

Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR E-Bulletin – March 2013

www.jp-shrewsburydiocese.org.uk

Vision: *A diocese fully engaged with the call of God to be a people of justice and peace*

Contact details:

- Correspondence to Michael Crawley, Secretary, Shrewsbury Diocese Commission for the Promotion of Justice, Peace and Social Responsibility, 5 Riddings Court, Timperley, Altrincham, WA15 6BG mjcrowley@waitrose.com
- Donations or contributions for *MouthPeace* to Ged Cliffe, Treasurer SDJPSR, Fern Villa, Four Crosses, Llanymynech, SY22 6PR ged.cliffe@tiscali.co.uk
- Items for the e-bulletin, diary dates and notice of events to Anne O'Connor anneoc980@hotmail.com

Contents:

1. **Pope Francis I – an inspired choice**
2. **Resources**
3. **Year of Faith**
4. **Mapping exercise**
5. **A Call to Action**
6. **Launch of Catholic Scholars' Declaration on Authority in the Church**
7. **Faith group calls for Government to change direction on energy policy**
8. **MyStory Campaign**
9. **New documentary about peace & reconciliation in Israel/Palestine**
10. **New WDM Campaign**
11. **17-24 March Romero Week**
12. **20 March Budget Day**
13. **Pilgrimage for Peace and Economic Justice**
14. **National Justice and Peace Network Conference**
15. **Forthcoming Events**

1. Pope Francis I – an inspired choice

Jorge Bergoglio, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, was elected pontiff on the fifth ballot on Wednesday following the papal conclave in Rome. The 76-year old Jesuit is the first pontiff to come from Latin America. He will be known as **Pope Francis I**.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, the former Archbishop of Westminster, said that the Church was "very blessed". Describing Pope Francis I as a "humble and very intelligent" man, Cardinal Murphy O'Connor said his election "may have been a surprise" but it was an "inspired choice". "He will bring a new kind of style of to the Catholic Church," he said. "His own simplicity of life will be a great example to the whole world."

Simon Barrow, Co-Director of Ekklesia writes: *The election of Argentinian Cardinal-Archbishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio, SJ, to be Pope Francis I is historic in four senses. The new pontiff is the first non-European to be Bishop of Rome for a millennium, the first Jesuit, the first from Latin America, and the first with deep origins in the industrial working class.*

His elevation sends out a number of signals. The new pope is regarded as a humble and pastoral man. He has chosen not to live in a palace and to use public transport (though both of those things will change now that he is at the Vatican). He does not 'stand on ceremony', as his modest appearance on the balcony of the Basilica at St Peter's illustrated.

While not an 'insider', Bergoglio is an astute man. He is willing to take advice, and with good communications and diplomatic skills he knows something of how the Vatican works and why the Roman Curia, its administrative hub, is in need of substantial reform. Robert Micken, correspondent of The Tablet, presently in Rome, said this evening that we might expect not just a challenge to the ruling bureaucracy, but "a reform to simplicity."

At the age of 76 Francis I is unlikely to have a long tenure, but this does not mean he cannot bring change. Among 'transitional papacies' has been that of Pope John XXIII, who launched Vatican II. No-one is predicting another major Council in the coming years, but a quiet incumbent who is more in touch with the grassroots and the global church may be able to bring an unexpected level of change in certain areas.

It would be mistaken simply to focus on Pope Francis' strongly conservative views on bioethical issues and on same-sex marriage. That is to be expected. None of the other cardinals would have represented a substantial shift in those areas. But those involved in development and work alongside the poor hope that Francis can apply his pastoral instincts anew in looking at the AIDS-HIV crisis, for example.

Equally, the new pope will be regarded as progressive on a range of other social questions, even if he has kept his distance from the more radical exponents of liberation theology. While he has emphasised spirituality as the core of his ministry, the new leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics has voiced clear support for the poor and has publicly challenged neoliberal free-market policies and the 2002 austerity drive in Argentina.

There are a variety of other signals in the new pope's immediate response to his elevation. First, the name he has chosen resonates not just with the missionary priest Francis Xavier, a fellow Jesuit, but also with St Francis of Assisi. This is the first pontiff specifically to identify with the man who is regarded as "the saint of the poor", of humanity, of the natural world, of prayer and of peacemaking. Moreover, one of St Francis' visions of God had Christ saying to him: "Francis, go repair my house which, as you see, is falling completely to ruin."

Second, the way he handled his first blessing from St Peter's was interesting. He looked contemplative rather than swayed by emotion as the crowds cheered and chanted. His initial greeting, in Italian rather than Latin, was a simple, "Good evening" followed by a joking remark about how his fellow cardinals had looked to "the ends of the earth" to find their Bishop. He spoke, in the first instance, not of his role as global leader, but as becoming bishop in Rome and of his desire to greet the people of Rome. After praying for his predecessor, he then asked the people to pray for him, in silence, before he offered a reciprocal Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria and 'Glory Be' Blessing.

Pope Francis I comes across as an intelligent man who values simplicity and good relations, and those who know him say that he will want to see a culture change within the Vatican - which is known to be remote, full of infighting, and resistant to change.

Much of what can initially be said of this man may be summed up in the style of the Society of Jesus, which formed the new pope. At the centre of Jesuit life is a combination of the 'Spiritual Exercises' set in motion by its founder, Ignatius of Loyola, and a concern to engage the world through learning, culture, social justice, service and ecumenical dialogue.

Jesuits do not have an official habit, but in the Constitutions of the Society, declare: "The clothing too should have three characteristics: first, it should be proper; second, conformed to the usage of the country of residence; and third, not contradictory to the poverty we profess..." Those characteristics - propriety, rootedness and humility (as well as the loyalty stressed in the Jesuit vow) are what many hope they will find in Francis I.

It will certainly be interesting to see how this unexpected papacy proceeds, and how those with current power in the Catholic Church respond to it.

For full report go to <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/18166>

2. Resources

Available to download: **A Lenten Journey 2013** plus **Stations of the Cross** (including one for **Young People**)
www.jpshrewsburydiocese.org.uk (scroll partway down to 'Season of Lent')

Under the heading '**Way of the Cross**' on the Resources page there is also a **Stations of the Cross**, prepared for **Key Stage 2** pupils by Louise Cooke, J&P Fieldworker for the Diocese of Nottingham, based on the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

J&P Calendar for the Year of Faith 11 October 2012 – 24 November 2013

As we move through the Year of Faith the calendar will start at the current time to make dates easier to locate
www.jpshrewsburydiocese.org.uk (go to 'Year of Faith' page)

3. Year of Faith

To celebrate the Year of Faith the JP&SR Commission is holding a **study afternoon and discussion** on Saturday 18 May from 2.15 -5.30 at St Columba's, Chester. Entitled '**Drawing Inspiration from Vatican II**', the afternoon will be led by **Brian Davies**, former head of education at CAFOD. The hall will be open from 1pm to socialize – please bring a packed lunch, tea and coffee will be provided. Poster attached in Word 97-2003 and pdf formats.

4. Mapping exercise

In 2011 the JP&SR Commission invited parishes to provide information on parish involvement on environmental, social action, and social justice initiatives. The information received demonstrated the rich and varied mix of Christian witness being undertaken in our diocese. We have recently contributed to a similar exercise for the National J&P Network to help build up a picture for England and Wales. If your parish didn't respond last time, or if you want to let us know about current initiatives, please contact the Secretary (address above) The 2011 report is on the resources page www.jpshrewsburydiocese.org.uk (scroll down to the penultimate item)

5. A Call To Action

Mission statement A Call To Action: *We are a group of Catholics, some of whom are ordained, brought together by our love of Christ's church and our anxiety about its future. Still inspired by the Second Vatican Council we want to contribute fully to the life of our church so that we may be a more effective sign of the Kingdom of God. To do this, we believe that an atmosphere of openness and dialogue both with each other and with our bishops needs developing. We desire to help create a climate of trust and respect for all where this dialogue may be fostered.* For details of the diocesan group contact: noreen.oneill@taw.org.uk

6. Launch of Catholic Scholars' Declaration on Authority in the Church

On 5 March there was a public launch of the **Catholic Scholars' Declaration on Authority in the Church** in the House of Commons. The Declaration – which seeks greater democracy and collegiality in all levels of the church – was launched in October to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II. You can find details at www.churchauthority.org/ - including a listing of all the international signatories, over 2000 to date.

7. Faith group calls for Government to change direction on energy policy

On Ash Wednesday, **Operation Noah** called on the Government to change the direction of its Energy Bill, currently going through parliament. On this day, when Christians traditionally repent of their sins, the group believes the Government should show true repentance – *metanoia* – involving a change of mind and purpose in its energy policy.

It is one year since Operation Noah published the **Ash Wednesday Declaration – Climate change and the purposes of God: a call to the Church**. One practical outworking of this declaration is the call for a decarbonised economy in the UK by 2030. In the last year, the Government has issued an Energy Bill that fails to set adequate targets for reduction in carbon emissions and gives a green light for the building of more gas-fired power stations, locking us in to fossil fuels several decades into the future. However, it is clear that urgent action is needed to completely turn the world's energy infrastructure around from fossil fuels to renewables. Reports from organisations such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC), the World Bank and the International Energy Agency have issued urgent calls for action to reduce carbon emissions yet the UK Government is not heeding the warnings.

Isabel Carter, Chair of Operation Noah comments: "The UK Government, like many others, assumes that short-term economic policy takes priority over the laws of nature and the laws of physics! Our fragile earth has alarm bells ringing all around. How much longer will we continue to ignore them?" Operation Noah calls again for the Churches to make care for God's creation a primary factor in the Church's mission, and to join them in calling for the Government to take a lead in working for a sustainable world.

www.operationnoah.org

8. MyStory Campaign

MyStory is a **Housing Justice** campaign launched at the end of Poverty & Homelessness Action Week 2013. At www.tellmystory.org.uk people facing the hardship of welfare cuts tell their stories and how they are coping with the changes. With welfare one of the most hotly debated topics this year, this campaign shows how changes are hurting unemployed, underemployed, sick and disabled people.

The benefit squeeze has already hurt vulnerable people in receipt of benefits. In April the squeeze is getting even tighter with the Benefit Cap, Bedroom Tax and the Cut to Council Tax Benefit. Amid these cuts George Osborne fans the flames of division describing those in need of welfare "sleeping off a life on benefits." The myth that

people on benefits are living a life of luxury needs to be challenged. Housing Justice, the national Christian housing and homelessness campaigning charity, believes that the media scapegoating of the welfare scrounger creates an unreal picture of how most claimants live. The rhetoric of strivers and skivers must stop. Housing Justice is launching this new national campaign to provide Britain with a window into the real world of claimants.

Alison Gelder, Director of Housing Justice says "The churches' role is to stand in solidarity with those in need. Jesus repeatedly stood with those who were stigmatised by the authorities of his day. This campaign aims to give a voice to those who need welfare. It is a scandal that the poor are still being blamed for the mistakes of the rich."

9. New documentary about peace & reconciliation in Israel/Palestine

A powerful new documentary made by the charity **Parents Circle Families Forum** - Israelis & Palestinians bereaved by the conflict who work together for peace and reconciliation - called **Two-Sided Story** charts what happened when Palestinians from a range of different religious and political backgrounds met with a group of Israelis, also from varied political and religious backgrounds. The film is funny, sad and moving. Without taking sides it provides a very illuminating insight into what actually happens when people from opposing sides sit down together, listen to what the other has to say and see each other as human beings. The film provides a great deal of food for thought about the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and possible ways through it.

If your organisation would be interested in screening the documentary please do let me know and I can arrange to come to a venue of your choice, show the film and participate in a Q&A session afterwards. There is a link to the trailer here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzJkBxQC4Tg>

Diane Taylor, Manager FBFF tel: 07966 145098 e-mail: info@familiesforum.co.uk

<http://www.theparentscircle.com/>

<http://www.familiesforum.co.uk/>

10. New WDM Campaign

WDM is launching its new '**Carbon Capital**' campaign to fight dirty finance. The campaign will expose how the UK financial sector is bankrolling climate change by ploughing billions into dirty fossil fuel projects which are devastating people's lives around the world. As a first step, we are calling for pension funds and other shady financiers to be made to come clean on the emissions created through its dirty investments.

New regulation coming into force later this year will mean that the UK's biggest businesses will have to report on their carbon emissions. But the financial sector has been let off the hook from disclosing the climate impacts of their investments. Find out how much your bank has poured into coal power and email Vince Cable to demand that the financial sector is forced to come clean on the carbon footprint of its investments.

<http://www.wdm.org.uk/vince-cable>

11. 17-24 March Romero Week

Before he was appointed Archbishop of El Salvador in 1977 there were few signs that the conservative Bishop Romero would challenge the status quo and speak out on behalf of the poor. But seeing his friends and colleagues murdered and their killers protected transformed his views. Romero became a prophetic 'voice for the voiceless,' ceaselessly calling for an end to the repression. On 24 March 1980 he was shot dead whilst saying Mass. More than 30 years on, Romero's voice continues to be strong – an inspiration not just to the people of El Salvador but to all those who seek justice. Two **Romero** powerpoints are available from Anne anneoc980@hotmail.com

More info: www.romerotrue.org.uk

Schools invited to sign up to Spirit of Romero Day 20 March

This new initiative was featured in the February e bulletin www.jp-shrewsburydice.org (go to e bulletins page). Resources including a downloadable slideshow briefing for teachers, the suggested ceremony on Spirit of Romero Day, outline of letters, and sign-up forms are available at: www.just1.org.uk/spiritofromero

12. 20 March Budget Day

This is our first big chance, as part of the **Enough Food for Everyone IF** campaign, to get the UK government to tackle global hunger. Please email your MP to urge the Chancellor to deliver life-saving aid and help stop tax-dodging. www.enoughfoodif.org

Watch and share a short film (2.35 mins) that features the G8 leaders as kids, finding their own solution to end hunger. <http://www.youtube.com/user/EnoughFoodIf?feature=watch>

13. 19 May–20 July Pilgrimage for Peace and Economic Justice

Iona to London: Beginning on Iona at Pentecost finishing at the Palace of Westminster in London: an act of witness and communal celebration drawing strength and inspiration from historic centres of prayer along the way. As the Pilgrimage makes its way southwards, there will be numerous opportunities for local churches and other groups along the route to promote discussion in the news media about the justification for the renewal of Trident, and related wider issues of social and economic justice.

www.justpeacepilgrimage

14. National Justice and Peace Network 35th Annual Conference 19-21 July

This year's theme for the **NJPN Conference** is *Breaking Open the Word* - booking forms and further info from: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk The Shrewsbury Diocese JP&SR Commission may be able to offer a bursary for a family or individuals to attend. Applications will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please contact Tony Walsh, 54 Underwood Drive, Ellesmere Port CH65 9BL tonywalsh3@btinternet.com

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

MARCH

13 Christian Aid Lent Lunch 12.00 – 1.30pm, Welsh Church, St John Street Chester

19 Talk on Oscar Romero by Marie Dennis, Co President of Pax Christi International in Wrexham Cathedral at 7.30pm. Marie has been to many areas of conflict around the world, including Egypt, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq and Palestine-Israel. Until recently she was director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Washington. Details Maria Pizzoni pizzoni@btinternet.com

20 Christian Aid Lent Lunch 12.00 – 1.30pm, Welsh Church, St John Street Chester

20 Spirit of Romero Day (see item 10)

20 -21 We Gather – Working Together The Gather Civic Consultation, Life Centre, Manchester, 235 Washway Road, Sale, M33 4B - a consultation looking at how the Church can engage with civic authorities. Contact admin@wegather.co.uk for info/ booking form.

23-26 Talks on Oscar Romero by Fr Michael Campbell Johnston SJ in Wrexham Diocese. Fr Michael has been involved in social justice for many years, has worked in and visited many countries and founded the Jesuit Refugee Service. He knew Romero before and whilst he was Archbishop in El Salvador. Full itinerary from Maria Pizzoni pizzoni@btinternet.com

24 Anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero www.romerotrust.org.uk

APRIL

15 Global Day of Action on Military Spending Pax Christi, NJPN and Columban J&P among supporters. Read more here on the newly created website. Pax Christi producing a DVD/web-based resource for the day. <http://demilitarize.org/>

18 Heald Green Churches Together Justice & Peace Group are organizing a talk to be given by **Niall Cooper, National Coordinator of Church Action on Poverty: Closing the Gap: Tackling Poverty in an Age of Austerity** at Christ Church Hall, Finney Lane, Heald Green, SK8 3DY 7.30 pm. All welcome.

19 CAFOD Quiz Night 7.30pm Our Lady's Parish Centre, Ellesmere Port Town Centre. £3 (Children half price)

MAY

9-16 Photographic Exhibition Children of Palestine and Liverpool St Mary Magdalene Church Alsager. Liverpool Friends of Palestine have been twinned for 4 years with the West Bank village of Bil'in in the occupied Palestinian territories. The photos show the everyday lives of children from both areas. Open weekdays 10am-4pm and on Sunday 1-4pm. Admission free.

12-18 Bite back at hunger Christian Aid Week 2013 www.caweek.org