capable of forging the bonds of fraternity, recognising the dignity of each human being and of working together to care for our common home".



He concludes:

"In a world in which everything is bought and sold, people's sense of their worth appears increasingly to depend on what they can accumulate with the power of money. We are constantly being pushed to keep buying, consuming and distracting ourselves, held captive to a demeaning system that prevents us from looking beyond our immediate and petty needs. The love of Christ has no place in this perverse mechanism, yet only that love can set us free from a mad pursuit that no longer has room for gratuitous love.

Christ's love can give a heart to our world and revive love wherever we think that the ability to love has been definitively lost. The Church also needs that love, lest the love of Christ be replaced with outdated structures and



concerns, excessive attachment to our own ideas and opinions and fanaticism in any number of forms which end up taking the place of the gratuitous love of God that liberates, enlivens, brings joy to the heart and builds communities. The wounded side of Christ continues to pour forth that stream which is never exhausted, never passes away, but offers itself time and time again in all those who wish to love as he did. For his love alone can bring about a new humanity"
Pope Francis for now deserves these last words.

His legacy is a deep practical manifesto for prayer **and** action for each person, for the Church, and for our suffering yet bountiful world.

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WHY I AM A STRONG ADVOCATE FOR THE LIVESIMPLY AWARD SCHEME

By Joe Burns, Commission Member

As soon as you go into some parishes you become aware of the sense of community and the concern of people not just for other members of the parish community but for the entire local community – and often – those far beyond it. In others there seems to be very little parish life with people going along to Sunday mass but very little sense of people on a shared faith journey.

The LiveSimply award scheme is something that can really bring people in a parish together to not only worship together but to take action arising from their Catholic faith. It provides a way of working on both the environmental concerns expressed by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* and how these are related to issues of poverty - which, again,

was something that he highlighted in this encyclical.

The award scheme asks parishes to draw up an action plan that demonstrates the activities they are going to undertake to show how their parish will live more simply, live more sustainably and live more in solidarity with those experiencing poverty.

Because the parish themselves draw up the action plan, they can take account of the people they have in their parish and the land, buildings and other parish resources that are available to them. The plan can, and should, incorporate actions that enable individuals, parish group and the whole parish community to take part. Equally, because of the flexibility within the scheme, actions can be devised that appeal to all age groups and



[The garden at St Benedicts church](#)

different interests in a parish. For instance, when St Benedict's parish in Garforth worked to obtain the award they decided to use some spare land to develop a garden that grew both flowers and vegetables. The people who got involved in this work were not particularly involved in other church groups prior to this. Equally, the flowers are



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used in church and some of the vegetables produced are shared with a local charity working with older people – thus enabling the parish to contribute to the life of the local community as well.

The LiveSimply scheme is administered by CAFOD – but it goes far beyond the typical things that CAFOD does. In Settle, for example, the parish community there decided to show their solidarity with those experiencing poverty by taking part in the Syrian refugee resettlement scheme. Not that they have ignored the wider dimensions of poverty as this parish has always been a supporter of CAFOD both in its fundraising for those in the global South and in promoting CAFOD campaigns.



SS Mary & St Michael church, Settle, showing their solar array

In both Settle and Burley in Wharfedale the parishes have had solar panels installed on the church roof to help them be more sustainable.

Drawing up the action plan is something that should involve the whole parish. Working toward the award only really works if the parish take a synodal approach. In SS John Fisher & Thomas More, Burley in Wharfedale, they undertook surveys across the whole parish to find out ideas from parishioners. They received back over 400 suggestions –

evidence, if you need any, that parishioners are only too happy to become involved in building their community when given the opportunity.

What I have noticed is that parishes working towards or with the LiveSimply award are much more aware of how their faith relates to their everyday life and how working together as a parish community can help them achieve so much more than if they just work as individuals.

LiveSimply – Care Deeply**03 May 10:30 – 3:30pm****Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral**

There is still time to join us on this day with CAFOD Director, Christine Allen, to explore the LiveSimply award and how it could renew Hope in your parish in this Jubilee year. Follow the link for more information and to register (**Please** register so we know how many people to expect. Thank you)

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/live-simply-care-deeply-tickets-1278395327839?aff=oddttdtcreator>

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COMMISSION CONTRIBUTES TO DIOCESAN STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

by Commission Members



The Diocese has been going through a strategy development exercise for the past year and as part of this, the Commission has

been asked to produce a statement outlining our Mission, Vision, and Values.

It has been a good exercise for us to undertake, as it has made us think about how to express what it is that we are all about. It certainly engendered a good discussion between Commission members and it has been through several iterations before we arrived at the wording below!

Mission Statement:

Our mission is to bring to everyone in the [Leeds Diocese](http://www.leedsdiocese.org.uk) an understanding and experience of Catholic Social Teaching. We aim to empower everyone to work with others to effect change, to advocate for the marginalised and oppressed, to work towards a world where human dignity is respected and upheld, and to care for God's creation in a sustainable way. It is a fundamental part of our Catholic faith that we should do such work.

Vision Statement:

We envision Catholic communities across the Diocese of Leeds acting for the Common Good and the care of our 'Common Home'. A place where every individual is valued, and where we work together to create a society that reflects the love and compassion of Christ. These communities will be inter-

generational, with our [SPARK Social Justice programme](#) opening up space for the practical contributions of the next generations of Catholic to reflect and act on the Gospel imperatives for Social Justice.

Values:

- 1. Dignity and respect:** We believe in the God-given dignity of every person and work to ensure that all people are treated in accordance with this.
- 2 Relational:** We seek out opportunities to work with others (both inside and outside the Church) seeking the same outcomes.
- 3. Participatory:** We try to read the 'signs of the times' in a synodal way: 'seeing' unjust situations through listening to others, 'judging' what the just Gospel response is, and then 'taking action' to promote that response within both parishes and the whole community.
- 4. Solidarity:** We stand alongside those experiencing poverty, racism or who are marginalised for other reasons locally. We actively support national and international organisations working to address the root causes of injustice.
- 5. Stewardship:** We are dedicated to caring for God's creation, promoting sustainable practices, and protecting the environment for future generations.
- 6. We dare to dream:** of a better world, of actions by Catholics in the Leeds Diocese producing real and lasting change to the root causes of poverty, climate change, racism and approaches to conflict.
- 7. Transparent:** We work in an open way, with all Commission meetings and action groups open to anyone who wants to join them.
- 8. Prophetic:** We non-violently speak truth to power.

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THE DEMISE AND RESURRECTION OF JUST STOP OIL

by Mollie Somerville

What being part of the movement has meant for me

I first took non violent direct action with JSO (Just Stop Oil) on 29 October 2022 by sitting in the road outside the Oval Tube station in London to demand no more new fossil fuels. Headline news appeared in the main Sunday newspapers and on TV. I had attended a talk about JSO in the summer and been on a full day's training on non violent direct action and several zoom meetings. We were told that this would be a two year campaign for the government to meet the demand. The news that JSO was hanging up its boots a few weeks ago was therefore a shock but not a surprise.



Mollie (middle)

Since that initial action I've been arrested and charged for 4 more actions and already have two convictions. Three more court cases are due in 2025 and 2026, so although the actions of JSO have finished, the ramifications continue. I have been part of a community of activists. We have met on-line to prepare actions, in person to do the actions and afterwards, on-line again to reflect and recover. I have felt supported and valued throughout. For each action I was

given a choice and told the level of risk involved as far as arrest was concerned. I feel that I've done something worthwhile and in keeping with my duty to love my neighbour as myself. People in the global south are already suffering the effects of climate change and will be the worst affected in the future. Our grandchildren too will suffer unless changes are made. I'll continue to pray, lobby, protest (though not within the M25 because of bail conditions). I may well end up with a 2 year prison sentence for my latest action of throwing soup at a Van Gogh picture in the National Art Gallery and damaging the frame. I'm reconciled to that and there is even training through JSO on how to survive in prison!

What effect has Just Stop Oil had?

Getting mainstream publicity about climate breakdown and the responsibility of the government to act was always one of the main aims of JSO. It has certainly generated plenty of that. Compared to many climate rallies, lobbies, marches and processions I've helped organise and attended; it far outstrips them all. A couple of minutes on News at 10 would be the maximum and sometimes that would focus on a small anti-protest group. The publicity Just Stop Oil has got is by no means always positive and the Daily Mail has delighted in denigrating the participants. Some people argue that the actions and publicity antagonise people rather than gain support. Others say all publicity is good publicity. Only time will tell whether or not JSO has had any real effect. I won't be around to see but at least I know I've tried to do something positive and make my voice heard.

What next?

Just Stop Oil as a campaign has finished but the people who have been involved are still



passionate about making a difference. I imagine that there'll be some kind of metamorphosis and who knows what kind of butterfly might emerge.

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WE CHOOSE NON-VIOLENCE – CONVERSATIONS WITH PALESTINIAN ACTIVISTS

By Joe Burns, Commission member

This is a partnership event between SPARK Social Justice, the J&P Commission, Pax Christi in the Leeds Diocese and the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival.

It takes place at **Wheeler Hall, Leeds Cathedral, on Saturday 17th May 3pm – 5pm** (refreshments available from 2:30pm)



Given the levels of violence in the West Bank and Gaze, non-violence may sound ridiculous – but Non-violence is a response to Israeli aggression that has significant support amongst Palestinians. The Film festival committee got in touch to see if we and Pax Christi were interested in joining with them to put on an event about this.

Join the conversation on the issue with Palestinian activist and academic Mahmoud Zwahre and Andrew Rigby, Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies.

Illustrated with film by West Bank filmmakers, this event Includes updates from the West Bank and explores the significance of 'Sumud' in the Palestinian struggle.

Mahmoud Zwahre is a leading activist and organiser in popular non-violent resistance against settler violence in the West Bank and currently a scholar at Coventry University



Andrew Rigby has researched and written about unarmed resistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories since the 1980s, activities informed by his deep commitment to nonviolence as practice and principle.



Use the link below to book a place (£5 waged, £3 unwaged)







<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/we-choose-non-violence-conversations-with-palestinian-activists-tickets-1324851649949?aff=oddtcreator>





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EVENTS

 Sat 03 May	<p>Live Simply Care Deeply. <i>Wheeler Hall, St. Anne's Street Leeds LS2 8BE 10:30 – 3:30pm</i> A day to inspire your parish to commit to the Live Simply programme and live more simply, more sustainably, and in solidarity with those experiencing poverty. Use this link to find out more and to book a place: Live Simply - Care Deeply Tickets, Sat, May 3, 2025 at 10:30 AM Eventbrite</p>
 Sat 17 May	<p>Conversations about Nonviolence <i>Wheeler Hall, St Anne's Street Leeds LS2 8BE 3pm to 5pm</i> This is a partnership event with the Leeds Palestinian Film Festival. It will include a speaker and a couple of short films. Full details and ticket booking will be available soon - keep an eye on our website</p>
 Sat 24 May	<p>Leeds Diocese Jubilee Year Mini-Pilgrimage to Kirkstall Abbey <i>Starting from Leeds Cathedral and following the Leeds Liverpool Canal towpath for most of the route.</i> Keep an eye on the Diocesan website for more details (or hopefully they will also be in parish bulletins).</p>
 Fri 25th – Sun 27 Jul	<p>National Justice & Peace Network Annual Conference: Just Peace <i>The Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> A weekend exploring peace with keynote speakers (including Dr Rowan-Williams) and workshops covering a range of aspects of Just Peace but challenging the inevitability of violence. If you are 30 or under then SPARK Social Justice has a limited number of sponsored places. See the NJPN website for details of this event and how to book:- https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/</p>
 01 Sep – 04 Oct	<p>Season of Creation The theme in 2025 of this season of the Church's Year is 'Peace with Creation'. Use the link to find out more and think about what you might do in your community to celebrate this season. https://seasonofcreation.org/</p>
 Sat 06 Sep	<p>NDEG 'Pilgrims of Hope' pilgrimage from Leeds Cathedral to Kirkstall Abbey. This is a 'save the date' notification for the next Northern Dioceses' Environment Group in-person meeting. The idea is to meet up at Leeds Cathedral, walk down to the Leeds and Liverpool canal and then walk along the towpath to get to Kirkstall Abbey (about 4 miles in total) and do it as 'Pilgrims of Hope'. More details to follow soon – but put it in your diary now if it sounds of interest.</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.