



INTERDIOCESAN MEETING OF J&P COMMISSIONS AND SUPPORTERS

By Joe Burns, Commission Member

As everyone must be aware by now, Bishop Marcus is now Apostolic Administrator for the Dioceses of both Middlesbrough and Hallam - in addition to being Bishop of Leeds.



There is currently an ongoing process of consultation about how this geographical area should be managed pastorally in the future.

Leeds and Middlesbrough Dioceses both have J&P Commissions and we decided that a meeting to reflect on possible changes would be useful. Hallam has not had a J&P Commission for the last six years but a group of 5 J&P supporters also came along to this meeting, which we held in York.

We had never met before as a group of northern dioceses J&P supporters so we spent a significant amount of time just getting to know a little about one another and how the work of Justice & Peace is carried out in each diocese.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the day was being in a room with 25 people who were passionate about Justice and Peace being a core part of being a Catholic Christian and the immense range of talent and different experiences that were brought together in the room.

Near the start of the day, we made a list of the aspirations each of us had for this meeting. It was an ambitious list! – and I do not think we advanced many of those aspirations. However, being ambitious and imaginative was at the core of what this day was about. We went through an exercise of visioning what the work of J&P might be like after the completion of any changes to diocesan structures (and we may not know what these changes are for another year or two).

What we did achieve through having this day was

- Renewed inspiration and sharing of energy for the work of J&P
- A better understanding of how J&P operates in our different dioceses
- All sorts of ideas for follow up – which will inevitably mean further meetings

Some of the key ideas were:

- Building closer relationships – perhaps having a northern J&P Day Conference?
- Making sure that the work of J&P is properly reflected in the results of the consultation process
- Sharing ideas and resources to enable more people to come to an understanding that the work of J&P is a 'constitutive element' of preaching the Gospel.

There will be more about this later!



LEEDS – A CITY OF SANCTUARY?

by Kathy Shaw, SPARK Manager

I read an interesting article this week on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Network by Simon Phillips; he works at [Leeds Jewish Housing Association](#).

Living as a Jewish person in Britain must feel anything but safe after the horrific stabbing

of two Jewish people in Golders Green a few weeks ago. There has been an unprecedented increase in antisemitic incidents in the last year.

The [Community Security Trust](#) monitors and responds to antisemitism and reported 3,700 incidents in 2025. Police recorded religious hate crimes in England and Wales reached a record high of 7,164 in the same period, an increase of 3%.



memories of Refugee Week in Leeds

The real-life impact for people living in fear because of their religion includes thinking carefully about where you live, where your children go to school and how you can safely socialise.

Leeds Jewish Housing Association has removed signs from some of their offices and locations to reduce the risk of being targeted,

windows are covered with special film to minimise the impact of criminal damage. In some areas of Leeds, adults and children seeking asylum are subjected to a torrent of abuse from people shouting in front of their accommodation.

How can this be right in Leeds, a City of Sanctuary?



Wherever we come from, whatever our faith or belief, we all have a right to feel safe. In cities around the UK, individuals and communities are rejecting messages of discrimination and harassment and stepping up to support people seeking sanctuary, making sure they have the connections and practical help to rebuild their lives. With this in mind, let's be part of a more confident and positive message of hope and counter these messages of division.

Simple acts can make a difference.

- Recognise our shared humanity and approach each interaction with solidarity and compassion
- Reflect on and challenge harmful narratives, actions, words or phrases that feed into a culture of ignorance and lack of inclusivity
- Ensure EDI and racial justice training in workplaces, education and faith settings reflects the lived experiences of people who are marginalised
- Plan or attend an event during [Refugee Week 15-21 June 2026](#) – sharing experiences and culture through food, art and activities to encourage understanding across our communities

Pope Leo has frequently spoken about the need to break down barriers between class and race, urging us to move beyond the fear of those we see as different. Faith should never be used to drive people apart and Pope Leo calls on all believers to mobilise their faith to unify with others, regardless of nationality or religious background.

At SPARK Social Justice, we believe our strength lies in honouring every person's equal dignity and worth, especially during these times of conflict or challenge. We

hope we can be part of a message which challenges prejudice, oppression and persecution against every human being.



A FOND FAREWELL

By Kathy Shaw, SPARK Manager

We are sadly saying farewell to two members of our **Catholic Young Men's Group**, who are joining religious orders. One, originally from Ireland, is joining the Dominicans and one member from Lithuania is joining the Jesuits in Austria.



Stephen and Laurynus supporting the recent marathon which raised funds for local causes

As often happens, all the best ideas in SPARK come from our membership and the idea for the Men's Group came from a synodal listening event we hosted in February 2025. Listening to SPARK Voices is a key part of what we do, and the theme of "What could the Diocese of Leeds do for young Catholic men?" was also chosen by a member of our Faith and Friendship group.

The mixed gender discussion observed that social networks in church were often aimed at women, with limited appeal for men



“there is a lack of comfort for men in the spaces that exist”. An overwhelming theme emerged from these and other consultations, young Catholic men were looking for a feeling of belonging “a fraternity, somewhere to share our faith”.

The final report was circulated to the Diocesan Justice and Peace Commission who lead SPARK and to the Bishop of Leeds. Bishop Marcus unexpectedly called into our Faith and Friendship group to hear what the SPARK members might want to share with him directly. This visit, alongside the feedback from the Commission was really valued by everyone who had contributed their views. So, fast forward to where we are now as a result of these discussions a regular group was curated by our SPARK member, Conor. We continue to host and support these gatherings in the lovely venue of Hinsley Hall and discussions around faith, fraternity and connection are an integral part of every occasion.

If you would like to hear more about the work we do, or you think you have a good idea and would like some help to make this happen, just get in touch and have a chat.

- sparks.jandp@dioceseofleeds.org.uk
- Ring Kathy: 07756717032

We send Stephen and Laurynus all our prayers from SPARK and the Justice and Peace Commission as they dedicate their lives to God’s work. This is such a significant milestone for them both in their spiritual journey and perhaps being part of a group of peers, sharing their Catholic identity, offered an opportunity in their discernment to

combine reflection, prayer and dialogue. Their faith and perseverance have brought these young men to take this meaningful step; their warmth, devotion and compassion will make them both valued members of these communities.



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CIVILIANS IN WAR

by Sara Forrest, Commission Member

Like many, I find the damage done to residential blocks of flats and attacks on energy and water infrastructure wrong. The civilians in war zones rarely have the power to stop their rulers fighting neighbouring states or distant states, regardless of who ‘started it’. Of course civilians have always been hurt or killed in war, in collateral damage. I think that since WW2 the number of civilian casualties is a higher proportion of the total casualties.



Sadly, now it seems that it is accepted by some significant powers that direct attacks on civilians and their mass displacement is OK.

It isn’t.

I’m even sadder that the UN Security Council, thanks in a large part to the veto power of



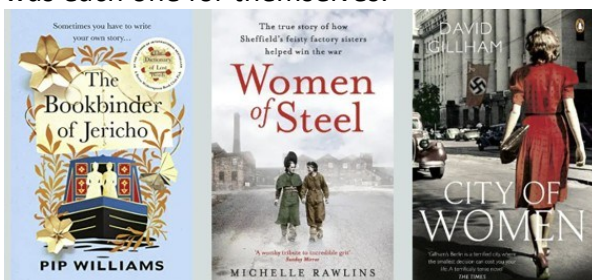
some states to quash resolutions of condemnation, gives the appearance that this behaviour is OK.

It isn't.

Over the past few weeks, I have read three books about women in war. [The Bookbinder of Jericho \(Pip Williams\)](#) is set in WW1 Oxford and [Women of Steel \(Michelle Rowbotham\)](#) is factual and tells many stories of the women who volunteered or were conscripted to work in the forges and metalworks in the Sheffield area during WW2.

What struck me about both was how the feeling of being threatened by external forces bound local communities together and led to people stepping up and doing things they wouldn't normally consider. For example, women who could sew took work dungarees up and in to fit the women who wore them. Their main fear was what the war was doing to those who were fighting on their behalf. There was a sense of 'it is what it is' and we just need to make the best of it.

The third book, [City of Women \(David Gilliam\)](#) is set in WW2 Berlin and was bleak and dark. In that book the women feared Nazi neighbours as much, if not more than the enemy. Civilians disappeared into prisons on the basis of accusations without trial. The same community spirit was not evident. It was each one for themselves.



I therefore applaud our politicians who regularly speak out for tolerance and remind us that we are a people who have welcomed

so many others to live here over the centuries. They abhor those who seek to spread division and hatred in our country.

I hope that each of us, in our own way, finds the confidence to quietly tell any friend and family member who veers towards supporting divisive views that we disagree with them because we are Christian and **we follow the example of Jesus who welcomed the stranger and helped the marginalised.**

We are many, the Pope is one, if we are all seen and heard talking about tolerance and living in diverse communities the world will be a better place.

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HOPE IN TURBULENT TIMES

By John Battle, Commission Chair

The language of "hope in turbulent times" seems to have lifted off with regular media references to the word "turbulent", not least in present politics from President Trump's changing tweets, to our own local elections and government's political turmoil. Even the football season is now said to have a "turbulent ending".

The word "turbulent" comes from a Latin root word "turbo" meaning basically "crowd", and referring to the "chaos of crowds". In mediaeval times, it was simply translated as "trouble".

Of course, it's commonly used in aircraft turbulence where there are four levels for pilots; light, moderate, severe, and extreme. So while football turbulence is light, it's tempting to insist that the much overlooked report this week from the United Nations that continued closure of the Straits of Hormuz will, in just a few months time, lead to some 45 million deaths in poor countries



through hunger and starvation, that's extreme turbulence that deserve serious attention.

We are in a common home and rather than live as a riot of a crowd we are invited to follow the gospel imperative of Jesus to become God's people as brothers and sisters in that common home.

In Book VIII of his "Confessions", Saint Augustine describes hearing a child's voice chanting the phrase "Tolle et Lege" "Take up and read", which inspires him to open Saint Paul's Epistle find a passage from Romans (13:13) that leads to his conversion to Christianity. "Tolle et Lege" is his motto for Christian growth.

Notably, Pope Leo in his memoir to Bishop Marcus regarding our diocese future reorganisations stresses the need to "study and reflect" in the light of the Holy Spirit.

Peter Roebuck's inspiring biography of Fr Storey "A Priest for His Time" tells us that Storey was throughout his life a great reader and he kept close to him all his life two key books; the 12th century Abbot of Rievaulx, St Aelred's "Spiritual Friendship" and the post Freudian psychotherapist, Eric Fromm's "The Art of Loving" (1957). And we learn that, at the end of his long ministry, Storey died working on a book he was to call "Relationship".

Reflecting Storey's life experience of proclaiming and practising the gospel in community, we can rediscover some resources for hoping in our current turbulent times.

This week, 13-20 May has been declared as the week "A Million acts of Hope", of everyday acts of kindness, a charity

organisations initiative "to combat the chilling effect of hostile narratives on civil society." In 1980 Dom Helder Camara of Brazil wrote "A 1000 Reasons for Living" again celebrating reasons for hoping.

Can we tell good news stories instead of bad ones?



We need to remind ourselves of the keyword "HOPING". It is an active verb not to be flattened down to an abstract noun or concept or reduced to feelings of optimism. Rather hope should be expressed in terms of a "doing" word to be practiced, that is to be shared with others.

And the source of "our hoping" is of course the biblical story of our salvation, the call of God to become "my people", the liberation from Egypt in the Exodus, culminating in the Resurrection of the Risen Christ we are celebrating this Easter and now with the sent support of the Holy Spirit.

This is part of the text of the Fr Anthony Storey lecture. This is a lecture that is given annually in the Middlesbrough diocese, and John was this year's speaker. The lecture was given using Zoom.

Use this link to read the full text of his talk.

[4 June – Hope in Turbulent Times – Diocese of Leeds: Justice and Peace Commission](#)



ASSISTED DYING

by Sara Forrest, Commission Member

The Assisted Dying Bill will again be presented to Parliament. It raises many issues about life, death and the choices we make.

I remember my grandad coming home to die when there was no treatment for his cancer. I was about 15. We ate our meals listening to his laboured breathing via an intercom and we could tell when his pain was particularly bad. I was at home when my mum asked the GP about increasing his pain medication. He was a fellow parishioner. He quietly explained that doing would take the pain away but it would also depress his breathing and probably hasten his death. Mum was upset and asked for time to talk with him about what he wanted. She cried after the doctor left. A couple of days later grandad was prescribed the medication. He died peacefully at home with family around him.

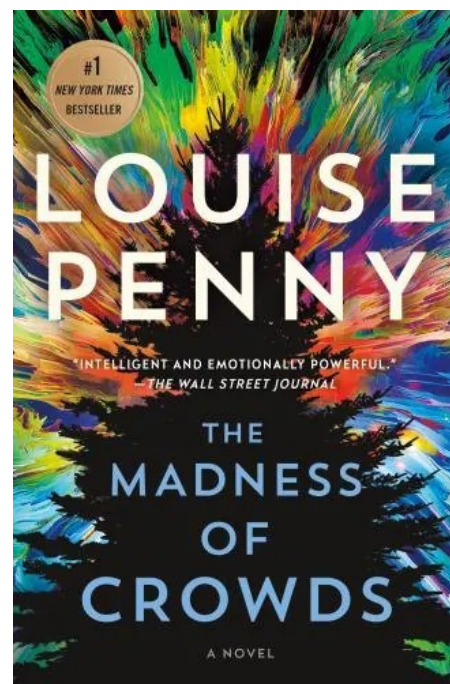
As my mum approached her own death her regret was about grandad. As a child she (and younger her sisters) had rejected any lady friends he brought home after her mother's death. She felt that she might have taken away his chance for a second marriage and happiness. She had no regrets about decreasing his pain when he was dying. My grandad was very kind and lived for his family, I suspect that his choice to take the medication was influenced by both a wish for the pain relief and his not wanting to be a burden.

[The Madness of Crowds](#) is a novel by Louise Penny set in the aftermath of Covid in Canada.

At its heart it is a murder mystery but through the characters she develops deep emotional and rational themes about

assisted dying and the right to life. It even touches on the horror in Sudan and our Western responses, which are from a position of privilege. Having said that, it is engaging and not a heavy read.

It challenges us to think of how acting out of love for someone might influence a choice. Murder is not always done from a position of hate. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it.









It helped me to think more deeply about the circumstances in which I might prefer to receive medication to relieve physical pain and thus reduce the emotional pain of the people I love.

Thankfully that seems like a long way away!

I hope and pray that whatever happens to this Bill the NHS will improve access to palliative care that supports people who are close to death in whatever setting they choose.



EVENTS

 Thu 25 Jun	<p>Re: Imagine Migration <i>Bradford Cathedral, 1 Stott Hill, Bradford BD1 4EH 19:30 – 21:30</i> An open conversation with their main contributor Krish Kandiah OBE, a social entrepreneur, author, and broadcaster who has worked extensively with refugees, government, charities, and faith communities. Use the link to find out more https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/reimagine-migration-tickets-1984979169129?aff=ebdiglgoogliveliveevents#location</p>
 Sat 27 Jun	<p>Young Voices That Matter: Race, Identity & Education <i>St George's Conference Centre, 60 Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3DL 11:00 – 15:00</i> Join young people and researchers for this dissemination event on Race, Racism & Education, a Youth-Led Insights and Community Dialogue Register for this free event using the link https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/young-voices-that-matter-race-identity-education-tickets-1987771387730#location</p>
 Sat 04 Jul	<p>Independence from America Day <i>Assemble at Kettlesing Millenium Village Hall at 3pm (whole event goes on until 7pm)</i> A day of information about what goes on at the Menwith Hill base and why we should be concerned – speakers, music, stalls and refreshments. Use the link to find out about the detailed programme https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/event/independence-from-america-day/</p>
 Fri 24 – Sun 26 Jul	<p>'Just Talk' the 2026 National Justice & Peace Network Conference <i>Swanwick Christian Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire</i> The annual conference bringing together J&P supporters from across England and Wales. Keep an eye on their website for details of speakers and workshops https://www.justice-and-peace.org.uk/conference/ APPLICATIONS CLOSING AROUND NOW</p>
 Sat 11 Jul	<p>Community Climate Conference <i>Friargate Quaker Meeting House, Friargate, York, YO1 9RL</i> The event will explore how communities can take practical climate action that supports a more sustainable future. Keynote speakers & Workshops. Follow the link for more info: https://book.plinth.org.uk/e/iYlqnIO6Y9ghJ89Iqwyj</p>
 Aug	<p>Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemoration events <i>Various Locations across Yorkshire</i> 6th Aug Bradford – details to be confirmed 6th Aug Sheffield – 1-m-2pm gather in Tudor Square 8th Aug Huddersfield -Hiroshima & Nagasaki vigil details tbc 8th Aug Hebden Bridge Hiroshima & Nagasaki vigil 2:30-3:30pm 11-13 Old Gate 9th Aug Leeds 10:30-12:00 Park Square See Yorkshire CND for more details https://yorkshirecnd.org.uk/upcoming-events/</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!