

NJPN North West Justice & Peace E-Bulletin April 2017

The monthly e-bulletin for the North West, linked to the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), is produced jointly by the dioceses of Lancaster, Liverpool, Salford, Shrewsbury and Wrexham. Please send diary dates to anneoc980@hotmail.com

MARTHA ZECHMEISTER CJ - ROMERO WEEK LECTURE 2017

26 March 2017: **Sister Martha Zechmeister CJ** gave the following address on Saturday, 25 March at the National Ecumenical Service for Romero Week 2017 at St Martin in the Fields, Trafalgar Square, London, entitled: ***The Secret of Romero: Passion for God and Compassion for the Poor "Over these ruins of ours the glory of the Lord will shine"***

Archbishop Oscar Romero spoke these words that we heard just now in his cathedral in San Salvador on the Feast of the Epiphany in 1979. It was in the midst of a desperate situation, prior to the outbreak of the civil war: people were being sacrificed on the altar of wealth, they were being cut down in their struggle for a life of dignity and they were exposed to cruel and barbaric violence. They were expelled from their homes and their land, living in a nightmare of torture, of overnight escapes and separation from their loved ones.

Romero describes the atmosphere of his home country at that moment without any illusions, using the words of Isaiah: "there are only ruins here, there is nothing more than pessimism, a tremendous sense of frustration." And so what the prophet was saying about Jerusalem, Romero is applying to the situation of El Salvador. He continues in his own words: "our human strength can do no more... we are stuck in a dead-end alley Politics and diplomacy achieve nothing here, everything is destruction and disaster, and to deny it is madness."

I think many of us here are beginning to feel the same way with respect to our actual global situation: we are stunned by the interminable vicious circle of war and violence in the Middle-East and in other conflictive zones of our world. The tentacles of terror are reaching out to the capitals of Europe. (We are shocked by the attack in the heart of London: five dead and over 40 injured. And this atrocity was carried out exactly on the first anniversary of the Brussels killings when people were mourning those victims). There are more than 60 million refugees worldwide, driven from their homelands by violence, hunger, poverty and climate change - and the "First World" seems to be riven with the fear of being overcrowded by the migrants and becoming ever more vulnerable. In consequence Europe is seeking to convert itself into a fortress constructed against "these invaders". But as we know there are also still more marginalised and excluded people in the midst of the rich "developed nations", who feel themselves betrayed by the political establishment. And finally we are confronted with the seemingly unstoppable rise of irresponsible populists and nationalists all over the world.

It seems that our world is getting a little bit out of control, that it is falling apart - and we are in danger of being overwhelmed and paralyzed by fear and anxiety. Here and now we are sharing with the people of El Salvador the awful experience that our world is in a great mess and that we are stumped - and that sometimes we are tempted to despair.

Exactly into this situation come those prophetic words of Oscar Romero: *"Over these ruins of ours the glory of the Lord will shine. That is the great mission that Christians have at this critical moment: keeping hope alive."*

But - if actually we face up to the crude facts, what is it in the end that can justify our persistent confidence? What can strengthen our tenacity, to pin all our hopes on God and on the "transcendent salvation" that Romero evokes? As an attempt to answer that, I will offer you my experience with El Salvador and with Archbishop Oscar Romero.

El Salvador and Oscar Romero taught me what it truly means to be a Christian.

Romero became really meaningful to me through an experience I had in "La Chacra", a slum area in the suburbs of San Salvador. It was during the all-night vigil celebrated on 24 March 1999, the anniversary of Romero's assassination. On that night one family after another described, in front of the whole assembly, how their relatives and friends had disappeared and had been tortured and murdered during the years of the civil war.

The martyrs of El Salvador were truly present there to testify to resurrection and as witnesses not only to God, who does not allow these victims to vanish in death, but also as witnesses to a life that takes the risk of 'making a stand against death' here in this place and now in this time. That was a night of many tears and great distress, yet it also brought us into the 'real presence' of radiant humanity and the authentic experience that Romero's death was a source of life for us. A source of life that helps us to resist despair and can give staying power - perseverance - to our hope.

El Salvador, with its martyrs who sealed the Gospel with their blood, became for me a "Holy Land". It became for me a privileged place where I was confronted with the drama of Jesus in a frighteningly current way - and it was the first time in my life I understood what it truly means to be a Christian.

It's not sophisticated, it's very simple: Christians are those people who follow Jesus, and who do what he did. They risk their own lives by taking sides - without any ifs or buts - alongside the vulnerable, those in danger and those excluded. But in spite of the simplicity of this message, we all know that we are unable to cope with this essential challenge of the Gospel. When it really happens, it is not our merit, it is not the result of our ethical efforts - it is the unexpected irruption of God's grace and mercy. With Archbishop Romero, God's grace irrupted into the midst of the cruel reality of El Salvador. So, the theologian, Ignacio Ellacuria, far from reciting pious platitudes, declared at the moment of the assassination of Romero: "With Archbishop Romero, God passed through El Salvador".

Yes, Oscar Romero is a true incarnation of God's mercy and love in that historic moment; he is a "sacrament of Jesus Christ", the real presence of the whole drama of the life of Jesus. His assassination confronts us with the cross of Jesus - as a consequence of his Jesus-like way of living. Therefore, Romero`s life and Romero`s death - like the life and death of Jesus - become an unending source of Christian hope and joy.

Living this core of the Christian life with such integrity, Romero also had a very clear view of what is the essence of the Church and what has to be her mission. The Church, as the community of those who follow Jesus, has to make the Gospel present, here and now, as a liberating and redeeming reality in the midst of whatever is oppressing and enslaving people. In the words of Romero himself: "A Church that does not join the poor in order to speak out on behalf of the poor and against the injustices committed against them, is not the true Church of Jesus Christ... The voice of the Church has always been the voice of the Gospel --- it can be nothing else. Many times this Gospel touches the open wounds of society and it is natural that it should sting and cause pain."

As he took up this vocation Oscar Romero was transformed into one of Christianity's outstanding prophets. He himself defines what it means to be a prophet: "The prophet is the watchman who keeps vigil. When God tells the evildoers to be converted, the prophet has to sound the trumpet of God and tell the evildoers to repent. ..."

As a bishop, Romero considered himself as the guardian of his brothers and sisters, called to protect and defend them. Certainly it was a highly risky task to sound the trumpet, to bring to public light, that evildoers were threatening and damaging the lives of his people, motivated by greed or other egocentric interests. Romero by his natural temperament wasn`t a "trumpet"; in fact he was a calm, peaceful and shy man. But he accepted the hazardous burden of confronting the oppressors with their crimes. And most of them had the benefit of great wealth or high office with political or military power behind them.

Even so he encouraged his priests, his fellow pastoral workers - and every one of us to take this risk: "Do not be false in your service to this ministry. It is very easy to be servants of the word without disturbing the world: a very spiritualised word, a word without any commitment to history, a word that can sound in any part of the world because it belongs to no part of the world. A word like that creates no problems, starts no conflicts."

Remembering Archbishop Romero, remembering the martyrs, and celebrating them, is a dangerous thing to do. It obliges us, like them, to let ourselves be touched in our innermost being, by the anguish that the victims of exclusion, discrimination and impoverishment suffer today. It obliges us to risk what seems like self-destructive insanity: in Bonhoeffer's words, to throw ourselves, with all of our existence, against those systems that crush and exclude the vulnerable.

To remember the body and blood of the martyrs, among them, the proto-martyr Jesus of Nazareth, does not allow for any kind of diluted celebration. It either draws us into following those martyrs, or the celebration is a lie, and carries within itself "its own judgment" - as Corinthians tells us.

To be faithful to the legacy of the martyrs of El Salvador, we are obliged to practice a patient exercise of contemplation, of paying close attention to the situation in which the crucified people live today. If we do it well, it will hurt. Only from such pain can a new pastoral word and action be born, pastoral action that is effective and hope-giving.

In an audacious and courageous way, Romero identifies the cross of Jesus Christ with the horror that the people lived through in his time. They were exposed to violence, cruelty, and humiliation. He affirms the inseparable connection, between the crucified people and the crucified Christ. They are one single flesh and cannot be separated. When we Europeans are speaking about martyrs we are always in danger of provoking depression and feelings of guilt. This is not the Gospel and it is not Oscar Romero!

However paradoxical it may seem, the most vulnerable, the marginalized people of El Salvador and the poor all over the world, can teach us, what it means to celebrate the martyrs. To follow in their footsteps is not forcing ourselves into some kind of moral and ascetic performance, but rather something that enables us to become more human and fully alive. Following in their footsteps we become liberated from our paralysis and depression and we are empowered to joyful action. 'Whoever loses his or her life . . . will gain it.'

Hope - as a "divine virtue": Christian hope is not the starry-eyed confidence that somehow everything will go well - it is not the pious variant of "positive thinking", the self-centred autosuggestion that: "nothing bad will happen to me". Christian hope is far more radical, it does not trivialize these forces that have the power to bring suffering and to destroy the lives of others. The meaning of Christian hope reveals itself only as we face the victims. If there is no hope for them, then certainly there is no hope for us. Christian hope is the vigour of the heart, capable of resisting and rejecting the imposition of the "law of the strongest" as the inevitable "law of nature". Hope is stubborn enough not to accept that the victims are the inevitable collateral damage of human history.

Our God is the solemn promise that the evildoers of this world WILL NOT HAVE THE LAST WORD. This confidence, that GOD will have the last word, transformed the shy man of El Salvador into a courageous prophet. With him the saving and life-giving love of God passed through El Salvador, and was present amongst us. Blessed Oscar Romero, servant of God, faithful follower of Jesus Christ, friend of the poor, voice of the voiceless - Pray for us.

Read more about the Romero Trust: www.romerotrust.org.uk

See also: London: 'Oscar Romero's message is more relevant than ever today'

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32214>

CARDINAL NICHOLS: AS CHRISTIANS WE MUST AVOID HATRED OR RETALIATION

26 March 2017: During a Mass offered for the victims of the London attacks, Cardinal Vincent Nichols spoke of the darkness experienced by those who suffer and mourn. "We know this experience," he said. "It's very immediate and very painful for some today." He added that it is Jesus who is "the light of the world, the light that shines in the darkness of the world, the darkness of grief and sin, a light by which we learn to take just the next step."

In the counsel of St Paul to "be like children of the light" the Cardinal said: "we have a task to discover what the Lord wants of us in any particular situation, and to be like children of the light means to do our best with kindness and compassion and courage." As the Apostle admonishes that we should 'have nothing to do with the futile works of darkness', so the Cardinal urged that for Christians, this means that we must "have nothing to do with talk of hatred or retaliation; have nothing to do with bitterness, or scorn, or mockery, or gossip, or all that undermines who we are individually and together as children of a common Father."

At the beginning of Mass, the Cardinal remembered individually those who had died in Wednesday's attacks: PC Keith Palmer, Kurt Cochran, Aysha Frade and Leslie Rhodes. He also explained that, as Christians, it is our duty to ask for God's mercy on the soul of the attacker. The Mass was offered for the victims of the attacks, especially those who had died, at Westminster Cathedral on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, Sunday, 26 March.

The full text of the homily given by His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols follows:

In the texts for our Mass this morning, as they are in the Missal, there are three phrases which we can do well to remember today and in the days to come. The first is from the Psalm that is given for today: *'The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.'* The second is from the Gospel: Jesus says, *'I am the light of the world.'* And the third is from St Paul where he tells us: *'Be like children of the light.'* These three texts help us to reflect today, especially in context of the terrible events that took place on Wednesday.

The first phrase, *'The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.'* These are words of great comfort: comfort for those who mourn, comfort for each one of us. In the Psalm, we hear of the shepherd carrying his crook: that's the symbol of his ability to bring back to himself those who have slipped away. We hear of him carrying his staff, a staff that he uses to drive away wolves, or drive away robbers. There is a realism about this Psalm, for it includes those words that we may be walking in the valley of darkness. We know this experience. It's very immediate and very painful for some today. Sometimes the darkness just creeps up on us. Sometimes we can be suddenly plunged into darkness and the sun goes out. Its light and its sparkle seem lost. In these moments we remember the words: *'The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want,'* because he has prepared a banquet for me there at the end of this pilgrimage.

The second phrase, *'I am the light of the world.'* It's spoken in the context of the Gospel narrative we've just heard: the man who is born blind and who is cured, and of the people with sight who fail to see what is before them. At the heart of this narrative is Jesus, the light of the world, the light that shines in the darkness of this world, a darkness of grief and a darkness of sin, a light by which we learn to take just the next step. I don't think we should necessarily think of the light of Christ as a floodlight that shows up everything. That would be too much. Maybe it's just a single light at times that helps us through one day. But he is the light of the world. He is the one who shows us how to walk in the dark places in which we find ourselves from time to time.

And then thirdly there are the words of St Paul: *'Be like children of the light.'* He is saying to us that we have a task to discover what the Lord wants of us in any particular situation, and to be like children of the light means to do our best with kindness and compassion and courage. It means to do our best, handing over our troubles to him because he willingly takes them on and he willingly makes of our trouble, our illness, our pain, our dismay. He can make of them something special for God, his Father. St Paul says to us, 'Have nothing to do with the futile works of darkness.' Have nothing to do with talk of hatred or retaliation. Have nothing to do with bitterness, or scorn, or mockery, or gossip, or all that undermines who we are individually and together as children of a common Father.

Today on this Fourth Sunday of Lent, we move a step closer to Holy Week and to Easter. The days of Holy Week are days in which we enter and embrace the great mystery, sometimes the puzzle, of human life, that puzzle now lit up by the light of Christ. In Holy Week we stand face to face with the darkness of betrayal, of suffering, and of death. We stand face to face with the emptiness of mourning before the tomb. And we stand face to face with the astonishing gift of new life in the glory of the Resurrection. In many different ways, some small, some tragically all-consuming, we live this mystery, each of us in our own lives, and we wait and prepare ourselves to bring it to the celebration of Easter.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32210>

MUSLIM WOMEN GATHER ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE TO CONDEMN 'ABHORRENT' ATTACK

Metro News 26 March 2017: Women formed a human chain along Westminster Bridge tonight to remember the victims of the attack on 22 March. 4 days after the attack shook London, women from different backgrounds came together in solidarity to condemn the horrific crime and show unity in the face of terror. Many of those present were Muslim, wearing blue as a symbol of peace. Ahmadiyya Muslims said they wanted to add to the condemnation of the violent attack and stand defiant in the face of terrorism.

Ayesha, a mother of two from Surrey, said: "As a visible Muslim I think it was important to show solidarity with the principles that we all hold dear; the principles of plurality, diversity, and so on." Londoner Mary B said she was present to make a 'small gesture'. The retired healthcare worker said: "I am here to show that in a quiet way we continue to go where we like and do what we like in London. This is my city. It's a very small gesture but life is made up of small gestures".

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32144>

CORRYMEELA LEADER REFLECTS ON LIFE OF MARTIN MCGUINNESS

22 March 2017: **Pádraig Ó Tuama** the leader of the Corrymeela community, the Christian centre for peace and reconciliation in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland reflects on the life of Martin McGuinness - whose life was marked by a move from violence to peacemaking and reconciliation. He writes:

I first met Martin McGuinness when he and Peter Robinson opened the Davey Village at Corrymeela. He was speaking about violence and peacemaking and he spoke about how people need to come on individual journeys. It hadn't been long since he'd shaken the hand of the Queen. I'd written a poem about that handshake and, to my surprise, he quoted some of the poem. We got chatting afterwards. He said to come visit him in Stormont. So, I did. It was the first of a number of meetings over the next years.

Mostly we spoke about poetry. He wrote some poetry himself, but mostly he loved reading it, Patrick Kavanagh in particular. He loved Kavanagh's ones about clay, the ones about the fields, the ones about family members -- *In Memory of my Mother* and the one that I can never remember about old men in *'October coloured weather'*.

To read on see: <http://www.corrymeela.org/news/73/martin-mcguinness>

For more information about the Corrymeela community, see: <http://www.corrymeela.org/about>

Ian Paisley Jr MP, whose father formed an unlikely friendship with Martin McGuinness, said: "How a person's journey started is of course important, but it is how it finishes which is actually more important. The journey of Martin McGuinness's life ended in a very different way to what people would have supposed it would have done. ... He became the necessary man in government to deliver a stable and necessary peace, and that's a complex and remarkable journey."

LAUNCH OF THE CENTRE FOR THEOLOGY AND JUSTICE

Liam Purcell, Church Action on Poverty writes:

Join us in Manchester on 10 May for the launch of an exciting new project. The Centre for Theology and Justice is an exciting new initiative that will help people in churches reflect theologically on issues of social justice. It's being set up jointly by Christian Aid, Church Action on Poverty, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, and Luther King House in Manchester. We're very proud to be part of it, and we'd like to invite you to join us for the official launch of the Centre. Wednesday 10 May 2017, 3.45-6pm. Luther King House, Rusholme, Manchester M14 5JP

We'll share our plans for what the Centre is going to do, and we have the inaugural David Goodbourn Lecture: ***Is justice enough? A radical Christian response to the current humanitarian and ecological crisis*** by Fr Augusto Zampini, an Argentine Roman Catholic priest, theological adviser to CAFOD and an Honorary Fellow at Durham University, Roehampton University and Stellenbosch University (South Africa). David Walker, Bishop of Manchester, will be the chair.

There will be a light afternoon tea and refreshments from 3.45pm. Fr Augusto Zampini's lecture will start at 4.30pm and finish at approximately 6pm. Attendance is free, but please book a place if you wish to attend.

Click here to book your place now! <http://www.theologyjustice.org/launch/>

PS If you want to stay informed about the work of the Centre for Theology and Justice, you can follow it on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/theologyjustice> or Twitter <https://mobile.twitter.com/theologyjustice> (@theologyjustice)

NJPN REPORT ON NATIONAL MARCH TO SAVE NHS

Ann Kelly, 7 March 2017: One of the home-made banners at the march for the NHS last Saturday (4 March) reminded us that 'you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone'. Perhaps we take for granted the blessing of a health service into which we pay according to our means and from which we receive health care according to our needs, regardless of our ability to pay. That is why I was among the (at least) 200,000 people taking part in the march along with National Justice & Peace Network Exec member Kevin Burr, carrying our NJPN flags.

The march made its way from the home of the British Medical Association in Tavistock Square through central London, along Whitehall (past the Ministry of Defence where only a few days before I had been part of the Ash Wednesday witness against our nuclear war preparations, for which, it seems, we can always find the money) and down to Parliament Square. There we were addressed by, among others, local health campaigners, student nurses, actor Julie Hesmondhalgh, Jeremy Corbyn, Billy Bragg.

The NHS is in crisis due to years of cuts and re-organisations, debts created by the Private Finance Initiative, staffing cuts and the knock-on effects of the underfunding of social care. The private sector is already involved and a hasty trade deal with the USA could open up the NHS to wholesale privatisation. Local 'sustainability and transformation plans' appear to be a way to force cuts to local health services. Despite a promise to train 10,000 more nurses, the withdrawal of the bursary for nursing students has led to a drop in applications. And there was a strong message in support of migrant workers on whom our NHS depends; the government's refusal to guarantee the status of EU citizens living in the UK leaves many of those workers in a state of uncertainty which may cause them to leave.

The march was organised by The People's Assembly, Health Campaigns United and Unite. The defence of the NHS in which so many people of faith work and have helped to build, is one campaign that calls for a broad alliance. And if the service collapses - they will have to pick up the pieces.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32080>

FLAME 2017 - 10,000 REASONS TO HOPE

Ellen Teague and Jo Siedlecka, 12 March 2017: The spirituality and exuberance of 10,000 young people who attended Flame 2017 on Saturday could be seen in the quiet listening to witness stories, reverential prayer and the joyful singing along to the music of Matt Redman, One Hope Project, Jasmine Elcock and a vibrant Mexican wave encircling the Wembley Arena. The Redman song, *'10,000 Reasons'* was a theme of the day, referring to God's blessings and reasons to be hopeful for the future. The quote from St Paul, *'Fan your flames into a gift'* stood out on the screen.

The largest gathering of Catholic youth happens every two years and is organised by the Catholic Youth Ministry Federation (CYMFed). Trains and coaches were travelling to Wembley from the early hours of Saturday morning from every Catholic diocese in England and Wales. Some also came from Scotland and there was a contingent from Norway. Colourful groups - some from Nottingham sported Sherwood green Robin Hood hats - posed for photos outside before moving into the venue, where they were soon joining in the mobile phone light show and moving in time to the music. Many diocesan bishops sat alongside their young people and youth leaders. Fast-moving presentations were well-planned and varied with multi-media backgrounds and lighting effects.

The Opening Liturgy was full of dance, movement and time for reflective prayer. The official welcome from CYMFed was given by Fr Dermott Donnelly of Youth Services in Hexham and Newcastle Diocese. "Wow, what a sight!" the brother of celebrity Declan Donnelly exclaimed from the podium. Cardinal Vincent Nichols brought a message from Pope Francis - who was cheered every time his name was mentioned - and especially when he called on the young people "to help vulnerable migrants and our neighbours who feel abandoned." Cardinal Vincent urged the young people to feed into planning for the 2018 Synod of Bishops on 'Youth, faith and vocational discernment'.

Cardinal Charles Bo from Myanmar was warmly received when he urged the young people to "carry the flame of hope" in today's world, particularly bringing hope to those less fortunate." Smiling throughout, he said: "I see beautiful faces and colours and this is the diversity of the Catholic Church." He spoke of the suffering in his country, particularly the 200,000 Muslim Rohingya displaced in the north and the Karen who are plagued by human trafficking. Cardinal Bo reported that he has been calling 2017 a Year of Peace although "everywhere the voices of hatred are becoming stronger and all of us must counter this." He reported that Catholics are working for justice in Myanmar's slums, camps for displaced people and in projects that promote education, health and build bridges between faiths. His phrase that "hope has no expiry date" was very popular on social media. Cardinal Bo also mentioned that he had wanted to look inside Wembley Stadium - but he was shocked to see that the ticket cost £20. "That's a month's salary for me," he told the crowds.

Throughout the day, a migrant boat TO6411 from the Italian island of Lampedusa was lit up on one side of the stage. This tiny vessel, which originally came from Turkey crammed with over 100 people, including several babies, was sailed to London from Lampedusa by artist Lucy Wood in 2013 to highlight the plight of refugees who risk their lives trying to get to Europe. Last year the UN report that more than 2,500 people drowned in that dangerous journey. This focus on migrants was followed by prayers for those displaced from their homes and those seeking to find shelter and safety in Europe. It was picked up in the afternoon by Sarah Teather, head of the Jesuit Refugee Service, who showed a powerful video of 'refugee friends' speaking about their difficult lives in the UK, where asylum seekers are not permitted to work and feel they have lost their identity. "JRS has been my home" reflected one. Sarah asked the each of the 10,000 young people in the arena to think about doing "one thing" to support refugees. "If each person does just one thing - what a difference that would make" she said.

Two young CAFOD volunteers - student teacher Leah Fox and Ryan Wilkinson, a volunteer with the Salesian retreat centre in Sheffield - described meeting refugees in the Lebanon. They said they felt the Church is a global community reaching out to the vulnerable. Fr Augusto Zampini, a CAFOD theological advisor who hails from the same city - Buenos Aires - as Pope Francis, spoke about the message of *Laudato Si'* and Pope Francis. We must "always try to see reality through the eyes of the poor; the Holy Spirit will help us with this." Fr Augusto urged the huge gathering to make a difference by working together as a community.

Several times during the day the hashtag #Flame2017 was trending on Twitter. The young participants in the arena were encouraged to write messages to refugees and to support by fundraising, campaigning and praying. Tweeting and texting went on throughout the day, and an app on mobile phones encouraged young people to imagine what it must be like to flee for your life.

Creative activities took place outside during the lunch break, where young people had to imagine trying to engage with the British public as refugees from overseas. Rise Theatre led some improvisations. One CAFOD stand encouraged volunteers to generate energy by cycling. There was a closing liturgy with quiet Adoration and Benediction - before Flame2017 came to an end and the crowds began to head for their coaches and the long journey home.

Watch the official music video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtwIT8JiddM>
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32121>

See an interview with Cardinal Bo by Ellen Teague of the Columbans about the influence of missionaries in Myanmar: <http://www.columbans.co.uk/news/interview-cardinal-bo-myanmar/>

HOUSING JUSTICE NEWS

Alison Gelder, Outgoing CEO, Housing Justice writes: Spring is upon us with crocuses and daffodils and lambs bringing the promise of new beginnings – and Lent with a renewed focus on reflection and the chance to turn again to God. For me this is especially relevant this year as I prepare to hand over the baton of leading Housing Justice and embark on a new phase of my life. So I am writing this, my final letter to you with mixed feelings. In many ways the situation for people experiencing or threatened with homelessness is worse now than it was when I joined Housing Justice in 2003. The numbers of people sleeping rough continue to rise and despite the Government's good intentions there is no silver bullet that will bring the housing crisis to an end. So our work is needed more than ever.

And yet there are many things that Housing Justice has achieved in the last 14 years of which we can be proud. Our work with Winter Night Shelters has grown from a forum for five London night shelters to a network of more than 70, an established toolkit to support the development of new night shelters and a respected Quality Mark with 13 night shelters now graded as Excellent. Our Faith in Affordable Housing project has grown from an online guide for church property folk to the provision of bricks and mortar for people who need homes. In London we have 28 destitute asylum seekers staying with volunteer hosts and we have provided accommodation for 50 people like this in the year since the project began. And even though we no longer run a mentoring and befriending service ourselves we are regularly training and supporting others to set up new schemes in their communities. Meanwhile on the advocacy front we are speaking in churches and to other groups giving radio and TV interviews and writing articles about Christian action on homelessness, as well as tweeting and Facebooking. We are a voice for Church concerns in the homelessness and housing sectors as well as with national and local government.

But my best memories will always be the times when I have been lucky enough to see the change that takes place between a first meeting on the street and then, after a few months of support, seeing someone settled in their own home. Even better is meeting someone as a volunteer who the year before was a night shelter guest.

However, none of this could have happened without you, our loyal supporters, your prayers and your donations. At Housing Justice we concentrate on the work that cannot be funded by the Government, helping people who have fallen through the net, are unable to access state support or who need something more than services commissioned by Local Authorities can provide. We also don't receive large sums from the denominations. So we, and the people we help, depend on the gifts of individuals, donations from Religious Orders and collections from parishes and congregations.

Please, will you include the work of Housing Justice and all those experiencing homelessness and in housing need in your Lenten prayers, and consider making a gift to support our vital work going forward. With every good wish and blessing, Yours sincerely, Alison Gelder, CEO.

- This article first appeared in *The Universe* in the weekly column contributed by a team of NJPN writers.

HOUSING JUSTICE HAS A NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE!

This month has seen the arrival of our new Chief Executive, Kathy Mohan, formally Regional Head of Housing for St Mungo's Housing. Kathy comes to Housing Justice with a strong track record in social housing where she has experience of both designing and delivering services. In a career spanning 30 years, Kathy has operated at senior levels in a range of social housing organisations – and brings a strong personal and professional commitment to the issues of homelessness.

Kathy's commitment to tackling homelessness and poor housing carries through to her personal life where she has volunteered through her Church to support the winter night shelter movement for many years – helping to lead the transition of her local scheme to CIO status and becoming its first Chair of Trustees. Kathy joins Housing Justice from St Mungo's Housing, having previously worked for YMCA, The Guinness Partnership, Sanctuary, Servite and within Local Government. She has also served on an ALMO Board and with a supported housing charity.

Speaking of joining the Housing Justice team, Kathy said: "I am excited and honoured to be taking on the role as Chief Executive at Housing Justice. I look forward to building upon the work of Alison – and to ensuring that Housing Justice continues to play a key role in the response to the challenges of homelessness faced by too many people in our society. The role of faith groups in alleviating the suffering caused by homelessness and poor housing is immense – channelling and securing this work is a key challenge. On a personal level it offers me the opportunity to combine my skills and experience from a 30 year career in 'Housing' with my personal mission, faith and values to affect change and alleviate the suffering caused by homelessness".

Speaking at the time of her appointment, Housing Justice Chair, the Rt Revd James Langstaff said: "I am delighted to share the news of a new top team at Housing Justice. The appointment of Kathy Mohan and also Jacob Quagliozi as the new Deputy Director will bring around a new season for the charity, building on the excellent legacy of Alison Gelder and Alastair Murray. Both Alison and Alastair have faithfully served Housing Justice and I want to pay tribute for their work. Under their leadership, Housing Justice has become a credible organisation for which church, Government and the wider sector can look for advice, a strong campaigning arm and a demonstration of increased practical action for often the least in our society. I am equally confident that under Kathy's leadership, with Jacob supporting her in that, Housing Justice will continue to do that in new and creative ways as we seek to remind society that everyone needs a home - not simply a house."

www.housingjustice.org.uk

HOUSING WHITE PAPER

The Government finally released their Housing White Paper in February with the stark acknowledgement that we have a broken housing market. Many of the problems are ones we, and others in the industry more widely, have highlighted before, and it is encouraging that the government recognises this. We don't build enough homes, we don't build those homes fast enough, and there is not enough protection for a growing number of people in the private rented sector. The term 'affordable' is also broken.

However, this was a landmark opportunity for a government in power, in such a position of authority in the polls, to have made some big changes to the scale of housebuilding outside of the main cities in this country. Sadly, it looks as though the large scale changes needed will not happen. **Download at:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version/pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590464/Fixing_our_broken_housing_market_-_print_ready_version.pdf)

See analyses from housing experts: <https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2017/feb/07/start-building-experts.housing-white-paper>

CRISIS BLOG: CAN HOUSING FIRST HELP END HOMELESSNESS?

Matt Downie, 14 March 2017: Today, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has presented an ambitious plan for ending homelessness. Crisis is one of the organisations to commission the CSJ to carry out this research, in an attempt to help generate new and innovative approaches to tackle the rising levels of homelessness and rough sleeping. A national Housing First programme features as the key component of this strategy to end rough sleeping and chronic homelessness, but what is it, and could it make a difference?

Housing First is based on the simple idea that the best way to solve homelessness is to provide people with their own home. This may sound blindingly obvious but the current approach in the UK is predominantly 'treatment first' where people are required to successfully address wider needs such as substance misuse or mental health problems before they move on from temporary accommodation such as hostels and night shelters. Housing First prioritises rapid access to a stable home for those with high support needs, but that is only the start. Once rehoused, people are offered the necessary services to address the reasons why they may have become homeless to start with.

Widely adopted across North America and a variety of European states, Housing First has formed a central component of successful, national homelessness strategies. Perhaps the most dramatic results have been seen in Finland, where in the 1980's rough sleeping had reached a high of 4,700, but where today it is virtually zero, and where the capital Helsinki has only one 62-bed temporary hostel remaining.

Wherever Housing First has been adopted at scale it has provided successful results, with high tenancy sustainment rates and improved health and wellbeing outcomes. The arguments for adopting this approach as national policy in the UK (and specifically in England, which is the focus of the CSJ report) are now too compelling to ignore.

The CSJ report advocates a national Housing First programme costing £110 million per year. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has estimated that after two years of implementing Housing First for 46,000 people the Government would save £200 million per year, making this programme cost neutral over the course of a parliament. Further work is required to show exactly what would happen if Housing First was adopted as the default approach to addressing different forms of homelessness, not least because the savings must be cashable, and presumably that means providing less temporary accommodation for people in hostels and night shelters.

In order to answer these questions in a real context, Crisis is conducting a feasibility study in the Liverpool City Region to look at the cost benefits of Housing First and the transitional costs of moving away from the current system. The study has been funded by DCLG and the European Housing First Hub, and it will report in June.

However not everybody thinks Housing First is a great idea. Hostel providers have raised concerns that the current environment of funding reductions for supported housing may be compounded if Housing First is somehow seen as a panacea or justification for further cuts to existing provision. It is also worth noting that politically there are those that level an accusation of 'queue jumping' at Housing First, citing the issue of those who have had to wait many years on the social housing queue and a perceived unfairness of fast-tracking accommodation for rough sleepers and others with support needs. Both of these issues are surmountable, but do require a transition plan and transparency about what exactly Housing First will replace, and for whom it will be provided. And yes, any national policy must also ensure that existing allocations of social homes are not disrupted.

There is a clearly strong interest from within Government for the Housing First model, with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, announcing that he will be visiting Finland to find out more about how it works in practice. This is to be strongly welcomed, and as ever with homelessness policy, cross-party agreement on this issue will be required if Housing First is to be adopted successfully across political cycles and jurisdictions.

We strongly welcome the CSJ call for Housing First to be adopted as national policy. Should the Government adopt such a policy it would represent a mind-shift in the way homeless people are seen and our shared aspirations for their future. Yes, we still need to address the political choices that create homelessness in the first place (welfare cuts, lack of affordable housing, etc.), and the CSJ report confronts some of these issues, but the case for Housing First as part of the solution to homelessness is now undeniable. Having a stable place to call home is fundamental to the life chances of us all, and Housing First offers that opportunity to those who need it most.

<http://blog.crisis.org.uk/tag/housing-first/>

SCHOOLS MUST DO MORE ON MENTAL HEALTH, SAY SCHOOL REPORTERS

16 March 2017 **BBC Report**

Grace, 16, has been bullied for the past nine years, has moved schools twice, struggled with suicidal thoughts and taken medication for anxiety and depression. At one point, she says, "there was no-one to turn to in the school and I felt so low I didn't want to go on".

According to research for BBC School Report, half of teenagers with mental wellbeing issues try to cope alone. And a third said they were not confident enough to speak to a teacher.

At her lowest point, Grace made a "suicide video", which she posted on YouTube. "I'd get beaten up every week," she says. "Teachers wouldn't do anything. I even heard the teachers talking about me behind my back."

According to her mother, Sarah, Grace got some help through external music therapy and counselling but little support directly from her first two schools. Support is better at her third school, where she helps as an anti-bullying ambassador. She is also a member of the National Anti-Bullying Youthboard. <http://www.antibullyingpro.com/youthboard-2014>

ComRes researchers questioned a representative sample of more than 1,000 UK-based 11- to 16-year-olds for BBC School Report <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/bbc-school-report-mental-health-survey-11-16-year-olds/>:

- About 70% had experienced negative feelings in the past year, ranging from feeling upset and unhappy, to feeling anxious, frightened or unsafe
- 11% described themselves as "unhappy" overall
- 86% described themselves as "happy" overall
- 70% of 11-16 year-olds say they have had one or more negative feelings in the past year: 47% felt upset and unhappy; 34% felt worried about how they look; 41 felt anxious.

They said the most important thing schools could do to support pupils' mental wellbeing was to provide someone trustworthy to talk to confidentially, but:

- 18% described the help they were offered at school for their worries and concerns as "poor"
- 66% described the help they were offered at school for their worries and concerns as "good"
- Half said there was an allocated teacher they could talk to about worries or concerns
- 15% said their schools had appointed older students as mentors

Separate research on just over 700 teachers <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/bbc-school-report-mental-health-survey-secondary-school-teachers/> found:

- Almost three-quarters (73%) would often or occasionally worry about a particular pupil's wellbeing in their free time
- Over a third had not had any training on how to deal with pupils' mental health issues
- A quarter said they would not know how or when to refer a young person in mental distress for help

In January, Prime Minister Theresa May announced plans to transform attitudes to mental health, with a focus on children and young people. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-38548567> The plans include better links between schools and NHS specialist staff and mental health first aid training for every secondary school. <https://mhfaengland/org/>

Reacting to the School Report research, Edward Timpson, Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families, said the government would "transform mental health services in schools" and was commissioning research to help schools identify which approaches worked best. "Growing up in today's world can be a challenge for children and young people, so it's vital that they get the help and support they need," said Mr Timpson.

Last year, research for the children's commissioner for England suggested more than a quarter of children referred for mental health support received no treatment. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36404490>

And on Thursday, commissioner Anne Longfield said the School Report study highlighted "many desperately sad stories" of children with serious conditions being denied support. She called for urgent action from schools, the NHS and government.

The Family Links and Nurturing Schools Network said schools needed better staff training and enough resources to support and improve pupils' emotional and mental health. "We must go further to invest in preventative approaches in schools and at home," said the network's chief executive, Nick Haisman-Smith.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39267193>

CSAN REPORTS CHILDREN GOING HUNGRY IN SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

16 March 2017: **Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN)** has submitted a response to the Holiday Hunger inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger, chaired by Frank Field MP. The short inquiry into Holiday Hunger was called in response to widespread evidence that children who usually receive free school meals during term time can return from school holidays in a worse mental and physical condition, having gone several days without a proper meal.

CSAN's response has focused on school holiday projects by two members, Nugent and the Cardinal Hume Centre, responding to the APPG's call for "solutions that can be driven by local communities - with support from the Government, businesses and charities - to ensure no child goes hungry in the holidays".

Both projects have been successful in de-stigmatising food provision by integrating the service within their community hubs alongside learning, play and extra opportunities for support to parents. However, staff from both projects as well as other CSAN members confirmed they had witnessed families who were unable to feed their children properly during the holidays when they go without the daily free meal provided at school.

Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN) CEO Phil MCarthy said: "We welcome the opportunity to raise our member charities' concerns about Holiday Hunger with parliamentarians. In our members' experience, food for children in the school holidays is best provided in through community facilities, as part of day-care activities for the children, so avoiding stigmatisation. We strongly encourage the Government to consider how the support which churches and charities are delivering on the ground might be scaled up to address the full extent of Holiday Hunger."

The response is available to read here: <http://www.csan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/170315-Caritas-Social-Action-Network-CSAN-Holiday-Hunger-inquiry-response.pdf>
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32144>

30 MILLION VIEWS AND COUNTING: ENDA KENNY'S ST PATRICK'S SPEECH GOES VIRAL

19 March 2017, Dublin **Ronan McGreevy** writes in *The Irish Times*:

Taoiseach Enda Kenny's speech about the value of immigration in front of US President Donald Trump has gone viral and has been viewed more than 30 million times. Mr Kenny's address, which he delivered at a St Patrick's Day reception at the White House last Thursday, made no reference to Mr Trump's policies. However, it was interpreted in sections of the US and UK media as a thinly veiled criticism of Mr Trump's plans to ban immigration from certain Muslim countries and to build a wall along the Mexican border.

A video of a section of the speech was posted on the Channel 4 Facebook page on the morning of St Patrick's Day and has been widely praised both on the site and elsewhere. It has been viewed more than 28 million times and has been shared more than 400,000 times including by the Taoiseach himself who shared it on his Facebook page three hours after it was posted. In addition it has been viewed 2.9 million times on the Facebook page of [moveon.org](http://www.moveon.org), 1.4 million times on CNN, 1,158,000 on the Occupy Democrats Facebook page and 235,000 on the USAToday website.

Occupy Democrats showcased the video on their Facebook page with the headline "Irish PM SCHOOLS Trump: 'St. Patrick Was An Immigrant' Right to Trump's face!" *The New York Times* reported the speech under the headline: "Irish Premier Uses St. Patrick's Day Ritual to Lecture Trump on Immigration."

In his speech Mr Kenny said St Patrick was an immigrant and was, in many ways, the patron saint of immigrants along with being the patron saint of Ireland. "Ireland came to America because - deprived of liberty, opportunity, safety and even food itself - we believed," he told the crowd. "Four decades before Lady Liberty lifted her lamp, we were the wretched refuse on the teeming shore. We believed in the shelter of America, in the compassion of America, in the opportunity of America. We came and became Americans."

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/30-million-views-and-counting-enda-kenny-s-st-patrick-s-speech-goes-viral-1.3016419>

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

Rebecca Sutton, Program Coordinator of Global Women's Exchange.

This prayer was developed for the NY State Labor-Religion Coalition's seventh annual 40-hour fast. It was also part of Prayers for a Just Economy, a prayer service calling for an increase in the federal minimum wage held in Washington, DC, 24 July 2013.

Pray for those who are hungry.

Pray for those who struggle each week to pay their bills.

Pray for those who are homeless.

Pray for the sick and lonely.

Pray for those who cry out for dignity.

Pray for those oppressed by unjust wages.

Pray for those who bear the yoke of prejudice.

Pray for those whose basic needs are denied.

Pray harder for those who will not feed them.

Pray harder for the wealthy who do not care.

Pray harder for those who deny them shelter.

Pray harder for those who will not give them comfort.

Pray harder for those who will not listen.

Pray harder for those who exploit them.

Pray harder for those who discriminate against them.

Pray harder for public officials who cater to the greedy and ignore those bound unjustly. Amen.

JESUIT SUPERIOR CALLS FOR GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Fr Arturo Sosa SJ, 9 March 2017: We must be honest and admit that the full participation of women in the life of the Church "remains stymied on many fronts". Those were the words of the Jesuit Superior General, Fr Arturo Sosa, at the opening of the 2017 Voices of Faith event in the Vatican on Wednesday.

The annual event marking international women's day brought together voices of Catholic women from around the globe with the theme: *'Stirring the waters: making the impossible possible'*.

Noting that faith provides the audacity to strive for the 'impossible', Fr Sosa spoke of the resilience and courage he has witnessed firsthand among women working on the border between Colombia and his native Venezuela. He said while Pope Francis' efforts to bring Vatican II to life and focus on the needs of the poor have opened the way for women's voices to be better heard, we must acknowledge that their gifts have not yet been fully recognized.

Read his speech in full here:

http://www.sjweb.info/documents/assj/2017.03.08_Voices_of_Faith_2017_Fr_General%27s_speech.pdf?platform=hootsuite
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32101>

IRELAND: TRÓCAIRE WELCOMES GROUND BREAKING ENVIRONMENTAL BILL

Liz Evers, 27 January 2017: **Trócaire** has welcomed a Bill by the Irish Parliament to divest from fossil fuels. Yesterday afternoon a majority vote was passed in the Dáil to progress the Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill to Committee stage. The Bill calls for the withdrawal of investments of the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) from fossil fuel companies and ban future investments in the industry by the Fund.

Executive Director of Trócaire, Éamonn Meehan said: "Major cities from Copenhagen to Berlin to Sydney have already committed to divest from the fossil fuel industry. However, if the Fossil Fuel Divestment Bill is passed, Ireland would be the first country to ban investment of public money into the fossil fuel industry.

"With a climate-sceptic recently inaugurated into the White House, this move by elected representatives in Ireland will send out a powerful message. The Irish political system is now finally acknowledging what the overwhelming majority of people already know: That to have a fighting chance to combat catastrophic climate change we must phase out fossil fuels and stop the growth of the industry that is driving this crisis. I have seen it on the ground, from Malawi to Honduras, climate change is decimating the world's poorest communities. The support of a majority in the Dáil for this Bill is an incredibly important moment for the climate justice movement in Ireland and will inspire other countries to follow our lead."

Trócaire has been campaigning for the Bill since early 2016.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=31806#.WitZ6NsR2kE.facebook>

OPERATION NOAH CALLS CHURCHES TO 'THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL' ON DIVESTMENT

21February 2017: **Operation Noah** is calling on local churches to commit to divesting from fossil fuels during a week-long **Global Divestment Mobilisation** in May. The Christian climate change charity is a faith partner in the initiative which is spearheaded by 350.org, the global divestment movement founded by American environmentalist and campaigner Bill McKibben. This year's Global Divestment Mobilisation takes place from 5-13 May and will focus on the impacts of climate change..

While many churches in the UK have committed to divest from coal and tar sands, they continue to invest vast sums of money in the fossil fuel industry. The Church of England invests more than £190m in Shell and BP alone as well as investing in ExxonMobil, while the Methodist Church has £52m invested in fossil fuels. While the national churches lag behind, Operation Noah is asking local churches to take the lead, encouraging them to make a divestment commitment and to write to national church investors urging them to do the same. To make this easier, the charity has produced a 'how to' guide, **Divest Your Church**, explaining the process of divestment and reinvestment for local churches, which will be available on the Bright Now website from early March.

James Buchanan, Operation Noah's divestment campaign manager, said: "Climate change is threatening the livelihoods of our brothers and sisters around the world. There is a moral urgency for churches to break their ties with the fossil fuel industry driving this crisis. By making a commitment to divest from fossil fuels, local churches can take a lead and show that it is no longer ethical to invest in fossil fuels."

Read more about Operation Noah here: <http://operationnoah.org/>

For info on Global Divestment Mobilisation and to register your event visit: <http://globaldivestmentmobilisation.org/uk/>
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=31978>

GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON MILITARY SPENDING – VOTE FOR A SAFER WORLD

The **Global Campaign on Military Spending Days of Action** are 20-23 April 2017

Find resources and ideas for action on the website: <https://demilitarize.org.uk/> including the online ballot – How would you spend £46billion for a safer world?

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdDybaTx_Azqsi6Qz7GPx0N8G8KmZKan0gK5nQLRP_nvs5UAQ/viewform

PAX CHRISTI WELCOMES UN DECISION ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

4 March 2017: **Pax Christi International** issued this statement on Friday, after the UN General Assembly agreed to negotiate a legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons: Pax Christi International welcomes the UN General Assembly's decision to negotiate a legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons. We consider it a milestone that nuclear weapons be explicitly banned by international treaty and see the treaty as an exercise in the moral values and global responsibilities required to build a more secure and sustainable world. Moreover, a nuclear weapon ban treaty should not be seen as a revolutionary step, but rather as the logical next step leading towards the near-universal goal of a world without nuclear weapons. It would also strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty by reinforcing the existing obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament. We call upon all governments to uphold their responsibilities and attend the nuclear weapons ban treaty negotiations in March and June/July 2017.

Nuclear weapons are instruments of ultimate violence. Our planet has no place for weapons of such terror and mass destruction. For anyone to possess them takes a toll on everyone's humanity. Their presence in an era of increasing interdependence is an affront to human dignity. Nuclear weapons are designed to cause catastrophic humanitarian consequences and their use, under any circumstances, is unjustifiable and unthinkable. The Catholic Church has been outspoken against the indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons: "Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation."

To free the world of nuclear weapons is a global public good of the highest order and a responsibility of all states. Humanitarian imperatives drive these negotiations towards a clear and explicit prohibition of the most destructive weapon ever created. The requisite protection for people and the planet depends on a complete legal prohibition of nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of any intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons is very real. The only way to eliminate such risk is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. Our movement thus calls upon governments to consider these human-centered parameters for the nuclear weapons ban treaty negotiations:

1. Develop a robust new legal instrument

Our movement calls upon governments to make the treaty's core focus the prohibition of the possession and use of nuclear weapons with an obligation for elimination. In focusing on these core principles, the full range of related activities--such as development, deployment, production, testing, stockpiling, transfer, threat of use and assistance with these activities--must also be prohibited. These provisions must be unambiguous. An explicit and binding prohibition will not only outlaw and further stigmatize nuclear arms, it will also reinforce existing foundations for their eventual elimination.

2. Take responsibility as a majority of states

Pax Christi International strongly affirms that all states and the peoples they represent have a stake in these negotiations. It is fitting, therefore, that the movement towards a ban treaty is an initiative of a majority of states, many of whom have renounced nuclear weapons and established Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones. That majority is now assuming leadership to achieve a universal prohibition of nuclear weapons. International organisations and civil society networks stand with them. We call upon all governments to take an active part in the nuclear weapons ban treaty negotiations. The worldwide risks associated with nuclear weapons call to account the minority of states which possess, or rely on, nuclear weapons. Those states need to engage with the majority in good faith as the legal anomaly around this weapon of mass destruction is finally corrected.

3. Act on core human values and legally binding obligations

There exists a legally binding obligation to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". Some states which do not have their own nuclear weapons are members of nuclear alliances or in other ways rely on nuclear weapons. They avow support for eliminating nuclear weapons but continue to rely on nuclear weapons. Our movement believes that a ban treaty, which is an instrument of collective security for all, offers a pathway for them to align their obligations with their aspirations. Pax Christi International calls nuclear-dependent states to act on their core human values, affirming rather than abstaining from the ban, and to engage constructively and in good faith in the negotiations.

4. Ban nuclear weapons for a sustainable future

Banning nuclear weapons now is a test of international commitment to a sustainable future in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A Chatham House study in 2016 noted that "nuclear weapons pose overwhelming dangers to global health, development, climate, social structures and human rights. The detonation of nuclear weapons would have disastrous immediate and long-term consequences both in the location of the detonation and also in many other parts of the world." Pax Christi International therefore urges states to contribute to the SDGs at this critical juncture in human history by banning nuclear weapons.

In the words of Pope Francis on the occasion of the 2014 Vienna conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons: "I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home. The security of our own future depends on guaranteeing the peaceful security of others, for if peace, security and stability are not established globally, they will not be enjoyed at all."

● **Pax Christi International** is a Catholic and faith-based peace movement with 120 member organisations worldwide promoting peace, respect for human rights, justice and reconciliation.

<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32058>

MESSAGE FROM SECOND GENERATION HIROSHIMA SURVIVOR - MIDORI YAMADA

March 28, 2017

I was born in Ono-cho in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1949. The town was 25 kilometres away from Hiroshima City, facing Miyajima Island, now known as a World Heritage site. Among the people of the small town in the Seto Inland Sea, the scars of the atomic bomb remain deep inside their minds.

I am a second generation Hibakusha. In my family, my father and two brothers directly experienced the atomic bombing. Many of my elder cousins also fell victim to the bombing.

Back then, my father was a deputy mayor of Ono-cho Town. Informed about many people injured by the new type of bomb on Hiroshima, he joined the rescue corps and went back and forth between home and Hiroshima City for several days. From day one he was exposed to the A bomb residual radiation. My father was very concerned about possible radiation effects on me. I was born after the atomic bombing. Whenever I was taken ill he felt distressed and blamed himself for having been in Hiroshima, He felt especially sad when I suffered from breast cancer at the age of 34.

My second brother was 13 and a freshman in middle school in Hiroshima City. On August 6 he and his classmates were mobilised to work on house demolitions, making firebreaks on the street which is now called Heiwa Odori Avenue. This was very close to what would become ground zero. Morning roll-call finished and each student had just started to work in the assigned areas. The bomb came all of a sudden, at 8.15am. When he came to his senses, he found himself and other classmates trapped under a fallen building and surrounded by a sea of flames approaching. He desperately called for help to people running around trying escape.

One soldier stopped and tried to help them, but in vain. These students encouraged each other and struggled to free themselves. Suddenly my brother's body got loose and he was able to escape by a hair's breadth. But most of his classmates were consumed by the raging flames and died - which would torment my brother for the rest of his life.

When he finally managed to get home, his face was black with soot and was swollen like a balloon. My family had a hard time recognising him. Day and night for three days he related the hell on earth he had witnessed to the families and neighbours coming to his bedside. Then he fell into a deep sleep, and then hovering between life and death for a month before coming back to life. But the scar engraved on his mind did not heal and he remained silent about his experiences from the A bomb.

My eldest brother who was in Hiroshima at age 16 still refuses to acknowledge the fact that he is a Hibakusha. He had been mobilised to work in a weapons factory in Hiroshima city. But he refuses to apply for a Hibakusha certificate, and he rejects everything that happened in the past. He is now suffering from rectal cancer.

Some of you might have heard Hibakushas' stories or seen painful scars on their bodies. I pay my deepest respects to many Hibakusha who courageously bear witness to their tragic experiences before the people of the world. But I would like you to know that there are many Hibakushas, who have suffered and survived quietly through these years, with deep scars in their mind, including my brothers. I believe it is my mission as a second generation Hibakusha to witness to their experiences too.

Working as a councillor in the Tokyo federation of A bomb sufferers organisations I've met with many Hibakusha who are still suffering from illnesses, and also many second generation Hibakushas who live with constant fear over the possible effects of radiation on parents and on their own health - which are unexpected and painful.

The damage and after effects caused by the atomic bombs are not limited to what happened around August 6 in Hiroshima, and August 9 in Nagasaki. They continue to threaten the survivors' physical and living conditions deeply in different forms. Nuclear weapons, therefore, not only harm people's bodies but also deeply harm their minds, even after 70 years since their use. These weapons must be abolished urgently.

We are now facing an historic opportunity at the United Nations where the negotiations for a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons are going to start. Calling for the conclusion of the treaty, the Hibakusha in Japan are working on the international signature campaign in support of the appeal of the Hibakusha for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Hibakusha, whose average age now exceeds 80, are calling on all the countries of the world to prevent the repetition of a living hell on future generations and never to create any more Hibakusha. During the New Year, on January 6, many Hibakusha participated in the joint signature collection in front of Kaminarimon Gate of Asakusa in Tokyo, together with many peace workers. The surge of the international signature campaign is sweeping around Japan. We, the second generation of the Hibakusha are also determined to develop this campaign far and wide across the world.

Contact the campaign here: yamada@t-hibaku-jp

See also: Hibakushas - atomic bomb survivors visit London <http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32220>
<http://www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=32222>

HAS THIS DRESS BEEN TO MORE COUNTRIES THAN YOU?

"Made in Morocco" says the label on the pink Zara shirt dress. While this may be where the garment was finally sewn together, it has already been to several other countries. In fact, it's quite possible this piece of clothing is better travelled than you. If it was human, it would have certainly journeyed far enough to have earned itself some decent air miles.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-39337204>

FRACK FREE UNITED LOCAL ELECTIONS RESOURCE

Frack Free United is a nationwide network of residents and campaign groups wanting to put fracking on the political agenda for the local elections on May 4 and to help stop fracking in England. You can find out more and sign up at www.frackfreeunited.org

On May 4, all the seats in every English county council are up for election. In the shire counties, the county council is the minerals planning authority. This means that it takes the decisions about whether or not to allow fracking. So, on May 4, voters will elect the councillors who will sit on the planning committee and take decisions about fracking in their area.

There are 14 county councils with oil and gas exploration licences in their area:

Cumbria, Derbyshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Surrey and West Sussex plus the Isle of Wight.

You can use our 'where is fracking?' map to find out about fracking in your area: <https://www.frackfreeunited.org/info-maps-and-candidates-in-your-area/>

RESOURCES

CHRISTIAN CND: 'THY KINGDOM COME' PRAYER CAMPAIGN

A Kingdom of Justice, Peace and Joy: a Campaign of Prayer for the success of the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty negotiations, taking place at the United Nations in New York in March and June, 2017.

Join us in this response to a call from the World Council of Churches to Christians of the world to pray and meditate on The Lord's Prayer, particularly in the days leading to Pentecost.

Download the prayer leaflet: <http://wp.christiancnd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/THY-KINGDOM-COME-A5.pdf>

FILM: Theatr Clwyd

***Shadow World* 12 April** 8-9:30 pm Theatr Clwyd, Raikes Lane, Mold, CH7 1YA. A smart, hard-hitting look at the global arms trade, the vast sums of money that are made and the corruption that creates. Film followed by panel discussion.

Winner of the Best Documentary Award Edinburgh International Film Festival. Shown at Theatr Clwyd as part of Wales One World Film Festival. "...superb, gut-punching exploration of the global arms trade is the sort of catalyst to energize politically-minded viewers."

Tickets £6. Small venue – booking advisable: 01352 701521.

See: <http://wowfilmfestival.com/en/nearby/mold>

PLAY: Moving People

A short play written by ***RISE Theatre*** and first performed at ***Flame 2017***. In the play we meet four people who have been forced from their homes. A fantastic creative resource to use with young people in youth groups, Confirmation classes or secondary schools to enable them to reflect on the value and dignity of each person.

The play creatively explores *the parable of the sheep and goats* (Matthew 25: 31-46).

Download the script and check out the accompanying resource for ideas on how to use this play with your group, including follow-up activities. <http://cafod.org.uk/Education/Youth-leaders-and-chaplains/Moving-people-play>

THEATRE: The Lowry, Salford Quays

***Bucket List* Weds 26 and Thurs 27 April.** The multi award-winning Theatre Ad Infinitum present *Bucket List*, the powerful story of one Mexican woman's fight for justice. When her mother is murdered for protesting corporate and governmental corruption Milagros finds herself with only a bloodstained list of those responsible. Determined to make them pay, Milagros embarks on a passionate quest for justice – no matter the cost.

A story about love, loss and revenge, told with physical storytelling, live instrumental music and song.

<https://www.thelowry.com/events/bucket-list>

THEATRE: Chester

***The Lost Boy* 29 April to 7 May** 7.30-9pm St Mary's Creative Space, St Mary's Hill, Chester, CH1 2DW.

How one boy's story changed a seaside town. Written by playwright Stephanie Dale, writer of the highly acclaimed 2013 production of the Chester Mystery Plays, *The Lost Boy* is a brand new play with music and film that looks at the changing face of our communities as young people flee war-torn countries. Original score by Matt Baker, who recently won an award for his outstanding contribution to the arts in Cheshire. Tickets £12-14.

See: www.visitchester.com/whats-on/theatre-in-the-quarter-the-lost-boy-p230371

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

APRIL

3 Christian Aid Lent Lunch 12 noon-1.30pm Quaker Meeting House, Union Walk, Frodsham Street, Chester, CH1 3LF. Minimum donation of £5 suggested.

5 'Singalong' Dementia Choir at the Canterbury Room, St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Great Georges Road, LL22 1RD. Facilitated by The Irenaeus Project 0151 949 1199 jenny@irenaeus.co.uk Everyone very welcome.

6 'Oasis' listening café at the Canterbury Room, St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Great Georges Road, LL22 1RD. Facilitated by The Irenaeus Project 0151 949 1199 jenny@irenaeus.co.uk Everyone very welcome.

8 Friends of Sabeel UK NW group Conference on the theme of *The Balfour Declaration* at the Triangle Methodist Church, Bolton, New Church Road, BL1 5SH. Guest speakers Professor Mary Grey, Ecotheologian, feminist writer and member of the Balfour Project and Dr Aimee Shalan, Director of Fobza – Promoting Palestinian access to education. To book/more info contact Deborah: darnes@talktalk.net Palestinian craft stall with Zaytoun Fairtrade products for sale.

10-13 Sub: Zero Youth Café St John's Church, Muxton, Telford. Drop in from 4-6pm. Tuck shop, pool table and other games plus dailyworkshop – Monday: Football Speed Shot, provided by Telford United; Tuesday: Dance; Wednesday: Craft; Thursday: Football. Find out more at: www.passionforlife.info

12 Film: Shadow World 8-9:30 pm Theatr Clwyd, Raikes Lane, Mold, CH7 1YA. A smart, hard-hitting look at the global arms trade, the vast sums of money that are made and the corruption that creates. Film followed by panel discussion. Winner of the Best Documentary Award Edinburgh International Film Festival. Shown at Theatr Clwyd as part of Wales One World Film Festival. "...superb, gut-punching exploration of the global arms trade is the sort of catalyst to energize politically-minded viewers." Tickets £6. Small venue – booking advisable: 01352 701521. See: <http://wowfilmfestival.com/en/nearby/mold>

15 Youth Concert with Chip Kendall St John's Church, Muxton, Telford. 6-8pm, doors open 5.30pm. Chip has toured the world, using music to engage young people for the past 12 years, including Greenbelt, Creation Fest, the Lumen Festival in Slovakia, and has previously appeared at Telford International Centre. Book tickets free at >admin@stjohnsmuxton.org.uk

20-23 Global Days of Action on Military Spending demilitarize.org.uk paxchristi.org.uk 020 8203 4884

21 April to 7 May Play: The Lost Boy 7.30-9pm St Mary's Creative Space, St Mary's Hill, Chester, CH1 2DW. How one boy's story changed a seaside town. Written by playwright Stephanie Dale, writer of the highly acclaimed 2013 production of the *Chester Mystery Plays*, *The Lost Boy* is a brand new play with music and film that looks at the changing face of our communities as young people flee war-torn countries. Original score by Matt Baker, who recently won an award for his outstanding contribution to the arts in Cheshire. Tickets £12-14. See: www.visitchester.com/whats-on/theatre-in-the-quarter-the-lost-boy-p230371

27 Housing Justice Roadshow Wrexham 9.30am-3pm Salvation Army Church and ARK Community Centre, Garden Road, Rhosddu, Wrexham LL11 2NU. An ecumenical event to encourage and motivate churches to be part of the housing solution in North Wales and to work in partnership with others. The recent Welsh Rough sleeper count conducted by the Welsh government identified particular challenges around homelessness in North Wales and Wrexham, this roadshow will be an opportunity to share good practice and discuss how working together can bring real change to communities and hear how churches are using surplus land and buildings to provide homes for people in housing need. More info: info@housingjustice.org.uk

Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/housing-justice-roadshow-wrexham-homelessness-housing-need-and-the-role-of-the-church-tickets-26327447103?aff=eac2#tickets>

MAY

5-13 Global Divestment Mobilisation - focus on the impacts of climate change <http://globaldivestmentmobilisation.org.uk/>

6 Revitalising the Tools of Active Nonviolence Liverpool. Booking essential: janharper1@yahoo.co.uk paxchristi.org.uk

13 NJPN AGM & Open Networking Day 10.30am-4pm CAFOD, Romero House, 55 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB. Looking at resources for Creation Day with NJPN Environment Group. Email: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk Tel: 0207 901 4864 www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

7 May Play: The Lost Boy final performance (see entry for 21 April above)

9 CWDF Forum AGM 6.45-9pm The Unity Centre, Cuppin Street Chester, CH1 2BN. The opportunity to review the Forum's activities over the past year and elect our Chair and Committee for the forthcoming year. Our speaker will be Cat Barton, Chester Zoo's Field Conservation Manager.

JULY

21–23 NJPN Annual Justice & Peace Conference The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. *'A Sabbath for the Earth and the Poor: The Challenge of Pope Francis'*. Email: admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk; Tel: 0207 901 4864 www.justice-and-peace.org.uk

• Many items taken from the daily e-bulletin Independent Catholic News www.indcatholicnews.com or from Ekklesia www.ekklesia.co.uk both invaluable free resources for up-to-date J&P news, events and in-depth articles. Sign up for comprehensive weekly e-bulletins from National J&P Network 020 7901 4864 admin@justice-and-peace.org.uk

The views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily those of NJPN